



2023 SUMMER

# NEWSLETTER



# A Community That Cares

**Toni Eby, MSW**  
**Executive Director**



There has always been great emphasis within social services circles on how our staff and volunteers are practicing self-care; that is how within the emotionally draining work we do, our team is able to manage their emotional and psychological well-being. While we still believe that is extremely important, it is also important to shift the limelight a little and focus our attention on community care. There is the old saying, “It takes a village,” which still holds some important truths. Humans need connection and support from our neighbors, peers, family, and those in our social circle. This could be something as small as asking someone if they are ok or need to talk to someone. It could mean checking on your friend when they are sick or finding out if the overworked mother that lives next door needs someone to watch her kiddo for an hour. How we connect and support one another is just as important as how we take care of ourselves.

# "ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE"

Community care also extends beyond support of those we personally know, but also extends to how we support our community at large. That could be anything from donating to organizations that you believe are making a difference in people's lives, advocating for change to improve the lives of our neighbors or participating in the voting process. SafeHouse has a large community of people like you ensuring that the organization has all the tools it needs to provide the best services for the womxn we serve. Additionally, SafeHouse, in turn has been caring for our clients and advocating for larger change in the way that San Francisco addresses solutions for unhoused womxn.

**"THIS INNOVATIVE WORK HAS BEEN DONE WITH THE WOMEN'S HOUSING COALITION."**

This summer we want to invite everyone to join us in showing how we are a community that cares by creating a new system for how unhoused womxn are supported and exited from homelessness. This innovative work has been done with the Women's Housing Coalition, and we hope you show your support by telling reaching out to your District Supervisor and telling them that we need to rethink how unhoused womxn in San Francisco are housed and supported. As always, we appreciate your ongoing support and look forward to updating you on our progress in the future!



# The Women's Housing Retreat



By Yves-Langston Barthaud, Development and Outreach Manager

In 2021, San Francisco SafeHouse founded the San Francisco Women's Housing Coalition alongside Cameo House and The Mary Elizabeth Inn to advocate for women's housing and women's safety. Today the WHC is made up of seven women's housing organizations that support this cause and is still growing.

The San Francisco Women's Housing Coalition (WHC) hosted, alongside the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH), and San Francisco Board of Supervisors Board President Aaron Peskin, a historic Women's Housing Retreat to identify the gaps in women's housing services and the solutions that the WHC has identified.

The half-day retreat began with opening remarks from Board President Aaron Peskin and HSH Department Chair Shireen McSpadden. They both highlighted the importance of the day and welcomed the event's guests, which included representatives from the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, the Department of Health and Safety, the Department on the Status of Women, the Mayor's Office, Adult Probation, Sheriff's Department, the District Attorney, the Public Defender's Office, Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development, and more.

The first half of the day was dedicated to WHC presenting some of the underlying issues that we've identified with women's housing in San Francisco and some of the glaring needs for unhoused women in the City. In the last ten years, six women's only organizations and/or programs have closed their doors. The closures mean fewer resources for 3000+ identified women living on the street.

When asked in a recent survey of 100 unhoused women where do they feel the safest, there were three responses: inside, with other women, and nowhere. These answers are jarring, considering the lack of women only safe spaces.

Here are some facts:

- From the latest Point-in-Time Count, there are 3000 cis and trans women currently experiencing homelessness in San Francisco.
- That number is low since the PIT Count doesn't account for those who may have a place to stay the night when the count is conducted.
- Trans women are 18x more likely to experience homelessness than the general population.
- Black women are 6x more likely to experience homelessness than white women.
- More than 90% of cis and trans unhoused women experience severe physical and sexual abuse.
- According to a study done in New York, women are 106x more likely to experience sexual abuse and violence in a coed shelter than in a gender-specific space.

**"More than 90% of cis and trans unhoused women experience severe physical and sexual abuse"**

There are currently 3,169 coed shelter beds in San Francisco. 65 beds are dedicated for women with requirements (i.e. for example: need to have experiences of sex trafficking), and 54 beds for women without requirements. Of the coed shelter beds, only 3% are being used by women because it is simply too dangerous. This needs to change.

The WHC also identified continuum of care gaps and flow issues for unhoused women trying to navigate the current system. In a powerful speech, a woman with lived experience described the challenges she faced being homeless from a young age, to trying to get support services and housing as a young adult and later. Part of the gaps identified was a lack of a centralized coordination system allowing for those seeking and providers to know what services and spaces are available at any given moment.

The second half of the day was solutions focused. The WHC proposed solutions that we identified that include:

- Develop centralized coordination of women's services
- Investment in data collection specific to women's needs
- Safety for all genders across the system of care with a focus on marginalized genders
- Stabilizing existing women's programs
- Fix the flow
- Allocate funds to fill these gaps

Stabilization and investment into current women's only programs will help meet some of San Francisco's current needs. One of the current proposed investments are for more Permanent Supportive Housing sites that are gender specific for women. We believe that the budget needs to reflect the value.

The day ended with three breakout groups for City Departments and the Coalition to brainstorm solutions for 90 days, six months, one year, and 3-5 years. The WHC will be finalizing a report for each department to review with the problems and recommendations that came from this historic day.



# Kitchen to Table

By Sharon Crawford, Residential Counselor

Many of the residents who come into Safehouse either have not cooked in a good while or do not know how to cook. Some were not raised in a nurturing environment that taught those skills, and others have been on their own since a young age and failed to acquire those skills along the way.

At SafeHouse the ladies prepare a community dinner for the house and each resident takes turns cooking one evening during the week. We provide meal recipes that are easy to follow, healthy and nutritious, therefore, teaching the ladies a skill they can take with them when they move out on their own. Although many clients are initially reluctant to cook, we've been told by a few of the graduates (only after they were in their own place) they were grateful they were taught how to cook and clean. In hindsight, many have realized those skills really made a difference for them as they began a new chapter in their own life away from Safehouse.



Safehouse has always purchased all the food for the residents during their stay at the program. As the point person who purchases most of the groceries for Safehouse, I have seen how the prices skyrocketed to almost double what they were just six months ago. During the pandemic things were very hard to obtain to keep the house running properly and it was always a fight to purchase what was needed to keep the bare minimum supply of toilet paper, germicide, masks, and hand sanitizer in the house. Not to mention how empty grocery store shelves were because companies were either shut down or there just wasn't any inventory to begin with, and no one was delivering more.

**"This can be a challenge and even an opportunity to learn something fun"**

Once upon a time, residents did the shopping for the house weekly, so they would learn how to shop, budget money, and work together as a team to purchase the groceries for the house. The pandemic stopped that due to the Covid-19 shelter-in-place orders and at that time Safehouse began shopping online for the house. Today we still shop online for most things because it has become easier and the cost to have food delivered is minimal. With many decimated supply chains and companies not able to bounce back from the pandemic aftermath, our food budgets have increased, and it continues to become more difficult to ensure the program has all the food items needed.

This experience is easily transitioned to the residents as well. In the Transitional Housing Program, we work with them to learn budgets and food hacks that will support the environmental changes and help with the budget for feeding themselves. This can be a challenge and even an opportunity to learn something fun like one pot dinner ideas or challenging oneself to learn how to cook a meal under \$20. I really enjoy as a staff being a part of teaching the women how to survive in a new life.



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## HOW TO GET INVOLVED?



- Go to [sfsafehouse.org](https://www.sfsafehouse.org) and click on WishList.
- Donate through our text to give number - 801801 SAFE.
- Donate <https://www.sfsafehouse.org>.
- Send a gift card.
- Organize a fundraiser for SafeHouse.
- Have an item on the list or something else you wish to donate? Send us an email to [info@sfsafehouse.org](mailto:info@sfsafehouse.org) or [tonette@sfsafehouse.org](mailto:tonette@sfsafehouse.org).

[www.sfsafehouse.org](https://www.sfsafehouse.org)

