

Hillview Court Apartments in Milpitas helps homeless stay housed

Supportive housing development provides affordable rents, on-site services



By **ANNE GELHAUS** | Bay Area News Group

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From the outside, Hillview Court Apartments in Milpitas look like an appealing place to live. Attractive and neat, it doesn't look too different from the hotel it used to be. But for many of its residents, Hillview Court is a reprieve from life on the streets.

Hillview Court is a permanent supportive housing development, designed to house those experiencing – or at risk of – homelessness and provide services to help them achieve a level of stability where they can thrive. The challenges are many: Residents are often dealing with issues ranging from substance and alcohol abuse to struggles with mental health. Even with on-site services, drug overdoses and emergency calls are not uncommon.

In spite of the challenges, studies show that developments like Hillview Court have a 90% success rate in helping residents stay housed.

“There are no magic solutions, but we know this model works,” says Laura Archuleta, chief executive of Jamboree Housing, a nonprofit that owns and operates more than a hundred affordable and supportive housing facilities across California. “A stable, affordable place to live combined with comprehensive support can be a lifeline for those struggling with homelessness.”

Paul Jamison is someone who grabbed that lifeline. His life on the streets began at age 16. With a mother who struggled with alcoholism and a father he never knew, Paul spent much of his time living in parks in downtown San Luis Obispo, drinking, smoking and dabbling in drugs. A devastating break-up in his early 20s sent him spiraling.

“I suffered a mental breakdown and started drinking to cope, not just to have fun with my buddies,” he recalls. “That’s when I turned to alcohol and drugs pretty heavy.”

His addiction got him into trouble with the law, and he was soon in and out of jail. Homesick and disillusioned after traveling to upstate New York looking for a second chance, he was arrested there for armed robbery and spent more than seven years in prison.

After his release, Jamison returned to the Bay Area. He fell in love with a woman who became pregnant. Because of his past and his issues with drugs and alcohol, he was only able to see his daughter, Rebecca, on supervised visits.

Yet Jamison did everything to make sure he could see Rebecca, even when court dates cost him jobs and court costs consumed every resource he had. He lived in an old camper for years, constantly looking for a safe place to park.

Then came the COVID-19 pandemic. With no place to go and in desperation, Jamison called Santa Clara County Supervisor Cindy Chavez’s office, which directed him to the Easy 8 Motel on First Street in San Jose, a place the city had requisitioned to provide temporary housing during the pandemic. There, he was able to apply for Section 8 housing assistance; a few months later, a staffer told him about Jamboree’s Hillview Court.

He’s been in his new apartment for three years now. “This place has grounded me; it’s given me a base to start from,” he says. He goes to church. He has started a men’s group at Hillview for activities like visiting museums or watching football games. He pays his rent faithfully; Equifax notified him recently that his credit score had gone up.

His relationship with his daughter has blossomed. Living at Hillview “has really helped him get out of the survival mindset,” Rebecca says. “Any relationship needs communication, but you can’t communicate when you’re thinking about trying to eat the next day.”

She recognizes the effort her father has made. A valedictorian at her high school graduation last year, Rebecca told the crowd, “I want to thank my family for always supporting me, especially my dad.”

Paul watches a recording of that moment and smiles. “There was a reason I went through all this stuff,” he says. “I fought for her. Like any parent, I just want to see her succeed.”

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