

HOMELESS PRENATAL PROGRAM

MISSION

In partnership with our families, break the cycle of childhood poverty.

SERVING 3,500 FAMILIES A YEAR

HPP PROMOTES HEALTHFUL LIVING IN FAMILIES WITH FOUR MAJOR GOALS:

HEALTHY BABIES

Perinatal services to promote healthy pregnancies, births and bonding.

NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS

Services designed to strengthen families and promote protective factors.

SAFE, STABLE HOUSING

Housing support including education, resources and limited rental assistance.

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Job training, financial education and other resources to encourage family stability and self-sufficiency.

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- Case Management
- Prenatal & Postpartum Support
- Housing Assistance
- Parenting Support
- Mental Health Therapy
- Fatherhood Services
- Child Welfare Support
- Emergency Services
- Substance Use Services
- Child Development Services
- Domestic Violence Services

PARTNERS

- Child Trauma Research Program
- BALANCE Financial Fitness
- Five Keys Charter School
- Project Legal Link
- SF/Marin Food Bank
- New Generations Health Center

REVENUES & SUPPORT



EXPENSES



CLIENT SERVICES

Daily drop-in (or phone/email) support, crisis management, emergency services (including food, clothes, diapers, hotel vouchers) and referral services.

HOUSING ASSISTANCE

Helps homeless and low-income families secure and maintain stable housing. Program services include housing search and placement, financial assistance with move-in costs, lifting barriers to obtaining housing, budget counseling and short-term rental subsidies.

FAMILY SUPPORT

Trauma-informed support for families with complex needs such as high-risk pregnancies, involvement with child welfare and/or substance use disorders, domestic violence, mental health needs, complex challenges to housing and/or a variety of factors that require more intentional and long-term support.

JELANI HOUSE

Transitional living facility for homeless pregnant and postpartum women located in the Bayview District. Residents receive 24-hour support and assistance with permanent housing.

WELLNESS CENTER

Activities that encourage a healthful transition from pregnancy to parenting by offering a holistic and integrated array of services designed to help women deliver healthy babies, encourage mother/child bonding and acquire parenting skills that promote positive child development, including prenatal classes, group prenatal care, alternative health services (e.g., prenatal yoga classes, acupuncture, doula support), postpartum support, lactation consulting and family planning counseling.

MENTAL HEALTH & PARENTING SERVICES

Onsite individual, couples, family and group therapy to HPP clients, as well as parenting classes, fatherhood services and children's playgroups.

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER (CHW) APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

A 16-month, paid, accredited job training program with an apprenticeship credential that prepares former clients and women from the community for careers in community health.



BECOME A DONOR

Contributions from individuals directly support HPP's services where the need is greatest. Make a one-time gift or join our monthly giving program, Invest in a Family. To make a contribution, visit www.homelessprenatal.org or contact Kristin Hatch at kristinhatch@homelessprenatal.org.

HPP also accepts donations of diapers and formula.

BECOME A VOLUNTEER

HPP has a vibrant volunteer corps and a diversity of volunteer needs. Join the HPP family today and give back to your community!



HOMELESSPRENATAL.ORG

2500 18TH STREET
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94110

415.546.6756

@HPP_SF

KQED

FORUM
WITH MINA KIM & ALEXIS MADRIGAL



A Generational Approach to Combating Poverty and Homelessness

MAY 23, 2023



ALEXIS MADRIGAL
FORUM HOST



SHELLENA ESKRIDGE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



MARTHA RYAN
FOUNDER



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TO LISTEN**



"We have an opportunity to mold, to shape, to provide the interventions, to provide the early education to make sure that this child meets all the milestones and to provide support for the mother... And we've done it." -Shellena Eskridge

San Francisco Chronicle

www.sfchronicle.com

FEBRUARY 24, 2020

SF opens Bayview housing to serve pregnant homeless women

Anna Bauman

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER
LOCAL BAY AREA & STATE

A new shelter opening this week will serve some of San Francisco's most vulnerable residents: pregnant homeless women.

City officials announced Monday the opening of Jelani House, a transitional housing program for both pregnant women and new mothers experiencing homelessness. Full-time staff will offer health, parenting and financial classes along with housing assistance with the aim of boosting the women and their children into permanent housing and a better future. In doing so, officials hope the shelter will also help break the cycle of intergenerational homelessness.

The program is the first of its kind in San Francisco.

"No pregnant woman should have to sleep in a car and no baby should ever have to sleep in a tent," said Martha Ryan, executive director of Homeless Prenatal Program, a nonprofit that will run Jelani House. "And no mother should have to go it alone."

Three women — all pregnant or recent mothers under the age of 25 — are scheduled to move in Tuesday to the spacious, sun-splashed building that sits on the corner of a residential street in the Bayview district. Three more will join each week until the house reaches its capacity of 17 mothers or mothers-to-be. The women were chosen through the city's coordinated entry system, which includes access points throughout the city to funnel residents into the city's homeless services.

Standing in a pale-green room decorated with



Jelani House, Bayview District

couches and shelves stocked with parenting books, Mayor London Breed called Jelani House a "game-changer" for the city.

"I am so excited for the mothers that I know are going to be the first people to live in this incredible space," Breed said. "I know what it means, not only for them, but what it means for their unborn child or other children to have a clean, nice place with beautiful furniture ... and the wrap-around love that they will get."

Jelani House will be able to house pregnant and postpartum mothers for stays of up to a year. The Homeless Prenatal Program, a community nonprofit that Ryan founded in 1989, will provide 24-hour support and coordinate services like case management, health and prenatal education, individual and group therapy, and classes on finances, parenting and cooking.

"We believe that it's important to value people by providing them with ... what we would like to have for ourselves," Ryan said. "When people feel like

they're being valued, it's so much easier for them to put one foot in front of another."

Women at Jelani House will meet one-on-one with a "housing specialist" during their stays to facilitate a move into permanent housing.

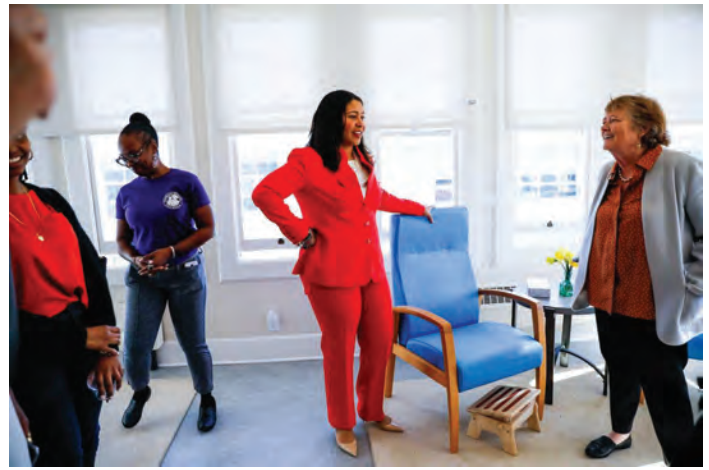
"If we don't go upstream, and start working with pregnant moms, then the next generation of chronically homeless is in the pipeline now," Ryan said.

Pregnant women who experience homelessness face unique challenges, Ryan said, including vulnerability to street violence, poor nutrition, lack of sleep and extreme stress. These issues increase the likelihood that they will have preterm or low-weight babies, she said. An estimated 1 in 5 pregnant homeless women give birth prematurely, posing grave health risks to the baby.

"People who are pregnant and experiencing homelessness are a very high priority," Jeff Kositsky, director of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, said in a statement.

The Homeless Prenatal Program served nearly 300 pregnant women experiencing homelessness last year, Ryan said, but there are undoubtedly more women in that position who did not seek services. The women served through Jelani House represent "just a tip" of the broader scope of homeless mothers, Ryan acknowledged, but added that it is essential to develop a service model that can be replicated.

Fathers or partners will not be allowed to stay at Jelani House due to space limitations, said Lilli Milton, director of programming at the Homeless



Mayor London Breed and HPP Executive Director, Martha Ryan



Bedrooms at Jelani House

Prenatal Program. Visiting hours and family events will help encourage family connections, she said, but she recognizes that separation from their partners may deter some women from staying at Jelani House.

"That's definitely going to be difficult," she said. "Some moms may choose not to come because of that."

Jelani House is part of Breed's initiative to open 1,000 new shelter beds by the end of this year.

Operating costs top \$1.3 million a year, funded by the city's Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing.

Jelani House, which was closed for several years, once functioned as a residential drug treatment program for families and mothers with young children.

"This place has always been a place for our mothers to thrive," said Supervisor Shamann Walton, whose district includes the home. "I'm excited that Homeless Prenatal is going to continue that legacy."



Mayor London Breed

San Francisco Chronicle

www.sfchronicle.com

JANUARY 11, 2019

Martha Ryan helps thousands of families through Homeless Prenatal Program

NANETTE ASIMOV,
STAFF WRITER, SF CHRONICLE

Chances are, many of the 7,500 homeless men and women living on San Francisco streets and in shelters began life poor. They may have been born addicted or premature — and they may have mental or physical problems as a result.

Three decades ago, Martha Ryan understood the pattern: a tragic, costly cycle affecting multiple generations and absorbing millions of taxpayer dollars. But as a shelter volunteer in San Francisco then, Ryan had no idea of the role she would play in halting that cycle and improving the lives of thousands of people and their descendants.

The nurse practitioner planned to spend her career in the developing world. She'd already worked in far-flung regions — Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda — teaching, nursing and training women to be public health leaders in their villages. She wanted to keep doing it.

But in 1988, Ryan paused to earn her master's degree in maternal and child health from UC Berkeley and to volunteer at the Hamilton Family Shelter in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury, where she worked with homeless women. Many were addicts, and many were pregnant, with more immediate concerns than getting the sleep, balanced diet and medical care needed for their babies to be born in good health. This alarmed Ryan, who began knocking on the doors of public health officials and local nonprofits to tell them prenatal care was critically needed among the city's growing homeless population.

"They would say, 'that's awful,'" Ryan said. "But no one did anything."

So she did.

"I found the developing world right here in San Francisco, one of the richest cities in the world," Ryan said.

She won a \$52,000 grant in 1989, dubbed her new venture the Homeless Prenatal Program and, from her headquarters in an empty closet at the shelter, she referred 45 pregnant homeless women to prenatal programs around the city that first year.

Today, the \$7.5 million Homeless Prenatal Program serves more than 3,500 families a year — not only helping with medical care, but with housing, parenting classes and a range of other services intended to break the cycle of extreme poverty.



Martha Ryan, Founder and Executive Director of HPP

Ryan is one of six finalists for Visionary of the Year, an annual recognition by The Chronicle of Bay Area leaders whose work improves the world.

San Francisco Mayor London Breed believes Ryan has done just that and nominated her for the honor.

"What's inspiring about Martha and her vision is that she's really changing lives in a way that is absolutely amazing," Breed said. "This organization is amazing and an important part of our city, the future, and our ability to care for a very vulnerable population."

Breed expressed particular admiration for the fact that Ryan's program has grown and consistently improved over three decades with Ryan at the helm.

Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-San Francisco, has called it a national model.

A walk through the Homeless Prenatal Program's three-story building in Potrero Hill across from San Francisco General Hospital reveals a bustling, cheery environment where children play, women get their needs met, and half of the 100 or so staff members are former clients.

Often, the best ideas come from people whose life experience tells them what's needed, Ryan said.



“You hire people much smarter than you are,” she said. “Hire to your weakness.”

It’s not that Ryan never knew poverty while growing up — or babies.

The third eldest of 13 children, Ryan was 6 in the 1950s when her dad’s San Mateo business — distributing White Rock soda — collapsed. Family members didn’t lose their house. But they ate stale bread and wore hand-me-downs.

“Everyone except us knew we were the ‘poor Ryans,’” she recalled. Devout Catholics, her parents vowed to attend church every day if they came out of poverty. It was at church that a man offered her father a job selling auto parts in Asia.

Ryan was 9 when the family moved to Hong Kong, and then to Japan, where she learned to feel comfortable in a culture different from her own. She stayed until 1967, when she returned to the Bay Area for college.

“Knowing that we were poor, and knowing that people gave us clothes and people helped us when we were in need, I think that has something to do with why I do what I do,” she told the University of San Francisco in 2014 when the school gave her a medal. She graduated from USF in 1972 with a bachelor of arts in languages.

Through the Homeless Prenatal Program, Ryan learned that to improve life for children, you had to help their parents. If not, “I guarantee you that the next generation of chronically homeless is in the pipeline,” she said.

So the airy, industrial-style building doesn’t only have bins of free clothing for children and stacks of diapers for the taking, it has private cubicles for counseling, and day care. On a recent Wednesday, a housing workshop was about to begin, offering help finding — and keeping — a home. Often, when families do find a place, they have nothing to fill it up with.

So the Homeless Prenatal Program, known as HPP, is working with a local company, McRoskey, to donate and deliver mattresses. HPP also gives families pots and pans — always new, Ryan emphasizes.

Nearly 240 families found housing through the Homeless Prenatal Program in 2018. But rents are soaring, so that’s less than in prior years. Nevertheless, “we start with a map and ask people where in the Bay Area they want to live,” said housing associate Antionette Fort.

The Homeless Prenatal Program also has an office that helps parents with the Family Treatment Court, which is the San Francisco court that tells parents who are in danger of losing custody of their children what they need to do to keep them. Often, the answer is to work with HPP’s substance abuse program, or join its Fatherhood Support Group.

Upstairs are a UCSF family planning clinic and a high school: Five Keys, a public charter school begun by the San Francisco Sheriff’s Department and specializing in young people transitioning from foster care to independence.

For homeless pregnant women — whose common connection is not only poverty but often childhood abuse, Ryan said — HPP tries to emulate the kind of caring, healthy and even pampering experience that other women enjoy when pregnant. So there is yoga, massage and midwives. There are parenting classes that culminate in a baby shower — a joyful party that’s expected for women of means, but not always for homeless women, who are at high risk for postpartum depression.

And then there’s “belly casting,” making a plaster cast of a mother-to-be’s pregnant belly. That can be fun — but it’s also serious stuff, Ryan said.

“These are often unwanted pregnancies. Maybe the result of rape,” she said. Belly casting can help women bond with their baby, while the parties and classes give them a community of friends.

In 2018, the Homeless Prenatal Program tracked 333 pregnant women and found that 306 babies (92 percent) were born full-term. Of 316 babies weighed at birth, 284 (90 percent) came in at a healthy weight. And of 233 babies screened for drugs at birth, only one tested positive.

In 2012, it collected the stories of 28 graduates of its Community Health Worker training program in a book called “Facing Forward.” One graduate had had an infant with severe medical problems and had received an eviction notice. Another had dropped out of high school and become pregnant at 23; the baby’s father was in jail. A third was the daughter of a crack addict and an alcoholic and spent her early 20s in jail before having a son at 25.

Like all of the graduates, Ramona Benson, too, had a story. She was homeless, used drugs, and had a young child when she met Ryan. After going through the program, Benson graduated from San Francisco State University in 2012, and her daughter, 31, “is doing well,” she wrote in the book. Today, Benson is a director at Healthy Black Families, a Berkeley nonprofit.

“Martha and HPP gave me a second chance when nobody else would.”

A SECOND CHANCE FOR MOMS IN NEED

MARTHA RYAN, 61

San Francisco

As a nurse in African refugee camps, Martha Ryan thought she'd seen it all. But returning to San Francisco in 1985, she was shocked to see women and children on the streets—a grim sign of the spike in the nation's homeless population. Ryan asked a pregnant woman if she was under a doctor's care, and her heart broke at the answer. "I can't worry about the baby in my belly," Ryan recalls her saying. "I'm worried about the kids I've got."

The exchange gave Ryan her life's mission. "Pregnancy," she remembers thinking, "is an amazing opportunity to help a woman turn her life around." And so was born the Homeless Prenatal Program (homelessprenatal.org), the nonprofit Ryan started in 1989 as a clinic in a homeless shelter. As homeless and needy women flocked there, the program offered services ranging from help with regular medical care and job training to substance-abuse and mental-health counseling.

Today, in a three-story building, with 200 volunteers and 68 employees, she has helped more than 2,000 women deliver healthy babies. One is Laura Close, 30, homeless and drug-addicted five years ago and now a college student raising Nathan, a lively 4-year-old. "Martha saved my life and my son's," Close says. "I don't want to think where we'd be without her."

By Meredith Maran

KNOW A HERO?
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Ryan (center) with Close and Nathan (left) and Elizabeth Rivera and son Luis David.



HAIR AND MAKEUP: VERÓNICA SJOEN; STYLIST: TIETJEN FISCHER

Photograph by GABRIELA HASBUN

A way forward for pregnant, homeless women

San Francisco (CNN) -- Martha Ryan couldn't believe it. She had never heard of women who were pregnant and homeless.

But in one night, she met three.

"I said, 'How could that be?' recalled Ryan, who was volunteering at a San Francisco shelter at the time while pursuing her master's degree in public health. "But it didn't take me long to realize that ... if they were poor, they probably wouldn't have health care, but certainly (they) would still be having sex. And they would get pregnant."



CNN Hero: Martha Ryan, left, has helped more than 80,000 families since she started her program more than 20 years ago.

Ryan also realized the likely consequences.

None of the three women had received prenatal care, meaning they were far more likely to deliver unhealthy babies. An unhealthy baby would add to the burdens of a homeless mother, and the family would likely end up dependent on state programs to survive.

"If they delivered unhealthy babies that ended up in the intensive care nursery ... (that) could have cost the system, the society, the taxpayer, all of us," Ryan said. "(And) the continual costs through a child's life -- of needing more support -- is astronomical."

Preventive care, it seemed, would be much more effective, and Ryan recognized an opportunity to help these women change their lives. She took a grant-writing class and eventually secured the \$52,000 she needed to start her Homeless Prenatal Program.

Since 1989, the nonprofit has provided prenatal care to thousands of homeless women in San Francisco. But it's also grown to offer much more.

"I learned very early on that prenatal care alone was not enough," said Ryan, a 63-year-old registered nurse. "The women that we were serving needed help with housing, mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence. ... And if we didn't help her with these other issues, then we were not going to be able to help her long term or help her children exit poverty."

Today, Ryan's group assists more than 3,600 families per year, offering all sorts of free services to help them pull themselves out of poverty and end a cycle that can repeat itself from generation to generation.

"If you're in (poverty) and you don't have opportunities or ways to climb out of it, it's hard to get out," Ryan said. "When people are given opportunities, they do it. They blaze that trail."

By helping families out of poverty, the nonprofit is also benefiting society and taxpayers.

Ryan said her costs average less than \$5,000 per family per year. The city of San Francisco, on the other hand, reports spending an average of \$6,647 a year on medical care alone for every person who is consistently homeless.

The assistance also keeps children out of foster care.

"It's a terrible loss for any mother to lose her child," Ryan said, "and often they will replace it with another baby. And so, it's in all of our best interests -- especially the mother and the child -- to keep the family together and to help the mother be the best mother that she could possibly be."

Ryan's program has helped more than 80,000 families since it started, and it has earned the trust of local governments: While some of its annual budget comes from individual and corporate donations, more than half of it comes from city and state grants.

“The government sees us as their partner, and they trust us,” Ryan said. “They know that we work with integrity. They know that the work that we do is good, and they see the effects of our work.”

Ryan’s program has also earned the trust of its clientele.

“This program works,” said Carrie Hamilton, describing herself as a former meth addict who lived in a minivan with her young daughter nearly a decade ago. When Hamilton lost her job and got pregnant again, she knew something needed to change.

She reached out to Ryan’s group and got help kicking her addiction, delivering a healthy baby, securing housing and stabilizing her life. She went through a year of job training with the group, and now she’s part of the staff, working as an outreach and case manager as well as a health educator.

“I am so happy to be able to relay the things I’ve learned to moms now, especially ones I can relate to because I know where they’ve been,” Hamilton said. “They really listen, not because they fully know where I’ve come from, but just because I am able to meet them where they are and have a no-judgment feeling for them.”



Carrie Hamilton leads a prenatal class at the Homeless Prenatal Program, founded by CNN Hero Martha Ryan. Hamilton is one of many employees at the organization who were once clients.

Ryan said nearly a third of her staff is made up of former clients.

“(They) are the reason why this program is what it is today,” Ryan said. “When a client comes in and sits down with a case manager who looks like her, who was in her shoes not that very long ago and who is now employed and working, immediate trust is formed. ... She gives her hope, hope that, ‘If she did it, why couldn’t I?’ “

For Ryan, believing and investing in women such as Hamilton is the key to her organization’s success.

“Seeing their strength and their ability to pull themselves up and, against all odds, to move forward and to change their lives, now that is inspiring.”



Now in its 7th year, **CNN Heroes** is an initiative that honors everyday people for their selfless, creative efforts to help others. CNN receives thousands of nominations each year from all over the world. All CNN Heroes are selected from viewer nominations submitted at CNNHeroes.com.

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www.cnn.com/2013/05/09/health/cnnheroes-ryan-homeless-pregnant*