Hand to Hand makes an impact in the lives of women and girls in San Diego County by directing resources to programs that empower change and self-sufficiency.

The vision for Dreams for Change is for all San Diegans to have the opportunity to build a secure future, especially underserved and homeless families. With its focus on homelessness and homeless prevention, their services include a “Safe Parking Program” for homeless people living in their vehicles, an “Eat Better Today” program, which provides meals through workforce training in the food service industry, and “Volunteer Income Tax Assistance” that provides access to tax credits and public benefits that integrate asset-building strategies.

This year, our Hand to Hand grant helped fund the “Eat Better Today” program which offers chronically unemployed women a three-month job training program in the food service industry on their food trucks that provide low cost, healthy food in needy neighborhoods around San Diego. Dreams for Change is a model social enterprise organization. Not only does it provide affordable, high quality nutritious meals to predominantly homeless people and senior populations; it generates income to help support and grow the business.

Short-term transitional employment coupled with work readiness and life skills training helps participants overcome barriers to secure long-term employment. Participants who complete the program gain marketable culinary skills, interpersonal skills and personal money management training that increases the likelihood for a secure future.

www.handtohandsandiego.org
New Entra Casa

New Entra Casa is a residential treatment facility for women who have been incarcerated. They have been successfully working to keep women out of jail, in jobs, and with their children for nearly five decades.

The most impactful outcome of this year’s grant-sponsored project was an increase in counseling staff. Each woman was able to be supported as one of only two clients per counselor even though the state of California allows up to twelve per counselor. This intensive counseling is pivotal to the women’s success. In the past year, 21 women have stayed free of re-arrest after leaving the program, with six women graduating completely.

For example, Rhonda came to New Entra Casa a second-generation gang member and habitual criminal. Rhonda had lost custody and contact with all three of her children. Rhonda worked through her abandonment issues in counseling, reconnected with her children, and saw her oldest son for the first time in several years. She now has regular contact with her children, and Rhonda’s goal is to ultimately regain custody of her two youngest sons.

Rhonda obtained full-time employment as a sous chef at a trendy restaurant on her first day of job search. After working there a short time, Rhonda was given keys to the restaurant, a promotion and a substantial pay raise. She has had her Federal Probation dropped two levels and stays connected with New Entra Casa.

Generate Hope

Generate Hope has had a very exciting 2018! This newer San Diego non-profit helps women who have been sex trafficked, turning their lives from abuse and trauma to healing and independence. The grant they received helped those women participating in their Recovery program. The Recovery program works intensely with new survivors, no more than six at a time, living in a house with two coaches/mentors.

Generate Hope just launched a transitional program at a donated home on Coronado Island, where up to 12 women who graduate from Recovery can continue treatment and work on building their new lives. With this new facility, Generate Hope is putting a focus on what it really means to transition from heavy trauma to stability and independence.

For example, one of the women who graduated through both Recovery and Transition is now in her second year of college and is receiving accolades in her academics. This woman suffered from trust and self-esteem issues, as her long-term boyfriend had trafficked her body for five years before she was able to escape. She is now looking forward to her future and is majoring in Computer Science.

Generate Hope has helped over 100 women turn their lives around and is well poised to help many more women in the future.
The Tender Loving Canines program is designed for teen and young women within the San Diego Girls Rehabilitation Facility. The program provides participants the opportunity to learn personal responsibility by assuming care of service dogs in training.

Girls are eager to participate in class and provide examples from their lives that relate to the material being taught. They understand the needs of those with disabilities and the importance of the training they are providing. They consistently put the needs of the service dog recipient first as they practice conflict resolution, clear communication, and teamwork.

The young women learn to implement only positive reinforcement dog training methods. Evidence demonstrates that these skills increase adaptive, communication and social skills, while reducing violence and reducing the likelihood that girls will re-offend. Outcomes were tracked by surveying participants before starting and upon completion of the program. 46% of participants showed an increase in patience, 42% reported an increase in communication skills and the ability to accept constructive criticism and 58% had increased confidence and ability to give constructive criticism.

The overall result of this experience has prepared the young participants to change their lifestyles once their rehabilitation period is over. As one participant shared, she understands people better because of this experience. Added value for the participants is being able to receive recognition for completing the program in a graduation celebration.

READING LEGACIES

Many of us remember bedtime stories with our mom or dad, but when a parent is behind bars, the separation makes fostering that bond challenging.

Reading Legacies’ vision is “…through shared-reading experiences, underserved children and youth will improve reading skills, increase self-esteem and connectedness to their families and communities.” Their mission is based on the need to spend time with children in their early years to build a solid foundation for success in reading and school. It is accomplished through a program for incarcerated family members by allowing them to read to their children via a video program.

From December 2017 to September 2018, Reading Legacies exceeded their expected goals: 95% of program participants reported an increased connection with the incarcerated parent and the child at home; 94% expressed improved morale and self-esteem; and 86% reported improvement in young girls’ interest in reading. One participant expressed gratitude that through reading aloud regularly with her children, she can see how she is transforming herself to be a better mother.

Whether serving long-term sentences, brief detentions, or preparing for re-integration with their families, participants are educated in the importance of reading to children, providing them with the vehicle for establishing regular, positive connections with family at home and equipping them with techniques and confidence to be caring, reading role models for the children who are watching their example.
“The program helped me a lot mentally and emotionally….Our team’s dog Luna was a fast learner and she made me feel good while training her”

~C.R.~TLC participant