

HOME AT HOPE:

CHANTEL AND BRENDA'S JOURNEY TO SAFETY AND HOUSING SECURITY

NEWSLETTER | SPRING 2023

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BRENDA & CHANTEL THE LOPEZ SISTER'S STORY

One of the first things our kids wanted to do when we finally moved to Hope the Mission's Shepherd House was to play outside on the playground. To some, that might seem like a typical kid reaction to seeing any new slide or swing set. But to our kids, my son Balthazar and my nieces Emery and Ashley, this wasn't just a typical playground—being able to play outside again meant that we were finally safe.

My sister Chantel and I never thought we would experience homelessness. We both worked full-time so that we could afford to take care of our three kids and our mom and pay the rent on a one-bedroom apartment. After our landlord increased our rent to the point where we could no longer afford to stay, we were wrongfully evicted and found ourselves checking into a motel on the corner of Sepulveda and Roscoe.

Chantel and I knew that the motel was not the best place for our family, but it was the only place we could afford to stay after we were turned away from the lead referring agency in the Valley. When we went to work each day, our mom stayed at home and watched our kids. We gave her strict instructions—don't take the kids to play outside. The playground nearest to the motel did not feel safe as we would often see sex workers or drug deals taking place.

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Save the Dates

HOPE THE CONCERT - MAY 7, 2023

14 YEAR CELEBRATION - AUGUST 26, 2023

DRUMSTICK DASH - NOVEMBER 23, 2023



Ken and Rowan running 350 miles from Las Vegas to LA.

ALL IN FOR HOUSING

Running 350 miles to end homelessness

According to the 2022 Homeless Count conducted by Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, an estimated 69,144 are experiencing homelessness on any given night in the county. Of that number, over 13,000 are mothers and children. The streets don't exist to be used as waiting rooms until the city is able to build more affordable housing, which is critical for many low-income families as the cost of living continues to rise in Los Angeles.

Hope the Mission has helped hundreds of families at our family shelter facilities. However, we'll need more space and facilities to ensure that ALL families experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles have a place they can go to get back on their feet. In order to raise the funds necessary to make this happen, Ken and Rowan made the executive decision to do something seemingly impossible—run 350 miles from Las Vegas to Los Angeles, in an attempt to demonstrate that they were going ALL IN to end this humanitarian crisis. 350 miles of running to raise the \$350,000 needed to open four family shelter facilities.

The run kicked off on February 17 along the Las Vegas Strip and ended at Hope the Mission's headquarters in North Hills. Along the running route, Ken & Rowan encountered countless obstacles- sections of the route were completely uphill, some days were warm, and others were bone-chilling and historically cold. They ran through the desert, through rain, and even through snow. But just like in poker, when you go ALL IN, you are putting all that you have on the line in anticipation of success. Ken and Rowan put their bodies, minds, and will to the test by going ALL IN to remind us that nothing great happens without great sacrifice and effort. to remind us that nothing great happens without great sacrifice and effort.

With your help and the generous help of others, we have almost raised the funds needed to open these four family shelters. Thank you for helping us to bring families ALL IN.



A Message from Ken Craft


The start of the year has been quite busy. I have found myself thinking about second chances. The season of Easter is one of hope and rebirth. At Hope the Mission, we believe that everyone and everything gets a second chance.

Every day at Hope the Mission, we see countless success stories of those who have benefitted from getting another chance. The story of Brenda and Chantel is just one example of what can happen when you bring people off the streets and provide them with the support and services they need to start over. These second chances are made possible thanks in part to generous donations that we receive from friends like you. This spring, we are opening two hotels as part of Project Homekey, and we will be opening up a third family shelter in the summer.

May this Easter season be a time of reflection and hope—as you think of those whose second chance has happened because of the support, partnership and dedication you have given to us.

Thank You.

Ken Craft,
Founder & CEO of Hope the Mission.

 @Kencrafthope @Hopeofthevalley

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Despite each working over 40 hours a week, we struggled to save up enough money to pay for our room. We saved every dime, nickel, and quarter we came across to pay for groceries at the 99 Cent Store. Still, we struggled. I was fired from my job twice; they viewed me as unreliable because I would have to call out of shifts due to my son's doctors' appointments. No matter what we did, we faced an uphill battle that didn't get any easier despite how hard we worked or who we reached out to for help.

On a hot day over the summer in 2021, we went back to the referral agency once again and asked for help. Balthazar, who has special medical needs, was on oxygen at the time and as the sweat dripped down our faces due to the 103-degree temperature, we reached our breaking point. Our family couldn't bear the heat—or our situation any longer.

"After holding our breath for a year as we dealt with the insecurity of our situation, we could finally put the pieces of our lives back together."



LA Family Housing finally referred us to Hope the Mission and that's how we landed at Shepherd House. Within a week of being there, our whole family felt at peace. After holding our breath for a year as we dealt with the insecurity of our situation, we could finally put the pieces of our lives back together. After a year of living in Shepherd House, we felt like we had won the lottery. A donor reached out to Ken Craft and offered to pay our rent on a furnished apartment, as well as pay for a vehicle, insurance, gas, and groceries for a full year. Our family was one of three selected to receive this amazing gift.

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Brenda, Chantel and Balthazar

We still live in this home today and both of us now work full-time for Hope the Mission. I am a Program Manager at the Job Center where I have the amazing opportunity to work with and help other families who have similar experiences to what Chantel and I went through. Chantel works in reception at Hope HQ, and she's the first person you see when you walk through the door. I love my job because I get to help people get back on their feet—just like I was helped when I came to Hope.

We consider ourselves incredibly thankful and lucky to have been supported by and part of Hope the Mission, first as clients and now as employees, but we know that there are thousands of people across Los Angeles who need the same support and services we received. Getting people off the streets or out of unstable housing is such an important first step in helping families recover from being unhoused.

Hope the Mission will be opening three hotels this year for families who are experiencing homelessness. And the best part about these hotels is that they all have playgrounds—and it'll be a place where moms, kids, and families can feel safe as they begin their journey to housing security. If there's one piece of advice my sister and I can give to other moms out there, it's to never give up. Times get hard but don't give up, keep persisting. Persisting led us to Hope the Mission which gave us the opportunity to feel safe, to feel supported, and to feel at home.



Chantel

100 Hours in A Car

Tents, encampments, and piles of belongings on a sidewalk are visible reminders of the thousands of Angelenos who are experiencing homelessness. But there are also many others we don't see—the invisible homelessness. These are our neighbors who are holding down jobs, showering in gyms, and struggling to keep their clothes clean to ensure that they can keep a sense of normalcy as they call their car a home.

To better understand the experience of this population, we recently spent 100 hours living in a car. We were given fifty dollars, a bag of clothes each, blankets, our cell phones, and the keys to a car whose gas tank was nearing empty. This was all we had to get through the week and we were expected to show up at work and perform our regular job duties. We quickly entered into 'survival mode,' something that those who are unsheltered know all too well.



Ken and Rowan spending 100 hours homeless in a car

Living in a car was difficult, exhausting, and for us—only temporary. During the 100 hours, we counted down to the end, but for many, there is no countdown in sight. Those who live in their cars are trying to get through each day as if they don't have to go back to their vehicle at night. They remain invisible and closer to street homelessness. A car is not home, and we must act, we must do better to ensure that ALL who experience homelessness are housed. We need more shelters, more tiny homes, additional hotels & motels, and more supportive services so that no one has to live on the streets or in their cars.

See their journey on on Social Media

Ken Craft founder and CEO

@kencrafthope

Rowan Vansleve President and CFO

@rvansleve

Spring Cleaning? Dont Discard...Donate...

Donate your gently used clothes and household items to our Thrift Stores!
100% of the proceeds go toward programs and services for our unhoused guests.
Call us at **(818) 392-0020** to schedule a pick up from your home.



For Thrift Store Locations online go to: www.hopeofthevalley.org/thrift-stores/

Or you can Scan QR Code Here

Because of your gifts last year we were able to provide:



492,300 showers



1,533,000 hot meals



511,780 shelter nights

(Cut Here)

Make a Gift to Welcome Someone Home *Today!*

☐ Ken, I want to provide safe shelter to moms and kids through my gift of _____

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250

☐ Check Enclosed

☐ Bill my Credit Card

Credit Card #

Exp Date:

Phone :

Email: