



# Caritas of Austin IMPACT REPORT

## Austin Has Solved Veteran Homelessness!



With an issue as complex as homelessness, it's not often that phrases like "we solved it!" are heard. But on August 19, that's what happened with veteran homelessness.

Mayor Steve Adler, along with the U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Julian Castro, announced that Austin has successfully reached all benchmarks for effectively ending veteran homelessness.

Caritas of Austin has chosen to use the term "solve", because that is ultimately what

"effectively ended" means. We now have a system in place that's housed our chronically homeless veterans, and our community now has the capacity to rapidly house veterans in the future as they experience a housing crisis. Now more than ever, we must remain committed to this work.

Caritas of Austin was one of the first to focus on serving homeless veterans back in 2011. Since then, we have served a total of 479 veteran households with your support. 220 of those families have been in the past two years since the Mayor's initiative began.

What matters most is the families behind those numbers... families like Rebecca's. Rebecca has a college education, a great job in the legal field, and a duplex with her youngest daughter. It's hard to believe that earlier this year she was homeless.

Rebecca served in the Army in the 1980s. She was stationed at Fort Bragg and worked in communications, spending two years deployed in Seoul, South Korea. After nearly five years of active duty, Rebecca decided to transition to a career in government. Though she divorced, Rebecca always remained stable as a single mom of four.



Two years ago, her stability took a turn when she moved to west Texas for what became an abusive relationship. Early this year, Rebecca found the strength to leave. She came back to Austin, but she had nothing. She was homeless and without a job. **Story continued on page 3**

# Words of Hope A Record Success

Over **500 sponsors and attendees** were present at the Hyatt Regency Austin to help raise a **record-breaking \$450,000** at Caritas of Austin's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Words of Hope Dinner on September 29.

This year's event also included the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Harvey Penick Award, which was presented to community leaders **Susan and Gary Farmer**. The Farmers join an impressive list of past honorees, including Donna Stockton-Hicks, Sarah and Ernest Butler, and ThunderCloud Subs who were present at this year's event.

Former refugee **Alepho Deng** and anthropologist **Dr. Jeff Salz** served as this year's featured speakers. Their unique approach to storytelling left all with a sense of unity and hope.

*"When you meet a stranger, it's important to stop and open your heart. I promise you, you will have more in common with this person than you have ever imagined. In your heart of hearts, in your soul of souls, you are exactly the same person."* - Dr. Jeff Salz

The evening also featured a live '**Fund The Mission**' auction where attendees had the opportunity to help underwrite various programs and services provided by Caritas of Austin. **Over \$175,000 was raised in just 15 minutes** during this portion of the evening.

*"The greatest gift Caritas gave to me was belief in me... when I didn't believe in myself, they believed in me. They saw something I didn't see... and I started to see it. The faith and hope they gave me is priceless."* - Clay, supportive housing client

Thank you to our 2016 lead sponsors: **Alori Properties, American Campus Communities, First Texas Honda, Heritage Title Co., Laura and Jim McBride, Silicon Labs, Stratus Properties, Texas Capital Bank**, and to all who supported this year's event!



# Veteran Homelessness - *Continued*



"It was so scary. I knew it was temporary and that I just needed to find a job, but I had no resources." With your support, Caritas' veterans program was just what Rebecca needed. When her Caritas case manager called, she said, "I started bawling. After that call, the wheels started rolling."

Rebecca started a new job in May working in the legal field, which she loves. Caritas of Austin provided a financial bridge which helped her move her possessions out of storage, cover her first month and a half of rent before she got her first paycheck, and pay for outstanding utility debt that was preventing her from obtaining stable housing.

Rebecca can't hold back the tears when talking about her case manager. "Maegan treated me with respect and dignity. There are people who come into your life for a short time but that you will never forget. She is one of them."

Caritas of Austin is more committed than ever to continue our work with veterans. Thank you for helping Austin reach this very important milestone of solving veteran homelessness. Your partnership makes progress possible!

## Donor Spotlight: Layla Metni

Meet Layla, a 13-year-old philanthropist who recently raised over \$8,500 for Caritas' refugee services as part of her Bat Mitzvah.

### **How did you first get involved with refugees in Austin?**

I first became involved through a family friend who works with middle school refugee kids. I wanted to make a difference. We decided to collect bikes, scooters, and skate boards and delivered them to the kids. They were so grateful, so happy.

### **Why did you have people donate to Caritas for your Bat Mitzvah?**

When it came time for me to pick my Bat Mitzvah Philanthropy Project, I chose Caritas to carry on my mission with the refugee community. It is customary for family and friends to give gifts in celebration of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. After my experience with the refugee kids, I wanted to do more. I asked friends and family to donate to Caritas, rather than to me.



### **What do you wish other people knew about Caritas of Austin and refugees?**

The refugee situation around the world is devastating. I would ask communities not to become overwhelmed and think they can't make a difference. If we all work together, we CAN!

## ABOUT US

Caritas of Austin supports people on their journey out of crisis toward self-sufficiency through housing, food, education, and employment services.

Each year, our services intersect with thousands of individuals and families to help empower people toward the life they want.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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*Read inside about the lives being changed because of your support!*



### 26<sup>th</sup> Annual ThunderCloud Subs Turkey Trot

Austin's favorite Thanksgiving Day tradition is just around the corner! Since its inception, this great event has raised nearly \$3 million to support Caritas of Austin's work in the community.

#### VOLUNTEER

There are over **500 volunteers needed** to help with packet pick-up, registration, and event set up and clean up. Sign up at [caritasofaustin.org](http://caritasofaustin.org)!

#### RUN / WALK

Join over 20,000 participants and sign up for the **5-mile run**, **1-mile walk**, or **Kids K**. Be sure to sign up soon before prices increase at [thundercloud.com](http://thundercloud.com)!

#### FUNDRAISE

Raise money for Caritas of Austin as part of the ThunderCloud Subs Turkey Trot registration, and you'll be eligible for **special apparel** and **prize packages!**

#### RAFFLE

**First Texas Honda** presents the ThunderCloud Subs Turkey Trot raffle, and you can win a **NEW Honda Accord!** Tickets: **1/\$25** or **5/\$100** at [thundercloud.com](http://thundercloud.com).



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