



## Josue Homes

FAST FACTS

National AIDS Foundation/Josue Homes is San Diego County's first and only non-hospice provider of transitional housing for neighbors with HIV/AIDS. Five Josue Homes serve up to 38 residents at a time with programs and support to help them put their lives back together.

### Making the change — Life at Josue Homes

*Josue Homes residents are required to take part in a variety of programs on their path to recovery, including the following.*

**Assessment:** Numerous standardized assessment tools are used to develop recommendations for residents' housing case plans.

**Housing Case Plan:** Each resident has his or her own case plan to address the individual's barriers – education, drug and alcohol, life skills issues, mental health.

**Challenge to Change:** This three-week course meets two hours a day and provides experiential exercises and presentations on subjects related to enhancing self-esteem, increasing motivations and setting realistic goals.

**CHARGE** (Choosing Health and Recovery through Group Empowerment): The 13-week session that meets once a week address HIV awareness, education, nutrition and medications. Topics discussed include how drugs and alcohol affect your health.

**Daily chores, kitchen chores, cooking:** Residents must take part in a thorough cleaning of living areas on a regular basis and prepare their own meals.



### At a glance...

- \* Residents can stay for up to 18 months while they work on a transition plan including conquering an addiction, addressing mental health issues, stabilizing their HIV medication regimen, preparing for a career and/or obtaining government assistance.
- \* Residents enjoy access to transportation, mail service, recreation, and a referral network to outside care providers. The staff helps those with little or no income locate financial assistance so they can move toward independent living.
- \* Residents may also take advantage of the many rehabilitative services offered through Father Joe's Villages. These include Mental Health Services, Career & Education, and Recovery Services programs.
- \* The homes are spacious, clean and nicely decorated. Each has a kitchen, a cozy living area and semi-private bedrooms. Outdoor patios and barbecues contribute to the relaxed atmosphere.

**For information on National AIDS Foundation/Josue Homes, call 619.667.2610.**

## 'Now it's about others'

### Caron Berg's inside look at recovery helps residents

By Patricia M. Walsh

As a client services coordinator at Josue Homes, Father Joe's Villages transitional housing for men and women living with HIV/AIDS, Caron Berg works on-site at Josue 1 near San Diego State University, one of the five Josue Homes in San Diego County. Caron supports all 38 residents in the program and works directly on housing case plans with 10 individuals who are working to regain their lives.

She drives residents to medical appointments – one recent Tuesday she was shuttling and reassuring a resident who needed teeth pulled – stands up for them at homeless court, networks with area providers to find referrals, mediates issues that naturally arise in family-style living, leads retreats to Alpine, and just listens when people need to vent. The high-energy, no-nonsense Redondo Beach native will also teach quilting to anyone who's interested.

The office she shares with co-workers is a converted bedroom in the house, next to the kitchen and across from the formal dining room well-furnished with household goods donations, including Ray and Joan Kroc's old player piano. Above Caron's desk is a bulletin board covered with pictures. She stops talking about a photo of her now-deceased cat Chebba to answer the phone after just one ring.

"Thank you for calling Josue Homes ... I'm sorry. I can't confirm or deny anyone's stay," she repeats firmly, but politely, several times.

Unwavering, she finally says, "Thank you and goodbye," professionally guarding the privacy of our neighbors in need.

The confident California-girl-next-door, frequently attired in shades of her absolute favorite color purple from her jewelry right down



VILLAGE NEWS Patricia M. Walsh

Caron Berg, client services coordinator, on the patio at Josue Homes near San Diego State University.

to the tips of her nail polish, says she's worked for 15 years helping neighbors in need at Father Joe's Villages for a reason.

"I'm here as an example that you can lose everything and then get it back – both inside and out."

"I was homeless," she says. "At one point the only thing I had to my name was a purple backpack full of clothes that weren't even mine. I lost jobs, a place to live and my car. What I didn't realize is I was losing me, my self-respect, and my dignity until all I had left was incomprehensible demoralization."

Then one day 16 years ago, Caron ended up in treatment for her drug and alcohol addiction. Her 15-month stay in a residential treatment program was a "God-thing," she says of her arrival at recovery; direction that came into her life when she needed it, even if she didn't want it. While there she met a woman who suggested that she volunteer at St. Vincent de Paul Village. After 10 years of unemployment, Caron took the advice and volunteered in Children's Services. After that, she says, "everything just fell into place."

Caron started her career at St. Vincent de Paul Village as a receptionist, became a residential

specialist at the Bishop Maher Center working with singles, and then a residential supervisor at the Joan Kroc Center helping families, before moving to her current position at Josue Homes.

"Being able to just be nice to people and being able to see the changes people can make in their lives is the best part of my job," Caron says. "I wave and smile at people all the time. We all walk by the homeless, like it says in the song 'Another Day in Paradise.' I used to be that person. I didn't want people to look at me because I felt so bad about who I was."

That view from the inside of recovery gives Caron, 48, a unique perspective of understanding when working with residents.

"She's really good at working with people, very adept and astute at understanding their needs," says Carl Wolter, program manager for Josue Homes. "She's supportive in a no-excuse kind of way; excuses don't strengthen your recovery."

A one-time bill collector, Caron used to be motivated by how much money she could get out of a collection. "My motive was to get people to pay so I could get a part of that money. I didn't care how it affected them. My motto was 'find them and grind them!' It was all about me."

Not anymore.

"Now it's about others," Caron says. "It's about being nice to people who haven't had other people be nice to them in a very long time." ■

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Caron Berg