

■ A Second Chance

Creating art is Donna's happy place. "I find painting fulfilling. It gives me a sense of satisfaction, of completing something."

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, Donna was among the loyal group of artistically-inclined residents who gathered every Friday to express their creativity in the community room of Mutual Housing at the Highlands (MHH), Sacramento, where LSS manages a supportive housing program.

Donna leads a peaceful life, and while her art group suspended its meetings during the coronavirus pandemic, she still continued to paint. She felt lonely, but persevered.

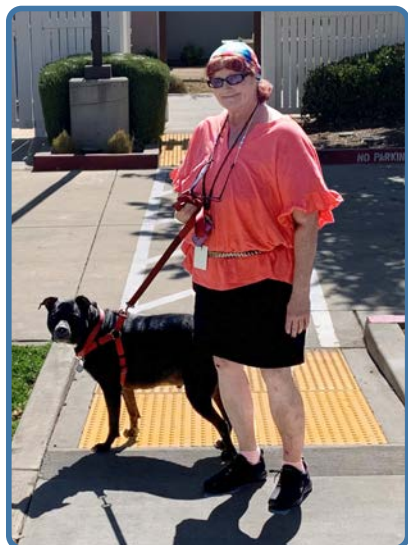
Her constant companion is Jackson, a black Lab mix she inherited from Rob, who was the love of her life before he passed away. They were together 18 years and she says wistfully, "There was nobody else like him."

It was after Rob's death in 2016 that Donna took the big step of leaving Sister Nora's Place, a long-term shelter in Sacramento for women who have experienced chronic homelessness, trauma, and serious physical and mental health issues. She landed there after undergoing successful treatment for Hepatitis C.

"Donna has become a leader in our community."

For the first time since she was a young woman, Donna, who is 58, was on her own, and that caused some anxiety. Her LSS caseworker made sure she continued to get proper healthcare, nutritious food and other relevant services. And having a place to call home began to transform her life after years of struggling with mental health, substance use and homelessness.

Donna has embraced her new life and community. Shortly after she moved into MHH, she joined the weekly Friday art group, developed a passion for painting and became the group's organizer.



"Donna has become a leader in our community," said Carole Cartwright, Program Manager for LSS at Mutual Housing at the Highlands. "She is thoughtful and articulate and often serves as a community liaison with our property management."

Like many individuals and families in her situation, the reasons for Donna's past homelessness are complex. She grew up in a middle class family in the San Francisco Bay Area, where she attended a single sex Catholic high school. A series of poor life choices and struggles with mental health often resulted in her spiraling out of control. Her life with Rob brought her some stability, but he battled his own demons.

Donna has made the most of her opportunity with LSS. She has the confidence to live on her own and to advocate for her fellow residents. And she is at peace with her past and looks forward to the life she has created.

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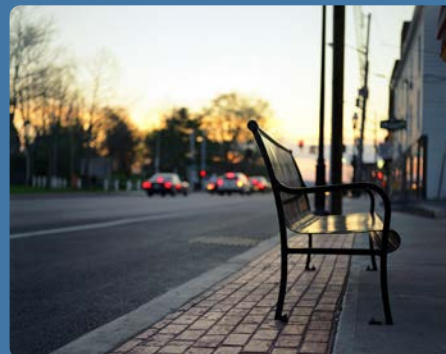
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OUR MISSION: To promote stability and honor the dignity of those we serve by providing supportive housing services that lead to self-sufficiency.

■ Introducing Jerry Metzker

Development Director

Jerry Metzker joins LSS as our new Development Director with 24 years' experience in fundraising and communications. During his career, he has worked in areas such as foundation and corporate grants management, individual and major donor development, communications, publicity, database management, branding, board development, strategic planning, community outreach, volunteer coordination, events management and planned giving.

He has worked as a development officer in multiple youth services and education organizations, including St. Paul's Episcopal School in Oakland, Be A Mentor, Inc. and Biotech Partners. He has also worked in family services and for Clausen House, which provides support and services to adults with intellectual disabilities. Most recently, he was the Associate Director of Development for Episcopal Community Services, which serves adults and families experiencing homelessness in San Francisco.

He is a former co-chair of the Oakland Chamber of Commerce NonProfit Roundtable and former associate member of Bay Area Blacks in Philanthropy (BABiP). He currently serves as the President of St. Paul's Endowment Fund, a small church foundation in Oakland, CA and is a member of the Contra Costa Development Professionals Network.

A "cradle Lutheran," Jerry earned his BA from Wittenberg University and an MFA in theater from Columbia University. He was in the first cohort of the Contra Costa-based Institute of Philanthropy, receiving his certification in 2018.

In addition to his dedication to the vulnerable people in our community, Jerry is a Bay Area theater maker with credits in playwriting, directing, acting and solo performance. He plays six musical instruments and is an accomplished static trapeze artist.

"I am honored to serve our Northern California community at LSS," he says. "As a devout Lutheran Christian, I take very much to heart the living out of the faith by taking care of the vulnerable in my community, as directed by our Savior."



■ CEO Corner: Changes, Growth, the Future



Summer has arrived, and I think it is one of the most welcome summers we have greeted in many years. Sometimes it seems like we are coming out of a 15-month winter, and we are—the winter of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even as we start to remove our masks in certain situations and reunite in person with those whom we

have not seen in a long time, I hope we can remember to continue to take care and remember that our own health impacts those around us.

At LSS, we have been fortunate during the pandemic. Our services have carried on as in-person as we could, and when they could not, we made every effort to provide the

people we serve with care and attention via phone and socially distanced conversations. I applaud the superb, dedicated and loving care LSS staff have provided over the past 15 months—from phone calls to food drop-offs to simple check-ins. We continue to secure housing and other essential services to end homelessness. For good.

Now, we look to the future. We welcome our new Development Director Jerry Metzker (see story above). We recently opened two new supportive housing sites (one for seniors and one for families) in San Francisco, we've expanded our youth services in Sacramento, and we've increased our programming for vulnerable seniors. You can experience some of the adventures and incidents on our social media, so please friend us if you haven't already. In the coming months, we will have much more to share.

Thank you for joining us to care for your vulnerable neighbors. Stay tuned for more!

Our Backbone

Spotlight on Case Managers

Case Managers are critical for our participants at LSS of Northern California. They walk alongside each individual and family we serve, guiding each in rebuilding their lives after the trauma of homelessness. They ensure that each person gets the necessary care and support needed for stability and success. They share in the joys and sorrows of these journeys toward healing and self-sufficiency.

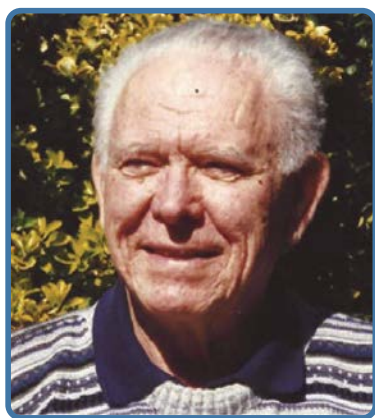
The coronavirus pandemic forced everyone who works at LSS to approach their jobs differently, most significantly our Case Managers. They learned how to deploy technology in new ways that actually increased their interactions with each person. In addition to case management duties, they sourced and delivered to doorsteps extra food, cleaning and paper products and smiles.

Sonya Gul has been a Case Manager with our Sacramento programs since 2003, first with a Housing for People With AIDS (HOPWA) program and then with Building Bridges. She is just one example of how our case managers embraced change during the pandemic to make a difference in the lives of those we serve

As many of those served by LSS have limited access to the internet, relying on cell phones for communication, Sonya found a multitude of ways to use her own cell phone and computer to help those she serves complete essential paperwork and submit required documents while remaining safely housed during the pandemic.

She did this by navigating the byzantine websites of the Social Security Administration, California Employment Development Department (EDD), local utilities and local housing authority on their behalf. For example, she might spend hours on hold with the EDD and then conference in the individuals she is assisting once she reaches a representative. Some clients shared their login information, so she could obtain essential documentation from online accounts, for example acquiring a utility bill and income verification needed to apply for emergency utility assistance. For those with limited literacy or language barriers, she asked them to take a photo with their cell phone of required documents and text those to her. These were used to assist clients in completing housing subsidy re-certifications.

“After all these years Sonya is still passionate about her work, and that passion really shone through during these COVID-19 times,” said Amy Lawrence, LMFT, who is Sonya’s supervisor and herself part of the LSS team since 2000. “She is an example of how LSS Case Managers use their creativity and dedication to truly make a difference.”



Leaving a Legacy

Frederick (F.) Mervin Baker was a man of many interests, including academics, business, faith, family, singing and helping youth. He held degrees in history and sociology, even publishing a book on the connection between the two. He served as adjunct faculty at UC Davis, Sacramento State University and Chapman University. He was a Methodist minister and owned his own business.

Mervin joined Peace Lutheran Church in Grass Valley, CA in 1995, when he married his second wife Patricia. Through this connection, Mervin learned more about LSS and the greater Northern California community LSS serves. He wanted to support this community, so he established a charitable gift annuity with LSS as a beneficiary of the remainder. Mervin died at age 97 in October 2019, and his legacy continues to make a difference in the lives of the vulnerable people that LSS serves.

Thank you, Mervin!

Learn more about how you can leave your own legacy by visiting the LSS of Northern California website (www.lssnorcalgift.org) or contacting Jerry Metzker at jmetzker@lssnorcal.org.

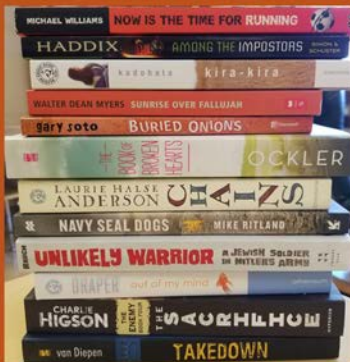


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this summer?*

Check out
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The funds from book sales help to support this vital employment program.

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LSS participants live with food insecurity every day, and with the support of our partners, we are able to provide groceries and meals.

visit us online at www.lssnorcal.org

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