



Volunteers  
of America®

GREATER SACRAMENTO  
& NORTHERN NEVADA



# EVERYDAY GRACE

SPRING 2010

## Preventing homelessness goal of HPRP

Times had been tough before for Kyomi Jones, but when the usually sunny 34-year-old mother of four was laid off from her telemarketing job in November, she admits that she was distraught about her family's future.

"We had just moved to a new apartment in September and were on a month-to-month rental agreement. I managed to pay December, but the month was almost up and I didn't have money for January," Jones said.

It was the closest to homelessness she and her family had ever been.

"I thought me and my kids were all going to be separated," she said, recalling her plan to place children 14-year-old Alexis, 13-year-old Ronald, 6-year-old Kemari and 17-month-old Elijah with family members in the event she lost her home.

Not one to sit by and let bad things happen, she actively looked for assistance.



*Kyomi Jones (right) and her four children, including daughter Alexis (left), found a safety net in the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program. HPRP's success is directly attributable to the ongoing contributions of you and your fellow supporters.*

"I went everywhere – different churches and agencies, and all of them turned me down," she said. "Then a friend told me about Volunteers of America – I was hesitant to even call because I'd been told 'no' so many times before. I thought for sure they'd tell me the same thing."

But to her relief, she heard someone on the other end of the line say, "Yes."

Even before she hung up, Jones had an appointment with a Volunteers of America counselor who would sign her up for the Sacramento County Homeless Prevention

*please see 'HPRP,' page 2*



*Because of you, Tikia Artis and her son are sleeping in safety and comfort.*

## 'I can't believe how caring people can be'

When Tikia Artis' roommate suddenly up and left their shared apartment of eight months, Artis soon fell behind on her bills. With no new roommate to help defray expenses, she couldn't make the rent and was given an eviction notice.

"I just didn't have the money," says Artis, whose mother, her only local relative, recently moved back to their native Virginia. "It was pretty scary, I was afraid that my son and I were going to end up living on the streets."

A referring agency put her in touch with Volunteers of America, and she and her

son, 6-year-old Jeremiah, found sanctuary in the Residential Family Center the same day. "It was a huge relief," she says.

While Volunteers of America's focus is on homeless prevention and rapid re-housing (see article above), short-term, emergency shelters are still necessary for those who suddenly find themselves in need of immediate housing – and it's the generosity of our supporters that make these possible.

Figures cited in the 2008 Sacramento County Children's Report Card, suggest more than 6,200 children experience home-

*please see 'New hope,' page 4*

# HPRP

continued from page 1

and Rapid Re-Housing Program. (*Volunteers of America is among the Sacramento County social-service agencies providing HPRP services.*)

Because of you, Volunteers of America is able to say “Yes” to more people than ever. When our clients, be they seniors in affordable housing or parenting couples at the Residential Family Center, share a sincere “Thank you,” they’re saying “thank you” not only to our staff and volunteers, but to every one of our supporters in California and Nevada.

Jones, like so many clients, is appreciative of the help she received from our HPRP staff.

When she found out she wouldn’t have to wait a month, or even a week to be interviewed for the program, she was ecstatic.

“They were *on it* – they were wonderful,” said Jones, who is still amazed at how quickly her caseworker Robert was able to rescue the family from the brink of homelessness. Soon after her initial meeting, she saw her overdue

utility bills taken care of, and a promise that her rent would be paid beginning Jan. 1.

Created in July 2009, when the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development approved the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency’s funding application, Sacramento County’s Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program was designed to achieve two goals: to create a countywide housing-based intervention system that concentrates on keeping households



**Maria Rojo:**  
*‘You lifted a lot off my shoulders.’*

that are at risk of homelessness in their homes (prevention); and to move families quickly out of homelessness and shelters (rapid re-housing).

For HPRP counselors, the key word is “quickly.”

Like Jones, Maria Rojo and her family were teetering on the brink of homelessness because of an unexpected job loss.

“It was real fast and easy,” the 43-year-old Rojo said of the application process. “I was shocked and surprised at how quickly they came to my rescue. After talking to Volunteers of America, I felt like things were coming together. You lifted a lot off my shoulders.”

Jones is also singing the praises of HPRP, calling it “a godsend.”

There’s never a good time to stare eviction in the face, but it was just days before Christmas, and she could sense her children’s anxiety.

“It would have been terrible,” Jones said.

But thanks to the HPRP safety net, Jones was able to successfully focus on finding a new job (*Jones started work as an in-home care worker in mid-February*).

“I know a lot of people who are doing so bad right now – and it’s hard,” Jones said. “The first thing that I tell these people, is that they need to call Volunteers of America and ask about HPRP – they’re going to find some way to help you.”



*Jones says smiles now come easier to her children, including 6-year-old son Kemari.*



*Robert King is featured in this year’s Shelter from the Storm video presentation, which will premiere at the free fundraising breakfast May 5.*

## Breakfast to offer food for thought

**H**is testimony is powerful and a reminder of who are supporters are working for:

“I had a stepfather that was putting a gun to my head, playing Russian roulette,” shares Robert King, a Volunteers of America graduate who tells of an upbringing of abuse and neglect, in a special video presentation set to debut May 5 at this year’s Shelter from the Storm Fundraising Breakfast.

The free event, which also features in-person testimonials of how you and fellow supporters have helped change the course of our clients’ lives, takes place from 8 to 9 a.m. at the DoubleTree Hotel Sacramento. To RSVP, please call Kim Castaneda at 916.442.3691.

## Turn fond memories into a bright future.

A charitable gift to Volunteers of America in memory of a loved one is a meaningful way that you can pay tribute to someone special and make a difference in the lives of those in need.

To learn more, call us at 916.442.3691, or visit us at [volunteersofamerica-sac.org](http://volunteersofamerica-sac.org).





*Among the devoted core of volunteers who frequently help at the Sacramento Senior Safe House are (from left): Stephanie Sorensen, Lynda Duggan (seated), Peggy Cooper, Teresa Smedley, Ruth Sturgill, Cathy Collins, Carol Wiseman, Dwain Wiseman, Sue Regadanz, Leah Ghods and Patricia Gayman (seated). To volunteer, call Kim Castaneda at 916.442.3691.*



**GREATER SACRAMENTO  
& NORTHERN NEVADA**

## Board of Directors

**Judy McGarry – Chairwoman**  
Compliance Director, *retired*  
County of Sacramento

**Sherman Haggerty – Vice-Chairman**  
President  
Altus Energy Inc.

**Joel Leineke – Treasurer**  
Vice President  
Power Constructors

**Debbie Augustine-Nelson – Secretary**  
President/CEO  
Augustine & Associates

**Steven K. Green – Immediate Past Chair**  
Senior Vice President & Manager  
F&M Bank

**Janice Bowen**  
Television and Video Producer

**Greg Grant**  
Partner, *retired*  
Grand Floor Designs

**Tom Lee**  
Department of Social Services  
State of California

**Leo McFarland**  
President & CEO  
Volunteers of America

**Michael Muljat**  
Vice President  
Cornish & Carey Commercial

**Stan Stancell**  
Department of Finance, *retired*  
State of California

**Joe Stinson**  
Assistant Publisher  
Sacramento Observer

**Rick Wylie**  
President  
Beutler Corporation

# Doing whatever's needed

Sacramento Senior Safe House volunteers help ensure residents are comfortable and cared for

Owners of a convalescent home, Sue Regadanz's parents and grandparents introduced her to the importance of caring for and nurturing seniors in need early on.

"I began working there at a young age," said Regadanz. "Some of our clients were residents for years – they were like family."

Unfortunately, not all senior caregivers – including actual relatives – are providing loving support.

The latest research from the National Center on Elder Abuses estimates that between 1 and 2 million Americans aged 65 or older have been injured, exploited, or mistreated by someone upon whom they depend for care.

"Many children who were once cared for by their parents are now in turn being called upon to take care of their parents," said Kelsey Tokar of the National Crime Prevention Council. "In some cases, this is not the best answer."

Many victims of senior abuse, neglect and/or exploitation suffer in silence and isolation, but Volunteers of America's Sacramento Senior Safe House, which opened late in 2009, now provides those 62 and older with a refuge where they may reestablish their health and independence.

Our volunteers are a key component to the safe-house formula, and men and women like Regadanz have proven to be indispensable in

helping Volunteers of America staff provide the program's high level of care and security.

Some, like the 57-year-old Regadanz, an office manager for CASE Medical group, help with meal preparation. Regadanz's recent dinner menus have included pork tenderloins, baked chicken, meat loaf and chicken pot pie – "Things I remember my grandmother making, and things folks from that generation might enjoy."

Away from the kitchen, she sets her mind on such tasks as washing windows and sweeping.

"I love to cook and clean and garden," said Peggy Cooper, who came to know the safe house early on as the former secretary to Sacramento County Supervisor Roger Dickinson. Cooper, who frequently assists the seniors with researching resources on the Internet, says the volunteers also "do a lot of those mundane, everyday kinds of chores – but every home needs those things done."

"We are so blessed to have the many skills and talents brought to the safe house via our volunteers," said program director Juanita Daniel. "They come from many areas of life experience and all are here because they have compassion and a caring heart for seniors."

"It is very rewarding to help at the safe house," said Ruth Sturgill, another of Daniel's regular volunteers. "These seniors deserve good care and an enjoyable stay while they're waiting for a better, permanent home."

*please see 'Volunteers' page 4*

# New hope

*continued from page 1*

lessness annually in Sacramento County.

The Volunteers of America Residential Family Center, which was dedicated Feb. 23 as part of an open-house event with renovation partners HomeAid Sacramento and Standard Pacific Homes, is there to provide that safety net for parents and their children.

Thanks to donors like you, the center is able to provide food and shelter, as well as such essential services as transportation to and from school for the children staying there, and job and housing referrals that will help their parents establish permanent housing and leave the shelter system behind.

It's a worrisome situation for anyone, but homelessness is especially disconcerting for children. Artis says she tries to keep the realities of their situation as far away from her son as possible. "He still doesn't understand what's going on," she says. "Your loving staff, volunteers and donors have made a big difference to us. I can't believe how caring people can be."

Having recently completed her GED, Artis is currently studying for U.S. Army entrance exams and plans on joining a medevac unit. She says her son will be staying with her mother while she's in training.

Artis' story underscores the importance



*HomeAid Sacramento board members Jon Nicholson, Mark Eglington and Kerrin West joined Volunteers of America President/CEO Leo McFarland (with scissors) for a Feb. 23 dedication event.*



*Also recognized for their contributions to the recent Residential Family Center renovation were Sofia Lacin and Hennessy Christophel, of Lacin/Christophel Mural & Design.*

of what you can do to positively effect change in people's lives – thank you!

*For information on current center needs*

*and projects, including our KaBoom! playscape campaign, go to [volunteersofamerica-sac.org](http://volunteersofamerica-sac.org) or call Kim at 916.442.3691. ♡*

# Volunteers

*continued from page 3*

Providing "good care" and a pleasant stay is foremost on the mind of safe house volunteers, who are only accepted after a thorough screening process, including an interview with Daniel, training sessions, and a criminal background check.

Those that become safe house volunteers

are invariably the most compassionate, considerate, patient and giving of our volunteer work force – ready to cook, clean or just offer a friendly ear.

"It's very interesting to listen to them tell the stories of their lives," said Sturgill.

Cooper agrees: "I have not had any trouble loving the people we've had here. I have met so many nice people."

As convivial as communing with safe house

guests can be, the reality of why they're at the safe house can cause volunteers to take pause.

"It's been saddening to learn of some of the situations these people are coming from," said Regadanz. "It's been frightening for them, so it's good they can come here and, in short order, begin to feel comfortable. It's a great thing."

As Cooper says, "It's the little things you can do for them that can make the world of difference." ♡



**Volunteers  
of America®**

**GREATER SACRAMENTO  
& NORTHERN NEVADA**

1900 Point West Way, Suite 270  
Sacramento, CA 95815  
(916) 442-3691 | [info@voa-sac.org](mailto:info@voa-sac.org)  
[www.volunteersofamerica-sac.org](http://www.volunteersofamerica-sac.org)  
[www.volunteersofamerica-nv.org](http://www.volunteersofamerica-nv.org)  
[www.facebook.com/voasac](http://www.facebook.com/voasac)

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Sacramento, CA  
Permit No. 1932