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HELPING HANDS

CNN names San Bernardino foundation chief a 'hero'

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SAN BERNARDINO » She's been called "figure-outer," "dreamer," "maverick," "savior."

And now, CNN calls her 'hero.'

Kim Carter, founder and executive director of the Time for Change Foundation, has been thrust into the international spotlight, as she was announced Thursday as a CNN Hero for 2015 for her efforts to help others.

She is in the business of changing lives.

Her Time for Change Foundation, founded in 2002 in San Bernardino, offers services to homeless women and their children in a home-style environment.

The nonprofit addresses issues of homelessness, drug addiction and incarceration to heal women, families and communities.

Since 2002, Time for Change has helped more than 700 women.

"I love these women," she said. "I am them and they are me."

The rate of recidivism is 0 percent.

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Time for Change Foundation founder Kim Carter, left, takes phone calls Friday with civic engagement specialist Vanessa Perez. Carter was named a 2015 CNN Hero.

PHOTO BY MICHEL NOLAN

Hero

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"We are the model amongst the people who evaluate these programs," Carter said.

The foundation's mission is to empower disenfranchised low-income women and families by building leadership through evidence-based programs and housing to create self-sufficiency and thriving communities.

It's about second chances.

"Based on my experience working at Time for Change, after having been a successful graduate of the Time for Change program," said Nicole Wolfe, a foundation spokeswoman, "when I think of Kim Carter, it reminds me of the 'Little Engine that could.'"

The nonprofit has also expanded its services, offering advocacy and leadership training.

The CNN Hero award examined all aspects of the Time for Change program and honored the group in a way that humbled Carter.

Out of more than 50,000 nominations from around the world, CNN selected 20 heroes.

Since its inaugural year in 2007, the CNN initiative has honored more than 200 people in 80 countries.

"We help women and chil-

dren to reclaim their lives," said Carter, an ex-addict who knows what it's like to lose your child.

Her journey has been long but one she had to experience to fuel her passion to help others succeed.

Carter had her first hit of crack cocaine when she was 17 and began a cycle of addiction and incarceration that lasted 12 years.

The most painful of its consequences was the gut-wrenching loss of custody of her daughter.

Now 57, Carter stayed out on the streets and wanted to change, but what she needed was a place to change at.

"There was no Time for Change Foundation for me," she said.

Carter said she knew there was a life out there, but she didn't believe she could get there.

"I didn't have a lot of hope," she said.

Carter was clean and sober five years before she regained custody of her daughter, doing menial jobs to get her into a good school.

The foundation program includes case-management services in a drug-free environment, an emergency shelter, transitional housing, financial education and money management classes, independent living skills, family reunification, leadership development and parenting education.

Transitional housing, called Sweet Dreams, includes two shelters. There are also 11 permanent support housing units.

The program's Phoenix Square, which opened in 2012, offers affordable housing for low-income residents.

For Phoenix Square, Carter said she had to become a developer.

"We can end homelessness — this is not temporary relief," she said.

The Time for Change mantra is: "We call it home, others call it hope."

On Friday, the day after the first CNN special on Heroes aired, Carter said, "Hope is still alive!"

She was elated that people from all over the world "are seeing what we're doing right here."

As offers for donations started coming in from other countries, Carter said, "I love the fact that I'm a 2015 CNN Hero, but there are women living in the park right now — mothers who don't have their children."

The Heroes video will be aired on CNN at the following times:

- Today, 10 a.m., 3 and 5 p.m.
- Sunday, 4 p.m.

To watch the video on CNN, visit <http://www.cnn.com/specials/cnn-heroes>.

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