



**Covenant  
House  
California**

# CHC

inside

SUMMER 2014

Opening Doors for Homeless Youth

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friend,

What an honor it is to be joining Covenant House California (CHC)! For close to twenty years,

I have known and admired CHC for the work they have done with homeless youth in California. Having spent twenty plus years working in child welfare, I am painfully aware that the youth we serve need more than our government systems can provide. These young people have often been abused or neglected by their families, they have been failed by the systems that are supposed to protect them and they have been forced to find ways just to survive.

We all need a system of support to be successful. I know that I would not be here if not for my family, friends and community support. At CHC, we have an opportunity to help develop these supports for youth who have never had them before, so that they can be successful and fulfill their dreams.

I have fallen in love with Covenant House's mission to "...serve all God's children with absolute respect and unconditional love...to help suffering homeless kids...and to protect and safeguard all children in need." Each day, we are amazed to see transformation in the lives of these young people. It is an amazing privilege to be part of such an incredible mission!

Yours sincerely,

Bill Bedrossian  
Executive Director, CHC

## A MINISTRY THAT MINISTERS TO ALL

CHC works hard to provide homeless and at-risk youth with their immediate needs, such as shelter, food and clothing. In addition, CHC helps youth plan and prepare for long-term needs and independent living. But

more often than not, youth also have needs which aren't material. Sometimes they need guidance for spiritual growth. In Los Angeles, that is the job of Sister Margaret and the Spiritual Ministry.

The voluntary Spiritual Ministry program provides CHC youth with activities and opportunities for spiritual growth. "It's a very holistic program, because the residents



*Sr. Margaret Farrell (center), who leads the Spiritual Ministry, with some of CHC's youth and alumni.*

come from many different faiths and backgrounds," says Sister Margaret. "But everyone who comes through CHC's doors has some sort of spiritual search going on, whether it's due to bereavement, abandonment, or if they just have questions

or are searching for some type of guidance. We try to reach out to the youth in any way we can and provide a program for them."

Having led the program for thirteen years, Sister Margaret says that the program also allows youth a chance to learn the meaning of giving back. For example, the Spiritual Ministry will organize car wash fundraisers to help with disaster relief in other parts of the

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## TERRI BEAN: A MATCH FOR CHC

"When I first read about some of the situations that these kids come from, I remember thinking, 'That's a really awful situation - what can I do to help?'" says Terri Bean, a committed CHC donor for more than twenty years.



Terri's dedication comes from a belief that no one

should ever be homeless. "It's demeaning," she says, "to be all alone, with no one to take care of you and nobody to go to." She emphasizes that the youth CHC serves have it tougher than most. "The kids who come to CHC have people who prey on them," she says, referring to the stories of youth who are victims of violence or sex traffickers. "I just think, how

(CONT. INSIDE)

## CHC ALUMNI: JIMMY

"I knew I was about to die," says Jimmy, a CHC alum who fell into trouble after graduating CHC and living successfully on his own for many years, "but I knew if I called the CHC phone number, somebody would be there to help me."

Jimmy had grown up in foster care and when he turned eighteen, he found himself homeless. He found CHC and, after doing well in the program, was able to get his own place, a job and enroll in school to become a nurse's assistant. It seemed that Jimmy had his life together, but he made some bad choices and soon, he was involved with drugs and battling addiction.

"I lost everything and ended up back on the streets," he says. "I was so embarrassed about what had

happened that I didn't want to call anyone for help, but when I got really sick and ended up in the hospital, I had to do something – so I called Sister Margaret."



Jimmy says that when Sister Margaret came to visit, she never judged him. She only offered advice. "She said I had to snap out of it or I was going to die," he says, "and she was right."

Jimmy had a spiritual awakening from that experience and has begun to move forward with his life. His health has improved dramatically and, with Sister Margaret's guidance, he is determined to get back on track. "She literally saved my life."

## A MINISTRY THAT MINISTERS TO ALL (CONT. FROM FRONT PAGE)

world. Other times, the program organizes trips to work with the elderly or to help kids with special needs. In the past, there have been trips to Tijuana to build houses for the impoverished in that area. "Doing these projects, youth learn that they are of use to the world. They learn it can mean something to help other people," says Sister Margaret.

Of course, there are also group trips to church on Sunday for any youth who wants to participate. "Some youth have been to church in the past, while others have never experienced it, but we make the opportunity available to them if they want to go."

The Spiritual Ministry also reaches outside the doors of CHC. Sister Margaret continues to stay in contact with the youth who have left CHC and help them in any way she can. She visits former CHC youth who are in

hospitals or who made mistakes and ended up in jail, giving them guidance and assistance.

"I believe this is my calling. God wants me to be here," she says. "There are stressful and hard situations, but every day, being around the youth and seeing little moments of success makes it all worthwhile."



The Spiritual Ministry working with CHC youth, alumni and volunteers to hold a car wash fundraiser.

## DEDICATION TO THE JOB: ANNA WALLER



Anna works with one of her CHC youth interns.

"I love my job and I love the kids at CHC," says Anna Waller, the Food Director at CHC's Los Angeles campus. "It's what keeps me coming back here every day."

As Food Director, it is Anna's responsibility to supervise the preparation of more than 5,000 meals every month at CHC Los Angeles. It can be difficult, due to the tight budget and the large demand, so Anna works with local food banks to get as many donations as possible. "There are just more kids these days," she says. "You have to work a little harder to get things done."

Originally from Boston, Anna has cooked all her life, even owning her own restaurant for a time while living in Arizona, but her years at CHC have been some of the most fulfilling of her life. One rewarding experience is the internship program at CHC that allows youth to come to work with her in the kitchen. Often, it can be the first job a CHC youth has ever had and it can be a big challenge for them.

"The kids think I'm mean," she says with a smile, "but that's just because I'm tough on them and I expect them to work." Anna admits that after a while, the interns usually realize why she is tough. "When they move on to real jobs, they say that I taught them what it meant to have a job. That tells me I'm doing something right."

Anna says that working for CHC isn't just a job for her. "It's my life. It's what I do and I love doing it."

## TERRI BEAN: A MATCH FOR CHC (CONT. FROM FRONT PAGE)

can you not want to help someone in that situation?”

Terri, a California native who resides in Orange County, donates on a regular basis, but also has done clothing drives and visited the Los Angeles site for a tour and to meet some of the youth. “I found it to be an amazing experience. It just hit my heart,” she says.

“To me, CHC’s program is a game changer for these youth,” she says. “It’s not just a shelter. The kids get everything they need to put their lives on track.”

Terri’s contribution also is a double

benefit for CHC: every time she donates, her company matches her gift to CHC. “I would give regardless, but it happens to be a bonus which I can take advantage of to help CHC,” she says.

Terri is modest about her commitment. “I just get a feeling that I’m contributing to something important. I give what I can because I think it’s worthwhile,” she says. “It’s a personal belief that you can’t do everything, but you need to do something and, by helping CHC, I know that I am.”

CHC thanks Terri Bean for her continual support.

## ABOUT MATCHING GIFTS

Terri Bean’s matching gift through her employer is an example of how Covenant House California works with corporations to customize programs that combine philanthropic initiatives with the needs of CHC’s youth.

To determine if a corporate partnership with Covenant House California might be right for your company, please contact Melanie Merians at:

[MMerians@covca.org](mailto:MMerians@covca.org) or call 323.461.3131, ext. 252

## CHC YOUTH: ANGELINA

Angelina just became a CHC alumni. She has a job she likes and is now living in her own apartment. It’s a big transition for her. When she first came to CHC, she had nothing. “I can remember not having anyplace to go and not knowing what I was going to do. I was really scared,” she says.

Angelina grew up in the foster care system. She says she often felt alone growing up, because she didn’t consider her foster family her real family. When she was seventeen, she left her home. She moved in with her boyfriend at the time, but soon discovered that she had made a major mistake. Angelina became a victim of domestic violence. “There was one time that he held a knife to my throat and I knew if I didn’t get out, I was going to die,” she recalls. “The problem was, I didn’t know where I could go.”

Fortunately, Angelina found out about CHC. She says she knew that CHC was going to be a great opportunity as soon as she arrived. “I wanted to get my life together as fast as possible and I could tell this was the place to do it!”

“Angelina was someone who really wanted to better herself. It became



clear right away she was someone who wanted to do well and would benefit from CHC’s program,” says Andrew Hughes, Angelina’s Case Manager when she first came to CHC.

With the help of CHC, Angelina found her first job. “I went into CHC’s Employment Skills Program and just told them, ‘I want to work, I don’t care what it is, I just want a job’ and they helped me.”

Angelina began working in the Tender Greens Sustainable Life Project internship and was eventually hired on as an employee. She then used that experience to move to her next job, which she still holds today.

“I really benefitted from the internship program and my job at Tender Greens,” she says. “It was my first opportunity to work and show what I was capable of doing.”

After finding employment, Angelina moved through CHC’s program quickly and eventually entered its Supportive Apartments Program, where she lived in her own apartment for the first time. “It was a great learning experience for me,” she says. “I’d never had my own place, let alone my own apartment. I can’t tell you how excited I was when I first moved in!”

Angelina graduated from CHC’s program in June. Now as an alumni, Angelina looks back at her time in the program with appreciation. “They really helped me with everything I needed to get my life on track,” she says. “I found a family at CHC who was there to help me. I’ll never forget that.”

# CHC AND TENDER GREENS TEAM UP

One of the first steps to independent living is gaining employment. But many of the youth who come to Covenant House California have little or no job experience. After experiencing life on the streets, it can be difficult for them to adjust to the structured life and schedule required to hold down a regular job. CHC's Employment Skills Program (ESP) offers on-site internship programs through the Outreach Department and Food Services for youth who lack job experience.

CHC also works with outside companies to hire youth as interns. One of the more unique programs is Tender Greens' Sustainable Life Project. This program consists of working at a Tender Greens restaurant, field trips to its farms and markets, and classes on cooking and nutrition.

"Tender Greens' internship opportunity is really special," says Elisha Reid, CHC's Employment Skills Program Coordinator. "The interns are given a

chance to really learn about Tender Greens and the way the company works. They learned about the art of cooking and not just customer service." As a result of the experience gained from the internship, several CHC youth have moved on to regular long-term employment, including some working for Tender Greens.

Reid says that CHC is always looking for other opportunities to create internship programs with local companies. "We welcome all internship programs, but the ultimate goal is to find the youth either a long-term job or, at the very least, experience which would be beneficial to add to his or her resume."

If your company is interested in working with CHC and setting up an internship program to help CHC's youth, please contact Elisha Reid at:

EReid@covca.org or call  
323.957.7455 ext. 305.

## CHC AWARDS DINNER HONOREE TENDER GREENS



**Erik Oberholtzer is a co-founder of Tender Greens and accepted the award on Tender Greens' behalf.**

**How did it feel for Tender Greens to be honored at the Awards Dinner?**

It was a great honor to be recognized for the work we have done in partnership with CHC, particularly to have Angelina on stage to present. She has come so far!

**Tender Greens' Sustainable Life Project is a program designed specifically to help foster and at-risk youth. How did that project come about?**

We recognize that foster youth are too often the ones who are forgotten by the system and fall through society's cracks. We wanted to help them find a better path forward through food.

**What motivates the commitment to this project?**

The individual stories of success. We are making a difference in these young people's lives.

**Through the program, Tender Greens has helped several CHC youth receive training and find jobs. You've made a difference in their lives. How does that feel?**

For me personally, it is one of the most rewarding aspects of my work. They inspire me to do more.

# EMERGING LEADERS STEP UP



The Emerging Leaders Group at CHC's Young Professionals Sleep Out in March. Photo by Jenna Schoenefeld

CHC's Emerging Leaders Group (ELG) is built around three pillars: giving back to the community, professional development, and having fun – all while assisting CHC in the process. In accord with that mission, the ELG has accomplished quite a bit this past year.

Along with holding events to interact directly with CHC youth, the group held two mixers to raise awareness of CHC's

mission. They also participated in the Covenant House Young Professionals Sleep Out in Hollywood and raised more than \$26,000 for CHC programs.

The ELG plans to continue their mission in the future, as well as expanding their membership. "We encourage anyone who is passionate about giving back to their community, making a difference in the lives of at-risk-youth, and expanding their professional network to join!" says ELG Councilmember Moana Casanova.

For more information on CHC's Emerging Leaders Group, find their page on Facebook or e-mail them at:

elg@covenanthousecalifornia.org

# “A MAGICAL NIGHT OF HOPE”



Aleya James and CHC youth Isaiah, perform “Happy” as part of the evening’s celebration.

## CHC’s 2014 AWARDS DINNER

May 8, 2014  
Skirball Cultural Center

**Event Co-Chairs:**  
Paul Hanneman  
Jeremiah Reynolds

**Honorees:**  
HBO  
and  
Tender Greens



Actress Mircea Monroe on the red carpet.

On May 8, 2014, CHC held its Annual Awards Dinner, “A Magical Night of Hope,” at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles. The event celebrated the work of Covenant House California, raised funds and awareness, and featured performers, special guests and celebrities.

This year’s honorees were HBO and Tender Greens. HBO created and supports CHC’s Digital Dove Program, a filmmaking class designed to foster creativity and train youth for jobs in the film industry. The restaurant Tender Greens was honored for their Sustainable Life Project, which gives CHC youth training, internships and work.



Actress Joelle Carter.

There were several highlights from the night, including appearances from actors Mircea Monroe, Joelle Carter, Steven Weber, Anthony Ruivivar and L.A. City Councilman Mitch O’Farrell. There were several musical performances throughout the night, including a song from renowned artist Lisa Vroman. In addition, Aleya James performed “Happy” with Isaiah, a CHC youth. Afterward, CHC Alumni and current Board Member Anthony Solis shared his experience at CHC and introduced a short film featuring the success story of Angelina, a CHC youth who recently transitioned to independent living. Angelina took the stage and thanked the audience for their support of CHC.

There were also silent and live auctions as part of the evening’s events. The money raised from the event will help fund CHC’s programs and services in the coming year.



Artist Lisa Vroman performs.



CHC Alumni and Board Member Anthony Solis.

## CHC AWARDS DINNER HONOREE HBO



**Jay Roewe is the Senior Vice President for West Coast Production for HBO and accepted the award on HBO’s behalf.**

### **How did it feel for HBO to be honored at the Awards Dinner?**

I was very proud on behalf of HBO to receive the award. We have had the Digital Dove Program at Covenant House California for eleven years and deeply appreciate the recognition.

### **What was the motivation to create the Digital Dove Program?**

The motivation behind Digital Dove was to provide a program the youth could use to focus themselves and have success with the tools and technology of the filmmaking process.

### **The Digital Dove Program has flourished since its inception and has not only inspired creativity for CHC’s youth, it’s led to youth finding jobs in the industry. How does it feel to know that?**

It is wonderful to know that our contributions are truly helping the youth at Covenant House California to find their way in the world. That is deeply rewarding!



A CHC youth sizes up a shot as part of the Digital Dove Program.



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