



# Mental Health Association

OF SAN MATEO COUNTY

*Empowering People to Create Their Best Life*

## JEREME – FROM HOMELESS TO HOME

Success is measured in many ways. For some, it is finding a place to be safe for one night, for others it means having an “always home.” People are different and even though what brings people to Spring Street Shelter is the same, we try to treat everyone as an individual with their own story and their own needs.

Jereme arrived at Spring Street Shelter, feeling the



*Jereme*

physical and emotional stress of homelessness. “I came to Spring Street Shelter from a campsite outdoors in Brisbane. I now can joke that when I arrived I looked like the Wolf man. Coming from a solitary and transient lifestyle I appreciate the Shelter providing a clean and safe roof over my head. I have made friends, I can manage my medications and I have fewer voices in

my head. Today is definitely better than my yesterday. With staff’s help I have located an apartment and have moved into my own place. Thanks to everyone, I know that tomorrow looks even better for me.” MHA will continue to provide services to Jereme and we look forward to his settling into his new life and creating a home for himself. We will continue to be there when he needs us. ☺

## SPRING STREET SHELTER

This year our Spring Street Shelter celebrates its 30th year of operation. As the first emergency shelter designed to provide a safe shelter, with staff, food and other critical basic needs to individuals who were homeless and living with mental illness, and other chronic health conditions, Spring Street has been an extraordinary service to the San Mateo County Community. Since opening, more than 3,000 unduplicated individuals have been able to leave the streets and move into safe, decent housing with support.

One such story is Wanda who came to the Shelter in 1990 from the Poplar Street on-ramp in San Mateo where she was

living in the bushes with her shopping cart. She declined medications which meant that her voices were always present. She was often disruptive, talking and yelling at these voices. While at the Shelter, she was hard to engage and after a few weeks she returned to the streets. When it started to rain, she returned to Spring Street, but again could only tolerate people for a few more weeks. This pattern persisted for close to a year. During this time MHA had purchased and rehabilitated a house adjacent to the Shelter and staff were laser-focused trying to engage Wanda to consider moving into this new setting and potentially trying out a small dosage of medications. After much

coaxing and coaching, and when she knew us well enough to trust, she agreed to both and in 1992 she moved into her own room in a house shared with four others, Hurlingame House. Staff, meals and services were available next door at the Shelter. Between 1992 and 2002 Wanda settled into a new life and we learned that in her previous life she had been married, taught elementary school in Daly City and had a daughter from whom she had been separated since Wanda became ill. Once settled in housing, Wanda found coping mechanisms for dealing with her voices, and fought and won a battle with cancer. In 2000 she received a card from her now grown daughter who

began to re-engage with her, much to everyone’s surprise. In 2001 Wanda’s daughter invited her to visit her new family, husband and child, in Florida for a week. After several similar visits, in 2002 her daughter invited Wanda to come and live with her family in Florida where she remained. As a result of Spring Street Shelter, Wanda was able to create a new life, her daughter got her mother back and Wanda was able to live out her life as someone’s grandmother. These are all things we may take for granted, but Wanda had to work extremely hard to accomplish and Spring Street Shelter offered her the first step on that journey. We are all very proud. ☺



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## Other Stories on MHA Website

[mhasmc.org](http://mhasmc.org)

- › MHA Operation Reindeer
- › Program Information and Referral Forms
- › Upcoming Events

### MHA'S MISSION

The Mental Health Association of San Mateo County (MHA), a nonprofit organization, enriches quality of life, restores dignity, and reduces homelessness, particularly for those affected by mental illness and HIV/AIDS. MHA strengthens hope by providing shelter, support and opportunities for socialization.

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