

SUMMER 2021

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Interim Breaking Ground on New Affordable Housing Project!

Interim Inc. is finally starting on construction of the new Sun Rose Housing project in Salinas. The three-story complex will house 17 residents and a resident manager.

There will be nine studio and one bedroom units of permanent, affordable, supported housing for adults with psychiatric disabilities who are homeless, chronically homeless or at risk of homelessness. Additionally, one floor of the complex will contain transitional housing for eight residents. This project has been specifically designed to meet the special needs of homeless single disabled adults.

The Sun Rose Housing project will replace the existing Soledad House, located in Salinas, which Interim has owned since 1980. Soledad House was Interim's original crisis residential facility and later provided transitional, shared housing. This property is in disrepair, and Interim will demolish the building and use the property to build the Sun Rose Apartments. Recent zoning changes made it possible to increase the number of units allowed on this property.



The Soledad House in Salinas is Interim's original crisis residential facility.

The complex will also include offices and meeting rooms for counselors and residents. The entire building will be handicapped-accessible with an elevator to the upper floors. Many tenants are expected to have other disabilities in addition to the psychiatric disabilities. Wald, Ruhnke & Dost Architects designed the project.

All tenants of Sun Rose will be offered mental health and case management on-site by Interim staff with the goal of helping residents to maintain housing and develop skills to be successful in the community. Tenants will be encouraged to use

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“The Monterey County Behavioral Health Bureau has a long and successful history of partnering with Interim Inc. to provide needed services to the most vulnerable seriously mentally ill individuals in our community. The Sun Rose Housing Project came about in recognition of the need for local housing and the unique supports needed to assist homeless mentally ill individuals to stay housed, safe, and stable. The Bureau worked with Interim to gain funding under the state’s No Place Like Home initiative and is excited to have secured a portion of the funding needed to support the project. This housing project will make a real difference in the lives of the people who will live here; helping these vulnerable individuals in achieving stability and a higher level of functioning within their own lives and the community.”

Katy Eckert, MBA, Behavioral Health Bureau Chief

Housing, Healing and Hope: The Path from Homelessness to Mental Health

This hour-long educational seminar was held by Interim Inc. on May 20, 2021. Barbara Mitchell, Executive Director of Interim Inc., and Joe Livernois, Board President for the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Monterey County, emceed the event. Interim program directors and staff, Marisol Jacobo, Kevin Gast, Kontrena McPheter, and Antonio Garibaldi also participated in the event.

The seminar kicked off with why we acknowledge Mental Health Awareness Month. “Each year millions of Americans face the reality of living with a mental illness,” explained Livernois, “One in five adults will experience mental illness in a year, and 1 in 20 adults will experience a serious mental illness. An estimated 25% of extended families have at least one member with a serious mental illness.”

Livernois asked Barbara Mitchell to explain the impacts of mental illness on those living in Monterey County. Mitchell acknowledged that mental illness is often linked to homelessness, although there is not necessarily one causal factor. “We have found that each client has a unique situation,” Mitchell expressed.

Mitchell played a recorded clip of Kontrena McPheter, a former client of Interim who now works as a Peer Outreach and Advocacy Coordinator. “The housing Interim introduced me to on Hayes Circle allowed me to gain strength — strength in my mind, strength in my body. It allowed me to heal some old wounds. It taught me mind over mood. I am grateful to Interim for giving me my life back,” shared McPheter.

Marisol Jacobo discussed the barriers to housing for many homeless people. “Homeless people are like anyone else. They have to feel comfortable and safe in housing. We’ve learned that sometimes people have to be offered multiple



From left: Marisol Jacobo; Barbara Mitchell, Executive Director of Interim Inc; Joe Livernois, Board President for the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Monterey County; and Kevin Gast.

housing opportunities before they will accept one,” Mitchell elaborated. “Interim has developed a multi-path approach to overcome barriers to getting people housed.” Interim offers short-term crisis residential treatment programs, and both residential and outpatient dual diagnosis treatment for people who have substance use issues, as well as mental illness. Additionally, Interim deploys an outreach and engagement team that seeks out people with mental illness who are homeless.

“Do clients ‘graduate’ from Interim?” asked Livernois.

“We don’t really ‘graduate’ people,” Kevin Gast (Program Director at Interim) explained, “We’re here forever. People may graduate from MCHOME, but then move to other programs within Interim. There’s no wrong door and no closed door. We are here for clients in our permanent housing as long as they need us, and we have extensive services to keep them supported and housed.” Mitchell further explained, “Interim’s services are flexible and structured such that those services can intensify, or decrease, depending on need. Some tenants have lived with us for over 30 years.” Mitchell played a clip of Beth Barrell, A client of Interim and Community Support Worker; Barrell shared how she is now able to live

an independent life, supported by Interim: “I am so eternally grateful to Interim for giving me housing because I could not afford to live anywhere else, and because of Interim, I can live independently, successfully, and I get support. Today I have hope because I have housing; I’m happy where I’m at because that’s where the hope is, at Interim.”



Kontrena McPheter

According to Mitchell, Interim is the only organization in Monterey County currently building brick-and-mortar housing specifically for people with mental illness. In June, Interim is beginning construction on its Sun Rose apartments. Sun Rose will contain nine permanent studios or one-bedroom apartments in addition to eight transitional housing beds. Housing development at Interim is funded through a combination of government grants and loans from

local, state, and federal sources, combined with grants and donations from foundations and private donors.

“Have you ever been able to use people with lived experience of homelessness, such as peers, for example, to engage people living homeless?” asked Livernois.

McPheter shared how certain aspects of her transition from homelessness were a direct result of the connection she made with the peer outreach worker that found her while she was homeless. “He asked if I trusted him,” said McPheter, “if I trusted to go with him, and I told him yes. That was my first trusting of anything or anyone at that time because I couldn’t even trust my own mind.”

Antonio Garibaldi, Wellness Navigator at Interim, shared his personal story as well as the biggest support mechanisms that helped him move off of the street. “I had a family member who worked with MCHOME,” said Garibaldi. “I started working with him and told him what my situation was, and he helped me put together a plan that involved an extensive 12-step program. From that program, I went immediately into Bridge House which is an extensive dual-diagnosis residential treatment program.”

Mitchell wrapped up the seminar with three key takeaways from the event:

- 1. Affordable supportive housing is exceptionally important** and there isn’t enough of it; it requires a lot of money and community willpower.
- 2. One size does not fit all in regard to housing.** It is not “build it and they will come.” People have to feel comfortable with the location and



From left: Antonio Garibaldi, Barbara Mitchell, Executive Director of Interim Inc, and Joe Livernois, Board President for the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Monterey County.

the configuration of the housing. If not, they won’t accept the housing.

3. Housing people is only the first task. Keeping people housed is really the major effort. It is essential to have extensive services, on-site, to help people maintain housing, and the system as a whole has to work to convince people to accept these services.

“Sometimes it’s a long journey. What’s different about Interim is that we are here for the long haul. For clients who are willing to engage with us, we will be there for them as long as they need us, with a flexible level of services. We’ve had some tenants for over 30 years. Some clients need services daily, some weekly, and some monthly — and some graduate to being employees or move into the community and don’t need Interim’s support any longer. They may get their mental health services in the community as an out-patient.”

Seminar was sponsored by: Hayashi Wayland, Wald, Ruhnke & Dost

Architects, Interim, Inc. Board of Directors, Fenton & Keller, Lavengood Family, Mark & Susan Bertelsen, Dr. & Mrs. Philip Bhaskar, Barbara Mitchell & Bill Pardue, and the Markon Cooperative.

“What can someone do if they have a family member in Monterey County who is homeless with mental illness, and living on the streets?”

If you are concerned about an individual who is homeless with mental illness, contact **MCHOME** at **(831) 883-3030**.

Note MCHOME is not a 24-hour emergency service. In an emergency, call 911

Other local organizations that provide assistance or resources for people who are homeless with mental illness include:

- Coalition of Homeless Services Providers Phone: **(831) 883-3080**
- NAMI Monterey County Phone: **(831) 422-6264**
- Natividad Medical Center - Crisis Team Phone: **(831) 755-4111**
- Monterey County Behavioral Health Access team Phone: **(888) 258-6029**

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Interim's Crisis Counseling Program (CCP) Is Here to Help Navigate the Impact Of COVID-19

Starting April 2021, Interim, Inc. opened the Crisis Counseling Program (CCP) as part of the library of services offered by the agency for adults in Monterey County living with mental illness.

CCP specifically provides emotional support, crisis counseling, coping strategies and resource referrals to individuals who are struggling with the ongoing fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When you reach out to the CCP, you are connected with trained, compassionate staff who can offer confidential support, stress-management tools, and local services to meet your needs with issues such as job loss, depression, testing, vaccination clinics, and how to deal with anti-maskers and holiday social gatherings.

Interim applied for a grant for funding to run CCP through Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The California Mental Health Services Authority (Cal MHSa) provides the training for healthcare providers to support people throughout this pandemic crisis. Interim was awarded the funding and immediately had a team of counselors within the agency complete the training to implement the program.

The training is organized and facilitated by Cal MHSa and includes the following:

- Crisis-counseling skills needed to provide behavioral health services after a disaster
- Understanding the types of emotional distress reactions common after a disaster
- Ethical considerations, cultural awareness, safety, and self-care of clients

Program Director, Idalia Matthews, and her staff, Veronica Sanchez,



From left: Magaby Aleala, Wellness Navigator; Veronica Sanchez, Counselor II with Health and Community Housing; Idalia Matthews, Crisis Counseling Program Program Director and are currently running CCP for Interim.

Counselor II with Health and Community Housing, and Magaby Aleala, Wellness Navigator are currently running CCP for Interim. These three women have attended all of the trainings to meet eligibility and have a high level of preparedness to support clients during the uncharted waters of a world-wide pandemic.

Once completed, the Interim team hit the ground running and have not looked back. The program is designed as a six-week process, but clients can use only what they feel they need. The team is currently treating 10 clients, but overall Interim's Crisis Counseling Program has supported more than 100 people since it began.

Interim's Crisis Counseling Program accepts clients from 19 different programs and, in addition to

providing a hot line, also aids with the following services:

- Connecting clients with short-term services
- Assisting with locating local providers to meet client needs
- Help with CDC, coping skills, vaccines, and testing sites

This is what Sanchez had to say about CCP:

“Being in the Crisis Counseling Program (CCP) made me realize the indirect support I had throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (family, friends, and coworkers) and the individuals I am serving under CCP have no other forms of support. I am glad to be of service to the following communities who reached out for support from CCP especially low-income individuals, minority groups, and families.”



CRISIS COUNSELING PROGRAM (CCP)



The Crisis Counseling Program is here to help you navigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis.



If you are feeling stress, fear, or anxiety over the uncertainty of COVID-19, contact us for support. You'll be connected with trained, compassionate staff who can offer support, stress management tools, and connect you with local services to meet your needs. All contacts are confidential.

Crisis Counseling Program serves adults with serious mental illness and their family members, providing counseling in Spanish and English.

Counselors offer support related to COVID-19 stressors and referrals to resources in the community.



Individuals can self-refer by contacting our team:

Phone:
(831) 676-3715 EXT. 500

Email:
jrosales@interiminc.org

INTERIM, INC.
Pajaro Street ANNEX
41 E. San Luis St.,
Salinas, CA 93901

Monday - Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Interim Breaking Ground on New Affordable Housing Project!

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other services in the community, including those provided by Interim at the nearby Pajaro Wellness Center.

Interim has received a great amount of community support for the project and have been successful in attracting competitive state and local funding sources. Our local foundations and donors have also been supportive and generous.

Interim has also received tremendous support from the City of Salinas, the County of Monterey and the local Coalition of Homeless Services Providers. Funding commitments have been received from the County of Monterey and City of Salinas, including CDBG funding, Whole Person Care funding, County Inclusionary Housing Funds and Homeless Housing Assistance and Prevention funds. Interim was successful in obtaining competitive funds through the California Housing and Community Development No Place Like Home Program through a joint application with the County of Monterey.

The project cost is divided into capital construction expenses of \$6.5 million, and another \$3 million in capitalized operating and other reserves designed to support the operating costs for 20 years. These operating reserves are necessary to ensure the units remain affordable, as the projected rents paid by tenants will be approximately \$250-\$300 per month, which will not cover the costs of operation. The services to tenants will be funded under Interim's contract with Monterey County Behavioral Health through Mental Health Services Act Funding, and Medi-Cal billing.

The project was delayed about six months by issues related to the pandemic. Unfortunately, the delays combined with the rising cost of construction have created a project



“As the representative of the local Continuum of Care (CoC), the Coalition of Homeless Services Providers recognizes the severe challenges many of our neighbors experiencing homelessness suffer from — one being severe mental illness. This is one of the many driving factors in the CoC’s decision to support and co-fund Interim’s Sun Rose project in the city of Salinas. Sun Rose is a highly anticipated, much-needed program in our community and we are very excited to see the project move forward.”

Roxanne V. Wilson, Executive Officer



deficit. Interim will lend the project funds to get construction started and we hope to reduce this deficit through more grants, donations, and other governmental sources. Interim is actively seeking the additional funding.

We feel it’s important to start the construction now as the demand

for affordable supportive housing for homeless persons is currently so high in Monterey County. If you would like to donate to the project, please contact Barbara Mitchell, Executive Director, to discuss how you can help, or send a donation in the enclosed envelope.

Getting to Know Joe Livernois

Board president for the National Alliance on Mental Illness Monterey County Chapter (NAMI)



Joe Livernois, 67, of Monterey, currently serves as the board president for the **National Alliance on Mental Illness Monterey County Chapter (NAMI)**. NAMI is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with mental illness and their families through support, education, and advocacy. He discovered NAMI while serving as a writer for the Monterey County Herald. At that time, Joe was writing a series of 44 articles focused on his reunion with his estranged father in Leon, Mexico. His articles can be found in his book "The Road to Guanajuato: Estrangement in Paradise." Additionally, Joe is a founding editor of Voices of Monterey Bay. Voices of Monterey Bay was created as a reaction to the current state of newspapers in Monterey

County and seeks to highlight voices that are routinely excluded or represented unfairly.

Joe hails from the middle of nowhere on a "dirt patch about 10 miles from the Mexican border." When Joe was young, his father began to show signs of bipolar disorder. He would cycle between states of incredible mania and severe depression. At that time, no one in his family, including his father, knew anything about mental illness. In order to survive, Joe and his five siblings found it necessary to avoid their father. "The family just sort of fell apart because nobody understood what was going on and it was nobody's fault. Mental illness is never anybody's fault," said Joe, "We didn't have the resources at the time." When Joe was a senior in high school,

his mother left his father. This was significant because the family was Catholic. Catholicism was extremely important to Joe's father in particular. Following the separation, Joe lost touch with his father. He learned from a friend (who just happened to see his father) that the man was living homeless in the streets of San Diego. Eventually, Catholicism led Joe's father to Leon, Mexico, where he lived for the rest of his life, even though he could not speak Spanish. "I think he just preferred to be involved in a ceremony that he didn't understand. That was mystical to him. I think the lore of Mexico and being around that 24 hours a day was magic to him," explained Joe.

Many years later, Joe's brother reached out to their father through an online message board. Their father invited Joe and his siblings to Mexico to help celebrate his 80th birthday. It ended up being a trip to remember. "We saw everything there was to see in the state of Guanajuato," said Joe, "We went to a state fair that was awesome. We went to a bullfight (that was not awesome). We just did everything." The trip lasted a week and a half and Joe did his best to put past issues aside.

"I came back from Mexico with this recognition that I really didn't know much about what he was going through as an adult, and as a result, I didn't know a lot about what I was going through as a child growing up with him. I really felt it would behoove me to learn more about mental illness." Consequently, Joe discovered NAMI, and he has been involved with the organization ever since.

"There tends to be this sort of stigma, shame, sadness, anxiety, weirdness around mental illness and it's nobody's fault. It's just a fact of life. You know if you go out and break an arm, you get it fixed. Nobody blames anybody for breaking their arm. It's not the person's fault. I think that if people were able to sort of shed the stigma and shed the blame then many people could get the help that they need quicker than they are getting it now."

Learn more at namimonterey.org

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