

Connections

UNDER ONE SKY

A NEWSLETTER FROM SAFE SPACE CHICO

OCTOBER 2026 | VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1 COMMUNITY, OPPORTUNITY, REFUGE, AND EMPATHY

Dear Chico: 150 Days of Connection



Larry Graff's decision to adopt Chico as his hometown came down to one important factor: family. With both of his adult children already residing in Butte County, Safe Space Chico offered both a personal homecoming and a new professional chapter.

Now, as the organization prepares for winter, the Executive Director is reflecting on the community, from the hundreds of neighbors served during a demanding summer to the partnerships essential to meeting the challenges ahead. In his inaugural letter, Graff introduces himself to Chico and extends an invitation to help build the kind of community where everyone has a place to belong.



During the 2025–2026 season, we provided 3,135 nights of shelter, offering warmth, meals, and the safest place to sleep while the temperatures cratered, falling close to freezing. Area churches opened their doors while volunteers worked together to bring those spaces to life. Read on to learn how you make our impact possible.

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WELCOME WAGON

CARLOS ALVAREZ
PROGRAM COORDINATOR

RACHAEL K. YOUNG-RENI
LCSW/ECM CLINICIAN

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

Safe Space Chico Attends North State Housing Summit



Board members and staff attended the second annual North State Housing Summit Sept. 25.

Staff Celebrates Good Neighbor Day



Program Coordinator Kayla Ealy is all smiles during National Good Neighbor Day clean-up Sept. 28.

DEAR CHICO: 150 DAYS OF CONNECTION



BY LARRY GRAFF | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When I arrived at Safe Space about 150 days ago, I knew I was joining an organization with an important mission. What I have come to understand even more deeply is that Safe Space is part of something larger: a community of people, organizations, churches, volunteers, businesses, and neighbors who believe everyone deserves dignity, compassion, and a place to belong.

For me, Chico is personal. My son and daughter, as well as their mother, live here. Being closer to family was an important part of what brought me to this community. This year also marked another wonderful milestone in my life: I got married in Oroville. So while I may be relatively new to the community, my roots here are already becoming very real.

My first 150 days at Safe Space have been busy and incredibly rewarding. One of the accomplishments I am most proud of is our Cooling Center. When temperatures climbed this summer, Safe Space responded. Beginning June 28, our staff, volunteers, churches, community partners, and supporters came together to provide more than 350 of our unhoused neighbors with a safe place to escape dangerous heat, along with water, food, connection, and support.

"the Cooling Center represented something more than a building. . .it demonstrates what can happen when Chico unites for the common good"

That spirit of connection is what I hope we continue to build. Being unhoused is not an issue that belongs to one organization, one neighborhood, or one part of our community. Addressing it requires all of us, across every part of our community, working together.

DEAR CHICO: 150 DAYS OF CONNECTION

"We may come to the impacts of being unhoused from different perspectives, but we share the same neighborhoods. . .and all have hopes for our community and dreams we want to achieve."

That is also why the idea behind this newsletter is so meaningful to me. *Connections Under One Sky*. Regardless of whether we sleep in a house, an apartment, a shelter, a vehicle, or outside, we are all part of the same Chico community.

As we prepare for the winter shelter season, I am looking beyond these first 150 days. Our goal is not simply to strengthen Safe Space. It is to strengthen the connections between Safe Space and the community we serve.

There are many ways to be part of that work. Financial donations help us provide immediate refuge and support when our neighbors need it most, while donated supplies help keep our shelter stocked with hie everyday essentials our guests rely on. Volunteers make this work possible, too, from serving meals and supporting shelter operations to helping behind the scenes.

You can donate, view our current needs, or learn about volunteer opportunities through our website at SafeSpaceChico.org. Donations and items needed can also be brought directly to Safe Space. Every contribution, whether it is time, funding, a meal, or needed supplies, helps us continue showing up for our community.

We are one Chico under one sky. Let's find solutions together.



COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

Safe Space Attends Career Expo



ECM Care Coordinator Tiffany Humphreys at Butte College's Social Sciences & Communications Career Expo, Oct. 7.

An Afternoon with Policy Expert Barbara Poppe



Key staff joined a Zoom discussion with the architect of the first federal homelessness strategy Oct. 15.

Under One Sky,

Our Future is Bright



Homelessness is a public health issue, with many of the consequences extending throughout our entire community. Displacement without adequate shelter options threatens to further entrench the crisis.

While city leaders debate how to proceed in the months ahead, the need to protect people living outdoors is immediate. Currently, our agency plans to open Winter Shelter by Dec. 1, sustaining nightly operations through the final week of February. We still urgently need host sites, shift volunteers, and meal providers to make this ambitious plan possible.

Those partnerships turn empty buildings into places of refuge, donated ingredients into gourmet meals rich in nourishment, and volunteer hours into true community.

SIX WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

SIGN UP
sugeni.us/ewsT

VISIT OUR SITE
www.safespacechico.org

FOLLOW OUR SOCIALS
Facebook.com/chicosafespace
Instagram.com/safespace_chico

STOP BY OUR OFFICE
1909 Esplanade
10 a.m. - 4 p.m. (M-F)

EMAIL US
info@safespacechico.org

SCAN
To connect

Join Our Winter Shelter Crew

WHICH ROLE IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

LAUNDRY
Wash and prepare shelter bedding weekly.

INTAKE
Coordinate guests' registration each night of service.

PROPERTY
Check guests items into storage for safekeeping.

MEAL PROVIDERS
Prepare and serve a warm dinner to shelter guests.

MOVE IN
Prepare each new host location for shelter operation.

MOVE OUT
Transition shelter operations to the next location.

MORNING
Assist guests with transitional into daytime activities.

EVENING
Assist in opening the shelter for service and evening activities.

DONATIONS
Collect, sort, wind collecta donated supplies.

BY THE NUMBERS

3%
OF SHELTERS ACCEPT PETS

25%
OF UNHOUSED FOLKS OWN PETS

36%
CITE EXTREME WEATHER AS A PET SAFETY CONCERN

64%
VALUE SAFETY IN PET OWNERSHIP

MISSY & ANGEL: STILL TOGETHER

A SAFE PLACE SHOULD HAVE ROOM FOR BOTH



In March, Missy and Angel moved into a permanent home with their owner. Together, they represent one of the successful transitions into stable housing that our organization has facilitated so far in the last year. As *Lilo & Stitch* remind us, "Ohana means family. Family means no one gets left behind or forgotten."

Yet being forced to choose between a pet and a roof is a common dilemma. 48 percent of unsheltered pet owners surveyed in Los Angeles reported being turned away from area shelters due to restrictions on pets. These are not people refusing help; they are being asked to choose between safety and family. Losing housing should not automatically mean also losing loved ones.

Our organization believes in meeting people where they are. Missy, Angel, and their owner stayed together, eventually finding the right home for their family. **That's the ending we want for every guest we serve.**

A FOND FAREWELL

Some people leave their mark through their work, others through the way they make people feel. After years as a valued member of our staff, outgoing Street Outreach Coordinator David Gaskill has done both. His quick wit, playful spirit, and genuine empathy have brightened even the hardest days. We're grateful for all you've given, David, and look forward to the news of your impact abroad!



WHEN HOME ISN'T SAFE

OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH



A locked bank account. A ruined credit history. A lease in someone else's name. Domestic violence can strip survivors of the very resources that they need to escape. Leaving means walking away without savings, reliable transportation, or even access to their own identification. It is the beginning of homelessness.

Research has found that approximately one in five women experiencing homelessness in California left prior housing to escape violence in the home.

"A 2025 California needs assessment found that 28 percent of survivors surveyed had been denied housing because of their experiences with domestic violence."

Tragically, barriers persist, even when the violence ends. Many survivors have spent years being denied access to shared resources and escaping the relationship means the beginning of homelessness. Among survivors surveyed, 95 percent identified housing costs as a barrier while 61 percent cited poor credit or eviction histories, often consequences of the abuse itself.

Organizations like Catalyst can help survivors bridge the gap between immediate safety and lasting housing stability through shelter, advocacy, and support.

SUCCESS STORY



We're celebrating another guest who received the keys to an affordable home. That's 58 people who have made the transition from homelessness into housing with our help in just one year.

58 new beginnings, each with a front door to call their own.

