

NEWS

'Brighter Futures' home gives East Bay women hope

House on Townsend Avenue will provide shelter for six women and their children



HAYWARD, CA – DECEMBER 7: Kim Carter, founder of Time for Change Foundation, poses for a photo in the new Brighter Futures home for formerly incarcerated women at the grand opening celebration in Hayward, Calif., on Friday, Dec. 7, 2018. Time for Change Foundation provides support for women recovering from incarceration, homelessness and addiction, by providing them with a stable home and environment that enables them to reunify with their children. (Laura A. Oda/Bay Area News Group)

By **PETER HEGARTY** | Bay Area News Group

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HAYWARD — Moms struggling with addiction or living on the streets now have somewhere to stay as they look to get reunited with their kids and put their lives on track.

The Time for Change Foundation, a San Bernardino-based nonprofit, officially opened the doors of a house on Townsend Avenue last week that eventually will be home to six women and their children.

The first resident, Juquida Zigler, who was homeless with her 4-year-old daughter for much of last year, moved in Nov. 29 after a stint in jail for petty theft.

The 24-year-old said she bounced from shelter to shelter around the East Bay, sometimes staying with a sister, as she looked for a place to live that would give her enough stability to find a job and care for her daughter.

It's all been a bit dizzying, Zigler admitted, after she joined the foundation's leaders and local political officials to ceremoniously cut a ribbon to open the house.

Just two days after learning about the foundation during a visit last month to the offices of Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency, a social services agency in Oakland, Zigler was living in the house.

"It was very fast," said Zigler, who grew up in Oakland. "I am really lucky. It's a little unbelievable."

While Zigler is currently unemployed, she will be required to contribute 30 percent of her income to live at the fully furnished house off West Winton Avenue.

"We are empowering women to use their voices to make a change," said Vanessa Perez, the foundation's director.

About 200 women have applied to live at the house, said Kim Carter, who launched the foundation in 2002 after she battled substance abuse for years as she lived on the streets.

She also spent time behind bars. In 2017, Gov. Jerry Brown pardoned her.

Carter said she decided to change the direction of her life after she became a mother, and wanted to help those who shared her background.

"None of the women who will live at the house in Hayward can really afford to pay rent anywhere," Carter said. "It will equal about \$100, or \$135 a month, for each them. But our goal is help them transition into self-sufficiency."

The women will be able to stay in the house for as long as necessary, Carter said.

"Our goal is not to recycle the homeless," she said, adding that setting deadlines can prevent people from developing the skills — or even just saving the money for an apartment deposit or a vehicle — to live on their own and support themselves.

The foundation is funded through state and federal monies and through individual donations, Carter said. Its budget for fiscal year 2017 was \$1.6 million.

But she noted the foundation's purchase of the Hayward house, which an online real estate listing shows was sold in October for \$769,000, was funded entirely through donations.

The foundation also recently opened an office in Pleasanton, which will administer the house and help the women navigate classes for life skills and with other tasks.

Carter said the nonprofit, which also runs a seven-unit affordable housing complex in San Bernardino — decided to expand into the Bay Area because of the growing homeless population amid the pricey housing market.

It picked the Hayward location because of easy access to public transportation and schools, and because the house is in a safe neighborhood, Carter said.

"This one is definitely on the right track," Mayor Barbara Halliday said about the Townsend Avenue house, "and it's doing the right thing."

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