

"I'm consistently amazed at how motivated these CHEFS students are and how enthusiastic they are about learning to cook. Every time I teach at CHEFS, I leave the kitchen with an overwhelming sense of hope — I donate to plenty of charities, but none other convinces me that I'm really making a difference in someone's life the way CHEFS does. Keep up the good work!"

Linda Carucci

Julia Child Curator of Food Arts

COPIA: The American Center
for Wine, Food & the Arts

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES TO END HOMELESSNESS

ECS mobilizes very low-income individuals and families to overcome homelessness within a safe, supportive environment.

Our comprehensive programs — from shelters, supportive housing, and employment training, to counseling, educational services, senior services and childcare — are all highly leveraged strategies to help people find permanent housing and develop the skills to maintain it.

CHEFS: Conquering Homelessness *through Employment in* Food Service

In 1998, the Episcopal Community Services started CHEFS, a vocational training program to prepare homeless and formerly homeless adults for

employment in the food service industry. CHEFS is at the spiritual heart of San Francisco's Ten Year Plan to Abolish Chronic Homelessness by providing marketable skills, and a helping hand, to a vulnerable population. *See inside for more stories about CHEFS.*

Dear Friends,

This issue of the newsletter is devoted to the Skills Center, a backbone of Episcopal Community Services, and its vocational training program, CHEFS. Serving over 900 people each year, the Skills Center provides classes, individual tutoring, vocational training and guidance to homeless and formerly homeless individuals. Originally started as an easily accessible academic program for adults, the Skills Center now serves all ages from toddlers, kids, and teens to seniors who are interested in improving reading skills and learning to use computers and the internet.

The Skills Center grew out of a conviction that it wasn't sufficient to find housing for those who didn't have any, without a mechanism to assist people in building sufficient skills to maintain it. The Skills Center is not merely another tutoring program but an innovative model that demonstrates how to blend academic work with life skill-building, so that adults with a variety of challenges such as severe learning disabilities, mental health issues, and substance use, can learn to read, obtain their GED, use a computer, or perhaps go on to further vocational training.

More than the rest of ECS's programs, the Skills Center and CHEFS are particularly patched together financially. A blend of private and public revenue, both programs rely heavily on foundations and corporations and have little in reliable core support. Your gifts to sustain these programs are vital.

Sincerely,

Ken Reggio

Coming Up *for* Air

Destiny awaits — only you have to find it.
-from Mike's journal

CHEFS

Mike Kobelt spent much of his young adulthood — in fact nearly 20 years — on drugs. Surviving on a hand-to-mouth existence was extremely wearing. After being told that he was HIV positive, Mike realized that his life would need to change or he would die. It was this thought that propelled him through the door into the Skills Center two years ago.

It proved to be one of the best decisions that Mike ever made. While getting his GED certification, he applied for the CHEFS program. While he wasn't sure that he wanted a career in food service, he did remember all the times that he had cooked, while growing up, for his younger siblings. He had enjoyed the experience and so decided to give CHEFS a try. Again, it proved to be a smart decision.

Succeeding in the CHEFS program was important to Mike because he proved to himself that he could do something well. That success paved the way for his subsequent enrollment in the Food Technology certificate program at San Francisco City College, which he will complete in June.

Currently, Mike spends two nights a week tutoring students at the Skills Center and also is a volunteer cook for Metropolitan Community Church's Thursday night suppers. This summer, he plans to go the French West Indies, where his father lives, and help his family expand their restaurant.

A New Lease *on* Life

Homeless for more than two years after a car accident left him unable to work as a security guard, Ledell Washington was looking for another opportunity. PAES, a work readiness program operated by the city, helped Ledell prepare to actively seek employment again. At first he swept streets and cleaned MUNI buses, all the while looking for more substantial work.

Hearing about the CHEFS program, Ledell decided to give it a try. He remembered that his mother always thought that he should be a chef. Learning about food preparation and cooking came easily to him. An added benefit through CHEFS was obtaining permanent housing at The Elm Hotel, a supportive housing program of ECS.

Today, Ledell is completing his CHEFS internship at Project Open Hand, where he helps to prepare 800-900 meals a day. He also volunteers for the First Union Church during his off time. Life is looking up for Ledell Washington.

"The CHEFS program provides a great service to the community. It transforms lives! As an instructor who has worked with the students, I can vouch for the program offering tangible job skills in the food service industry, as well as giving the students confidence in themselves and hope! It must continue."

Eric Tucker
Executive Chef, Millennium

“From nearly the beginning, I have been involved with CHEFS as a presenter on interviewing and networking skills. I have — without fail — always had eager and enthusiastic students genuinely dedicated in changing their lives for the better. For every life CHEFS touches it helps to take one more person off the streets and into a productive life through gainful employment in the food service industry. It is to me, the most rewarding and important program with which I am associated ... I urge anyone reading this message to please contribute whatever amount of time and money you can to help keep this program alive.”

Syndi Seid
Founder & Director, Advanced Etiquette

From Surviving *to* Thriving

It was nearly five years ago, when Victor and Tesha Sanders came home from work one night to find their rented home infested with rats, including droppings in their toddler's bed. An exterminator came out and put down poison to kill the rats. But it didn't seem to have much impact, and the Sanders were fearful that their two young children might accidentally ingest the poison. So they left their home not knowing where they would go.

Since Victor and Tesha had rented from a family member, there was no security deposit or last month's rent to retrieve — something that had worked to their advantage moving in, but now left them with no cash to obtain another rental. For a year and a half life went from bad to worse. No one in their

family could take in a family of four with one on the way — at least not for the long term. So Tesha and the kids would stay first with one family or friend and then another. Sometimes they were split up. Victor lived some of that time in a shelter.

Ensuring that the kids were in school and that life was as normal as possible for them was a top priority. Maintaining their jobs was another priority for Tesha and Victor. The chaos of their lives proved too much, and one day Victor realized that he would have to resign his job as a merchandiser for Pepsi.

Then in 2002 they received notification that Canon Barcus Community House, permanent supportive housing for families, was opening. One of the first families to move in, Victor and Tesha were very grateful just to have their family together under one roof. Confident that they could put their lives back together, Victor and Tesha vowed that for them Canon Barcus would be a temporary solution.

Not that life was easy... Their children adjusted well to Canon Barcus, participating in the after school programs, and doing

ECS's Skills Center

In 1994, ECS opened the Skills Center to provide chronically homeless individuals with low-threshold, easy-to-access classes in adult education and job-training. Considered a national educational model for homeless and disabled people, the ECS Skills Center serves over 900 students yearly

with classes in adult literacy, basic adult education, GED preparation, work readiness, computer skills, as well as the CHEFS program and vocational counseling.

In addition to classes, Skills Center students receive active support to access housing assistance, recovery programs for substance use and mental health, and accommodations for significant learning disabilities. These unique elements set the Skills Center apart from mainstream educational/vocational services and allows ECS to serve individuals facing the greatest barriers to employment.

well in school. But there were setbacks. Tesha had to stop working after being held up in a robbery at the bank where she worked. Victor had long dreamed of becoming a truck driver, but was finding it impossible to find training that was affordable. But they persevered. Working extensively with Skills Center Employment Manager, Sandra Marilyn, Tesha eventually went back to work at her bank in the call center, not a branch office. After much searching, Victor found a company that would train him to be a truck driver for half the price of most companies and with a reasonable monthly payment option.

Newly licensed, Victor found a job right away — and one with good benefits, which includes tuition help for his children's college education. With four children now, that's an important consideration. At the end of January, the Sanders family moved out of Canon Barcus to a market-rate rental home in Oakland. ECS's Canon Barcus Community House and the Skills Center came into their lives at a critical juncture and provided much-needed support. Proud of their accomplishments, Victor and Tesha are excited about the future — for the first time in a long time.

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ECS

Episcopal Community Services

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To sustain our CHEFS program,
ECS is challenged to raise
\$100,000 by the end of June.
Please help us meet this goal.

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From the Desk of
the Executive Director

Episcopal Community Services

Who we are

ECS is a public benefit organization with a family of programs that provide creative responses and offer solutions to the challenge of homelessness:

The Sanctuary
Next Door Transitional Shelter
Interfaith Winter Shelter
Canon Kip Supportive Housing
Pacific Bay Inn Supportive Housing
The Elm Supportive Housing
The Hillsdale Supportive Housing
Folsom-Dore Supportive Housing
The Mentone Supportive Housing
The Rose Hotel Supportive Housing
The LeNain Supportive Housing for Seniors
Canon Barcus Supportive Housing for Families
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