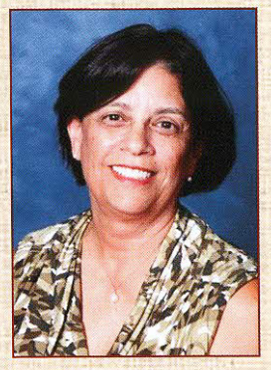
"Homeless to Hope"

Message from the Housing Commission

On behalf of the Commission, we present our 2014 Yolo Housing Calendar and Annual Report. This year, we embrace hope, as we tell the stories of those who have moved from homelessness to housing and about the stability that housing brings to our residents and to the community. Together with our family of partners and resources, Yolo Housing and it's affiliates – New Hope CDC, Wayfarer/4th and Hope, and Dixon Housing Authority – bring our residents hope – and home.

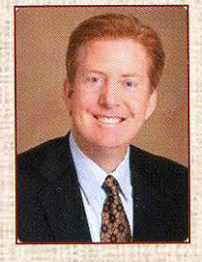


Cecilia Aguiar-Curry
Commission Chair

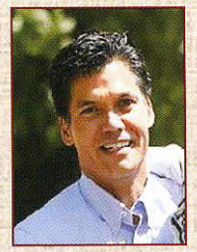
Marlin H. "Skip" Davies

Rita Eisenstat

Helen M. Thomson



Mark Johannessen



Brett Lee

Jennifer Wienecke-Friedman

From Lisa

I have a confession. My father's early life was difficult. He told me "we were always the family that left before midnight on the 30th because we didn't have rent on the 1st." At one time, he and the aunt who raised him lived in a chicken coop because they couldn't afford anything else. Growing up, my parents did everything possible to give us stable housing. A home is a sacred thing – especially when it might not always be there.

I used to take housing for granted. Then I became homeless. Not once, but twice. I am one of the lucky ones. I was someone who had a family to help out the first time. Someone whose friend let me sleep on the floor, where I could keep clothes to get ready for work the 2nd time. But what if the dice had rolled differently? What if I didn't have friends, family? What if my run of bad luck had lasted longer than a couple of months? What if I had been too ill to work?

What does homeless mean to you? Does it mean mentally ill? A substance abuser? Is it someone who won't work? Or, *does it mean what it says*? That it is someone without a home; without a safe place to sleep, without somewhere to make dinner? I've heard homelessness used as a value judgment, as if it was a deserved punishment. People are always surprised to learn that I have been homeless. What must I have done to earn that?

In truth, the ways into homelessness are as different as those who experience it. And how we define homelessness varies – from the federal definition of those who live in a place not fit for human habitation, to "couch surfers" who go from one friend to another, while working and sending their children to school. Homelessness comes to the person who has a job, but can't afford a home. It comes to the person who loses a job and can't get another. For others, homelessness comes while escaping spousal abuse, or after a terrifying illness leaving catastrophic bills behind. It comes to the poor and to the formerly wealthy. But homelessness does not have to be permanent. In these pages, meet the people we serve – those who show us a path from homelessness to the hope that stability brings. As we help our families, children and grandparents have a decent place to live, we create better and more resilient communities, where all of us can make a difference.

Lisa A. Baker
Chief Executive Officer