

The Trust News

skid row housing trust [Homes. Support. Success.]



In the Abbey: Theresa Winkler

Meet Theresa Winkler. She is 47 years old and has experienced chronic homelessness and life as a prostitute, drug addict and alcoholic.

Today she has 5½ years of sobriety, a loving fiancé (pictured above with Theresa) and a deep community of family. Theresa is a resident of the Abbey Apartments and has called the Trust 'home' for more than 5 years.

"I was supposed to be a statistic. I was supposed to be found [dead] under a bush, with a pipe in my mouth and a needle in my arm," she says with a cheeky grin.

Let's start at the beginning. Theresa was born in 1964 and raised in a Chicago suburb. She had two brothers and a sister. Her mother did secretarial work and her father was a fire fighter. She says she had a relatively normal childhood – until the age of 12.

In 1976, a member of Theresa's family sexually molested her. She was too afraid to say anything at the time. Scared and isolated, the abuse continued until Theresa finally broke down and found the strength to tell her parents. Unfortunately, her parents did not believe her. They called her a liar.

"I was so mad, and I felt so betrayed."

After a short stay in a foster home, she ran away from foster care and her biological family.

"I tried to get as far away from people as I could."

She didn't get far though. Theresa had only made it to downtown Chicago. It was there that she hooked up with a pimp. It was a meeting that would shape the next 30 years of her life. Still only 12 years old, Theresa began working as a prostitute. This quickly led to drug use and alcoholism.

"I never felt I was worthy of anything better."

During this time, Theresa was arrested between 35-40 times for drug possession, prostitution and being under the influence.

She had heard that the money in Los Angeles was good, so she headed west. She laughs when explaining how she got to LA by going "a little bit here, a little bit there."

Once in Los Angeles, she made the Sunset strip her home. "Sunset was real good at the

time." That's not to say that she was living a responsible life that she was proud of, in fact her downward spiral only continued.

In July of 2006, Theresa woke up in a hazy fog. She was homeless and had been living under a remotely concealed bush off of James M. Woods Blvd.

"I woke up. I didn't have anybody around me. I had no teeth in my mouth. I weighed 98 pounds and I was angry." She pauses a moment, then says, "Because I wanted to know 'where were all the friends I had when I made a lot of money?' I was angry, I was hurt, I felt betrayed and I was lonely. I ended up going on the street to make some money and got arrested."

That arrest saved Theresa's life.

"I remember lying in my cell, and closing my eyes and saying 'Oh Jesus, please take the taste and need and desire [for drugs] off my tongue.'" She sighed, "and I have not used or wanted to use since that night."

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Ending Homelessness One Home at a Time

In the first 10 months of 2011, **323** homeless men and women moved into a home provided by Skid Row Housing Trust. This December more than 80% of these individuals will experience their first holidays in their new homes.

129 of these men and women were experiencing chronic homelessness before moving into a home provided by the Trust. In collaboration with the United Way and Chamber of Commerce's Home For Good plan, the Trust is committed to contributing to ending chronic homelessness in Los Angeles by 2016.

In addition to the 323 men and women who moved in during 2011, another **1,372** formerly homeless men and women continued to live in homes provided by Skid Row Housing Trust.

Executive Director's Corner



Dear Friends and Supporters,

One of our most cherished partners recently bestowed a very special honor on the Trust. Our friends at the California Community Foundation named the Trust as an *Unsung Hero of Los Angeles*. The Foundation awarded the Trust with the Joan Palevsky Award in Housing and Neighborhoods, an award that has only been awarded to an organization once before. I have been at this work long enough to know that this award is really recognizing the true heroes of our work: our residents, staff, board of directors and volunteers who work in partnership to build community and solve homelessness.

We increasingly see our work as just that: a partnership. We respect the individuality, insight and wisdom of each member of that partnership. We recognize that the causes of homelessness are complex, but the solution is as simple as a home and a community. The trick is to allow each individual to create the home and community that best allows them to build a rich and meaningful life. For staff and volunteers, we also seek to provide opportunities for each member of our team to contribute to creating community in a way that is most meaningful for them.

We are often recognized for the groundbreaking design employed in our developments, but that design is simply the reflection of our belief that each person and place is unique. Cookie-cutter responses to the challenges our residents face are no more tolerated than cookie-cutter responses to building design. Partnership requires approaching each individual and opportunity with a

willingness to listen and hear something new. The California Community Foundation's Unsung Hero Award was meaningful for us because it recognized the Trust as an organization that does not just do good work, but is actually transforming the fabric of our city in the process. We believe that it is the quality of the relationships between residents, community, volunteers, board and staff that are the secret ingredient to our success.

As the holidays draw near, we are reminded of the importance of family and that we all belong to multiple families. Our community is a family, our workplace is a family, our children's school is a family, our religious faith is a family and our city is a family. We can contribute to strengthening the relationships in each of these circles. We can build partnerships with others in each of these groups. We can listen, be heard, and change our attitudes and actions based on being in community with those around us.

This holiday season we invite you to be inspired, as we have, by the simple concept behind the Trust's community suppers – dialoguing with people whom you may not normally. We invite you to see someone whom you might not have seen before, as family. We invite you to take the time to get

to know the people around you, to share who you are and listen to who they are. We believe that creating the communities and families we wish to be a part of begins with the simple act of really sharing who we are and hearing who others are. We hope that this simple idea provides some inspiration for you this holiday season.

Wishing you very happy holidays,

Mike Alvidrez

The Board Corner

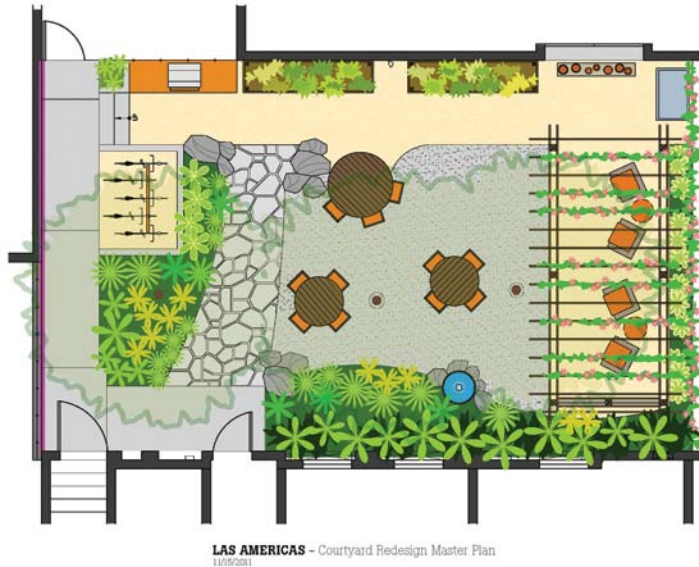
Skid Row Housing Trust is governed by an active and very committed Board of Directors. Our Board currently has 12 members, each of whom serves on one or more committees.

We are a working Board, and we have tried to draw on our members for both their commitment to our mission and their particular skill sets, which include expertise in social services, healthcare, law, accounting, real estate development, affordable housing, fundraising and public relations.

Our committees, each of which works with an executive staff member, include Supportive Housing Operations, Housing Development, Audit, Finance, Fund Development, Nominating and Governance and an Executive Committee. Our next newsletter will profile our newest Board members, Jennifer Caspar, Cheryl Hayward and Vanessa Rodriguez. We are thrilled to have these three new dynamic additions to our board family and look forward to all of our partners and supporters getting to know them.

Marc Hayutin, *Board Chair*

Development Corner



Residents of the Las Americas collaborated with landscape architect Allen Compton for three months to develop the design for a new and improved Las Americas courtyard. The courtyard, which will be dedicated to the Trust's founders, will be built in 2012 and will be a collaboration with Ur-Bin Garden Network

In Development

Work continues on the **Las Americas** green retrofit. The first phase of the retrofit is complete – including a new 95% efficiency condensing hot water boiler and low-flow faucets and toilets. Gas bills are already a third of what they were 6 months ago. The second phase of the retrofit will begin in 2012 and include additional energy efficient upgrades such as rooftop solar panels. The green retrofit is made possible by funding from the City of Los Angeles Housing Department and Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles.

To compliment the green retrofit, the Trust has engaged Allen Compton of SALT Landscape Architects (s-a-l-t.com) to redesign the Las Americas' Courtyard. Allen is working closely with residents to create a space that is both green and enhances the quality of life for residents. The redesigned courtyard will be dedicated to the Trust's founders whose vision to turn dilapidated, at-risk properties into well built and well run homes for the community continues to guide the Trust today. The living features of the courtyard will be installed by residents and the community in collaboration with Ur-Bin Garden Network.

The **New Genesis Apartments** has topped out! The sixth and final story has been constructed. At press time, the construction stands at 73% Construction Completion with a projected opening in May 2012. The New Genesis Apartments are designed by Killefer Flammang Architects (kfarchitects.com) with interiors by Collaborative House (collaborativehouse.com). The bottom floor retail spaces are designed by Lorcan O'Herlihy Architects (loharchitects.com). LoHa Architects also designed the Trust's **Annex**, which recently opened and houses the Trust's property management company.

In Construction

The Trust's **Star Apartments** will officially begin construction this month. The Michael Maltzan (mmaltzan.com) designed building is projected to be completed and ready for move-in in 2014.

Contributors Corner

Helping others put the pieces of their lives back together starts here...

5 Ways to Make a Difference

1. Give

Make a contribution to help provide vital supportive services that help residents succeed. Sign up for matching gifts at your workplace and consider the Trust in your estate plan.

2. Sponsor a Holiday Meal

Each of our 22 buildings hosts holiday community dinners for residents. You can sponsor a holiday dinner for 20-40 at any of the buildings by providing the turkey and all the fixings. Contact Renee@skidrow.org to learn more.

3. Tour

Take a tour and see what the Trust does, first hand. Tours are held monthly on the first Wednesday and the third Tuesday. For info on tours, email Patryk@skidrow.org.

4. Build Welcome Home Kits



Welcome Home Kits make starting over easier. You can help by building a welcome home kit or a mini-kit.

5. Volunteer

Register to become a Trust volunteer. Be first on our list to take action when volunteer opportunities emerge. Visit skidrow.org to complete a volunteer profile and be added to our database of willing volunteers.



Despite the lack of a supportive biological family, Theresa has built a family that she is proud and grateful to be a member of today. Her church, her recovery family, her friends and neighbors at the Abbey and surrounding community and her fiancé Will, make up the most fulfilling family that she could want.

"I love my life today. I am a very blessed woman."

The next morning, after sleeping on that same bench, Steve began his journey to San Diego. (He mistakenly believed the city was a few miles away when in fact it was 200+ miles away) He made it as far as Camp Pendleton before realizing what he had gotten himself into. At that point he turned around and headed back toward Los Angeles, ending up at Hollenbeck Park, in East Los Angeles.

It was here that Steve would stay for several days – before hunger, depression and outright desperation led him to believe that he had nothing left to live for. He attempted suicide by taking all of his blood pressure medication.

He had hoped to fall into a deep sleep and not wake up, but instead he just fell – and hit his head. The fall he experienced attracted enough attention to land him in the psych ward at White Memorial Hospital for 30 days.

While in the hospital, he was referred to LAMP Community for services. He learned about Skid Row Housing Trust and the Pershing Hotel there. Steve made his home with the Pershing Hotel for 10 years. During his tenure at the Pershing, lifelong bad eyesight worsened into legal blindness. His disability made it difficult to live in a single room occupancy apartment. He was granted a health-related reasonable accommodation and was able to move into a studio apartment at the Trust's Abbey Apartments. "I don't know how I would have survived the ordeal of losing my eyesight and applying for disability insurance if I had not had a home with the Trust," he shares.

Despite his disability and limited financial means, Steve is thriving today. He has become a very active participant in the community. He is a Resident Ambassador and speaks frequently to student groups and tour attendees about his experiences. He is a talented, eloquent speaker and makes it easy for his audiences to understand the complexity of homelessness. He also volunteers to help others through opportunities like the Dish Depot. (Steve and Theresa were both volunteers at the Dish Depot).

Today Steve can also proudly share about his relationship with his biological family, from whom he was estranged when he did not have a home. Steve speaks with his mother in Oklahoma every week and is grateful for her love and support.

Most importantly though, Steve is able to live independently because of the support he has at the Abbey from family, friends, neighbors, Skid Row Housing Trust and his community.

Continued from page 1.

As part of her probation after her release, Theresa had to go to the Union Rescue Mission.

They assisted her in getting her birth certificate and social security card. They also helped steer her to Skid Row Housing Trust. Within a few months, Theresa was moving in to the Trust's Simone Hotel Apartments.

Things were going as well as one could hope for – until she nearly lost her nose in a random attack.

"The guy just snapped! It had nothing to do with me." Fortunately Theresa's support system was in place and she had the personal and professional support she needed to recover from the attack and not turn to old vices to numb her fear and pain.

Theresa was able to transfer over to the Trust's Abbey Apartments when the Abbey opened because of her disabling seizure condition. She has been plagued by seizures for most of her life and unable to work as a result.

Theresa is a different woman today.

"Back then, I did what I needed to do to survive. Now I do what I need to do to live!"

She is in a committed and loving relationship with her fiancé Will. She meditates daily and is a proud part of The Jonah Project. She was even baptized on San Julian Street in 2008. Her faith is very much a part of who she has become.

"God has a plan for me."

She regularly attends church, recovery meetings, AA, CA & NA fellowships, and is one of the more prolific members of the Trust's Resident Ambassador Program. She is also a very active community volunteer.

Spin the Can

The Abbey is also home to another of the Trust's Resident Ambassadors.

Meet Steve Hatter. In our summer newsletter, he described himself as "A witty, devastatingly handsome blind dude with a nifty sense of humor." He says this with a tongue-in-cheek levity that warms up audiences as he educates those around him about a very serious topic – homelessness

Steve is 52 years old and a transplant to Los Angeles. He was born and raised in Oklahoma City. It is simply by chance that he ended up in California. It was about 11 years ago when Steve realized his life was going nowhere. He was living in a homeless shelter in Oklahoma City and meeting other men who had lived there for years. Despite having recently turned 40, he felt that his life was going nowhere. To fix this he took a desperate measure – he spun a Diet Coke can to figure out where he should go. The can pointed west. To be sure though, he spun it a second time. And again, it pointed westward.

The stars had aligned for Steve though. You see, he had decided to hitchhike to San Diego and the very first person to stop and offer him a lift just happened to be going all the way to Southern California – Fountain Valley, to be exact.

Steve spent his first west coast evening at Huntington Beach, on a bench, with his toes touching the sand, watching the sun as it set over the ocean – for the first time.

Policy Corner: Quantifying Cost and Value



The Trust's New Genesis Apartments are currently under construction at 456 S. Main Street in downtown's Historic Core.

Funding for affordable housing in California is driven by the state's Tax Credit Allocation Committee (TCAC). Low-Income Housing Tax Credits are the largest source of equity in affordable housing in California, and account for approximately 50% of the funds for the Trust's new developments. As a result, when TCAC raises an issue all affordable housing ears listen.

Recently the Tax Credit Allocation Committee held a hearing to investigate if the costs to build affordable housing could be reduced. The state housing agencies have joined forces to conduct a cost-containment study. In times of shrinking resources it makes sense to use dollars smartly and ensure that every penny delivers maximum value.

Affordable housing finance is nightmarishly complex with endless regulations ensuring that funds not only produce new homes, but that the homes have ample reserves in case a building system fails, reduce energy consumption, generate jobs that pay union wages, are affordable to those in the lowest income brackets, encourage public transit usage, are located near neighborhood amenities and on and on. For those of us who produce affordable housing, we can be prone to griping about the never ending list of policy goals we are asked to achieve, but is all this a bad thing?

The fact is, affordable housing cannot

simply be about throwing up four walls and a roof because our job is much more than that. The term "affordable housing developers" itself is probably outdated, and does not speak well to our past or to our future. Community-based housing development is rooted in the belief that the homes we create can be catalytic for the community and help us define the society that we wish to be part of.

While market-rate housing developers may focus on maximizing profit over a five or ten year period, the Trust must look at how the homes we produce will contribute to the community for 55 years or more. Each home is protected by a covenant that ensures that an affordable home remain on the property in question for a minimum of 55 years. We have to be forward looking; thinking about how design, quality, energy use, residential preferences and transportation patterns will hold up over decades to come. But beyond the nuts and bolts of creating homes, our developments also have to speak to our values as a society.

Do we seek to hide those who can not afford better, in fortresses separate from the

rest of the community? (One of the common complaints about large, urban public housing developments) Or, provide homes that encourage community integration and personal forward momentum? Should affordable housing look like everything on the block? Or, be aspirational? Should the homes we provide be place-makers? Provide community amenities? Fuel creative and inclusive communities?

We, at the Trust, believe that in this era of shrinking resources we should be working to increase the value created by the homes we produce. As a community-based organization, our bottom-line is not simply a financial one. Our bottom-line is the value we deliver back to the community for ever dollar we are the steward of. We support TCAC's desire to maximize the effectiveness of every penny invested in affordable housing, but see the need to also ensure that we maximize value at the same time. The future of the communities we serve demands that we not simply look at that value the day a home opens, but what that value will also be in 25 or 50 years.



Join Skid Row Housing Trust and Blu Dot Furniture for

**Good Design Doing Good
A Cross-Disciplinary Discussion
of Community-Driven Design**

Thursday, December 8th, 7 pm

Blu Dot LA

8000 Melrose Avenue

Los Angeles, CA

RSVP at LaStore@BluDot.com

or 213.683.0522x159

Inside



Only 5 miles separates the Abbey Apartments from the world-famous Hollywood sign. The proximity of these two different worlds makes sense though, since many of the stories that come from the Abbey seem worthy of a screenwriting credit. Sadly, these stories are not fiction, but the true-life experiences of real people. You are going to meet two of them inside.

See page 1.

Skid Row Housing Trust's philosophy is simple:

Homes + Support = Success

The Trust solves homelessness by developing, managing and maintaining permanent supportive housing.

The Trust provides **HOMES** for the most vulnerable homeless men and women on the streets.

The Trust ensures that our residents have access to the critical **SUPPORT** services needed to achieve stability, good health, and dignity.

The Trust ensures **SUCCESS** by reducing homelessness through opportunity for our residents and better neighborhoods for our communities.

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Skid Row Housing Trust

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