



## Quarterly Newsletter

### ***From the Board President***

Dear Friend,

One of the things that inspires me most about Friends In Deed is how our programs—each powerful on their own—come together to create something even greater. Every day, I see our teams collaborate with compassion and intention, supporting our clients not just at one point in their journey, but all along the way. It's a beautiful reminder that when we work in harmony, lives truly change.

I've also seen that same spirit of synergy throughout our larger community, as Pasadena and Altadena continue to recover and rebuild after the Eaton Fire. Neighbors have stepped up for neighbors, nonprofits have linked arms, and local leadership has leaned in with grace and determination. It's collaboration in action—and it's deeply moving to witness.

In this newsletter, you'll find stories that reflect the power of connection and cooperation—within our organization and across the community. I'm so grateful to be part of this work, and even more grateful for your support, which makes it all possible.

With gratitude,

Bret Schaefer  
Board President, Friends In Deed



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**It is through your generosity that we are able to provide these programs and services**

**Donate today**

**Join the Legacy Society**

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## ***Stories From Our Programs***

### **A Place to Breathe: Ms. Harris' Story After the Fire**

In the wake of the Eaton Fire, every story of loss carries weight, but it's often the quieter ones that gently remind us of the deep importance of compassion and community.

Ms. Harris is 80 years old. She lost her home to the blaze and had been staying at a motel and covering the cost herself.

[Read more...](#)



### **No Place Like Home: Why One Volunteer Couldn't Stay Away from the Pantry**

For many, volunteering at the Food Pantry is more than just lending a hand—it's about connection, community, and purpose. That's exactly what one dedicated volunteer discovered when life took her in a new direction.



[Read more...](#)

## *Stories from Our Community*



### **Sweet Generosity: Romy's Recipe for Community**

Romy was born into the world of pastry—quite literally. A fourth-generation pastry chef, he grew up in France, where baking was not just a job, but a family tradition. When Romy moved to the United States ten years ago, he brought more than recipes—he brought a dream.

[Read more...](#)

### **Mary's Journey From Volunteer to Vital Team Member**

When Mary moved to the United States in June 2023, she thought she was finally ready for a break. After 35 years of hard work, she'd earned a little rest. But after a few weeks of downtime, something stirred in her. She missed being active. She missed helping people.

[Read more...](#)



## ***Stories from Our Staff***

### **From Mortgage Loans to Meaningful Work: Marlene's Story**

Fifteen years ago, Marlene's life took an unexpected turn. She had been working in the for-profit world of real estate and mortgage lending since graduating from college. But when the 2008 recession hit, she was laid off—an event that might've felt like a dead end to some. For Marlene, it was an opportunity to do something that truly mattered.

[Read more...](#)



## ***Stories from Our Board Members***

### **A Legacy of Compassion: Welcoming Pastor Amy Aitken to the Friends In Deed Board**

When Pastor Amy Aitken arrived in Pasadena nearly four years ago to lead First United Methodist Church (FUMC), she



stepped into a legacy of deep-rooted partnership with Friends In Deed. FUMC has been a foundational supporter since the organization's earliest days, and under Pastor Amy's leadership, that relationship has only grown stronger.

[Read more...](#)

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## Programs

### **Bad Weather Shelter (BWS)**

Providing cold-weather support for our neighbors experiencing homelessness

### **Eviction Prevention and Rental Assistance (EPRA)**

Short- and medium-term rental support to prevent eviction

### **Food Pantry**

Dignified grocery shopping experience for 600+ households weekly

### **Street Outreach and Housing**

Team of workers on the streets engaging with our neighbors experiencing homelessness and connecting them to services

### **The Women's Room (TWR)**

Daytime shelter for homeless and at-risk women

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### **Our Staff**

(in alphabetical order)

Helen Angove

*Director of Operations*

Jane Armbruster

*TWR Case Manager*

### **Our Board**

Bret Schaefer

*President*

Leslie White

*Vice President*

Isaac Arreola  
*Harm Reduction Specialist*

Barbara Burns  
*Access, Data and Quality Assurance Specialist*

Marty Campolo  
*Deputy Director and Grants Officer*

Mary Cornelius  
*TWR Program Attendant*

Coty Dietel  
*Food Pantry Aide*

Rosie Espino  
*TWR Program Attendant*

Olivia Esteb  
*Housing Navigation Program Manager and Substance Abuse Specialist*

Ryan Greer  
*Senior Director of Programs*

Al Hackett  
*Outreach Specialist*

Juliet Hernandez  
*TWR Program Attendant*

Tish Inong  
*Director of Street Outreach and Housing*

Jenny Juarez  
*TWR Program Manager*

Rabbi Joshua Levine Grater  
*Executive Director*

Kristina Martin  
*Food Pantry Program Associate*

Marlene Martinez  
*Assistant Director of EPRA*

Stacey McCarroll  
*Director of EPRA*

Tim Nistler  
*Director of the Food Pantry*

Christopher Pelch  
*Treasurer*

Debby Singer  
*Secretary*

Pastor Amy Aitken

Kevin Bourland

Tim Howett

Nishanthi Kurukulasuriya

Suzanne Lee

Don Meaders

Jeff Salcido

Lana Slavitt

and;

Richard Cheung  
*Board President Emeritus*

Pam Marx  
*Board President Emerita*

Najwa Payton Jones  
*Housing Navigator and Outreach Liaison*

Christina Rebers  
*Housing Navigator*

Elyse Reed  
*Development Associate*

Lindsey Reed  
*Director of The Women's Room*

Eva Rivera  
*Food Pantry Manager*

William Shelby  
*Senior Intensive Case Management  
Specialist*

Virginia Valencia  
*Outreach Program Manager and Mental  
Health Specialist*

Laura Van Alstine  
*Director of BWS*

Merria Velasco  
*Senior Director of Development*

Dani Vinokurov Rivera  
*Development Associate*

Kenyetta Wilson  
*Controller*

At Friends In Deed, we honor the dignity and privacy of every person we serve. The stories we share are real, but sometimes, we change names or minor details or use stock photos to protect our clients' identities. Thanks for your compassion, understanding, and support.

**Friends In Deed** is committed to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion. We embrace and celebrate the spectrum of our employees', volunteers', and clients' ages, color, ability or disability, ethnicity, family or marital status, gender identity or expression, language, national origin, physical and mental ability, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, neurodiversity, and other characteristics that make our employees, volunteers, and clients unique.

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