Time For
Change
Gets $2.1M

By Diane Anderson
Staff Writer

Awards are paying off for one local nonprofit in its quest to move women in jail nationwide, one step at a time.

Time for Change Foundation recently won a federal grant for $425,000 per year for the next five years, totaling $2.1 million that will go a long way toward offering housing and resources to women returning home from prison.

The SAMSHA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) grant provides a way for women to reenter society and reunite with their kids.

There is no shortage of women to help. According to the Vera Institute of Justice, nearly two-thirds of women in jail nationwide are women of color, representing 44 percent Black and 15 percent Hispanic. Most, 82 percent, are nonviolent property or drug offenses.

Since 1970, the number of women in jail has increased by 14-fold, with 10,000 women now held in jail in nearly every county. The report states, "Since 1970, the number of women in jail has increased 14-fold, from under 8,000 to nearly 110,000. Once a rarity, women are now held in jail system, to a place that they now call home."

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Foundation also recently received a James Irvine Leadership award for innovation as an urban leader. “She received that for providing a continuum of housing with an emergency shelter, and developing our own affordable housing. With that Irvine award came some funding to support our expansion,” Perez said.

Time For Change Foundation helps about 120 women annually with emergency shelter, permanent supportive housing, affordable housing, and through WISH (wellness in stabilized housing) program.

Since its inception, she said the organization has helped 237 children reunify with their mothers, and get out of foster care. The focus is on reaching families on the verge of homelessness. The program teaches mothers about life skills, relapse prevention, financial education, leadership development, self-esteem, and employment readiness.

In the Bay Area, she said they do not yet have a facility, but expect to establish housing services where the housing crisis and gentrification is most severe. The cost of housing in San Francisco is souring.

“We’re looking to do a shelter, maybe affordable housing. We haven’t solidified exactly yet, but that’s what we’re hoping to do,” she said.

Even in the Inland Empire, where housing is supposed to be more affordable, she said a woman needs to earn $17.49 an hour for a one-bedroom, far away from the average hourly earnings.

Public housing is at 30,000 on the wait list with only about 10,000 slots available.

“You’re looking at a five-year wait list. By the time you get housing, your kids are grown, you don’t need it anymore,” she said. “That’s why we want to develop affordable housing.”

Development is still a big focus for the organization, no matter how many roadblocks have been thrown up in the past. She said their model is not a quick fix, but a permanent solution, and it is a model of excellence for ending homelessness for women and children.

“Phoenix square that we developed six years ago is still standing, zero police calls, crime rate going down in that neighborhood. It’s still beautiful looking brand new like [a first class] hotel.”

The organization has seen success because it seizes the moment. She said the organization is known for being innovative.

Instead of waiting for an opportunity, they take the opportunity. “That’s why we became developers. For us, that’s an innovative way to break bureaucracy and discrimination against people that we serve,” she said.