



# MEDIA RELEASE

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SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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## **U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE DESIGNATES SANTA CRUZ COUNTY WOMEN'S RECOVERY AND REENTRY PROGRAM A NATIONAL MODEL**

*Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office, Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County, Gemma/NewLife Transitional Housing Partner and Janus of Santa Cruz to Serve as National Mentor Training Program*

The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office, Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County's Friends Outside Program, New Life and Gemma Programs and Janus of Santa Cruz, today announced the U.S. Department of Justice has selected Santa Cruz County's Women's Recovery and Reentry Program (WRRP) as a national model and training site for correctional teams nationwide. WRRP, an innovative correctional substance use treatment and aftercare program, was selected for its success in providing evidence-based correctional treatment, improving outcomes for incarcerated women and robust post release aftercare in the community.

Correctional teams from Kansas, Wisconsin, Louisiana, Connecticut, Washington, D.C., Nevada, Vermont, Missouri, Wyoming and California are assembling in Santa Cruz for the training taking place Oct. 2-3, 2023.

The WRRP is a one-of-a-kind gender responsive/female-centered, multi-agency partnership that incorporates comprehensive services for incarcerated women, from custody through post-release, to aid in maintaining sobriety, functioning and quality of life through reduced rates of substance use and recidivism. Services include medication assisted treatment, gender-specific curriculum with a focus on healing trauma, comprehensive case management, substance use disorder treatment, housing, and resource referrals to meet specific needs of incarcerated women.

The program is funded through a Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) grant from the U.S. Department of Justice.

“It is an honor to have our local program recognized as a national model by the Department of Justice,” said Sheriff Jim Hart. “The key to success is the community partnerships we’ve built with Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County’s Friends Outside Program, Janus of Santa Cruz and New Life and Gemma Programs. Through this program, we have shown we can improve the outcomes of incarcerated women and reduce recidivism—which is key to improving lives and the well-being of our community.”

“It is truly gratifying that Friends Outside, a program of the Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County, has been recognized as an essential partner in the effort to provide individualized support programs that prepare women for community integration, wellness and recovery,” said Shawn Peterson, Director of Impact & Programs, Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County.

WRRP addresses the complex, traumatic histories, and diverse needs of incarcerated women, using three primary components: 1) comprehensive assessments of participants, 2) evidence-based trauma informed and gender-responsive curricula, and 3) structured re-entry case management via individual and group work, during incarceration and post release.

### **How the Women’s Recovery and Reentry Program works**

Participants are selected for the WRRP Program from a cohort of incarcerated women who are eligible to transfer from the Santa Cruz County Main Jail to the nearby Blaine Street Facility for housing. Following assessments, programming is provided for a targeted period--a minimum of three months to a maximum of 12 months--based on factors including participant risk, need and interest.

Participants have access to all other available programming at the Blaine Street Facility, including education, cognitive-behavioral curriculum, employment development, computer classes, spiritual support services, and various pro-social activities. All inmate programming is designed with the purpose of further developing participants’ cognitive, behavioral, social, vocational, and life skills to resolve issues of substance use disorder and related concerns.

Friends Outside, a program of The Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County, provides WRRP participants with aftercare services, such as case management and resource referrals. Gemma, who provides access to transitional housing, is a re-entry program for women who struggle with substance abuse. New Life provides residential substance use disorder treatment at their main facility and oversees Gemma.

The aftercare partners have significantly increased the continuity of care for women leaving Blaine and returning to the community with goals such as maintaining sobriety and improving levels of safety, functioning and quality of life.

### **2022-2023 Program Highlights**

85% participated in the in-custody portion of WRRP before transitioning to aftercare in the community. Of those who participated in the in-custody programming during the current grant period, eleven (11) women received wrap around case management with

Friends Outside post release. Six (6) left custody to enter the Gemma Transitional Housing Program.

The Gemma House occupancy has consistently been around 70% with WRRP clients staying over 6 months on average. Four of the six women enrolled in the Gemma House have been there for more than 9 months and are on track to successfully complete the 12 to 18-month program: a significant increase from previous years. Additionally, four (4) women received 30-90 days of residential substance abuse treatment and one (1) transitioned to an SLE. These participants still received case management support with Friends Outside despite being in outside treatment or housing situations.

76% of participants have not returned to custody on a revocation or new charge.

### **About the Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County**

The Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County (VCSCC) has been connecting individuals, organizations and businesses for good since 1967. Each year VCSCC engages with more than 500 community partners and more than 15,000 volunteers who connect meaningfully to help more than 9,000 residents in need. In addition to volunteer engagement and placement, VCSCC administers 19 programs, including Friends Outside, to support community need, seniors, families, youth, mental health, covid response, disaster response and government partners to make Santa Cruz County a happier, healthier place to live. For more information, visit [scvolunteercenter.org](http://scvolunteercenter.org) and find us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

### **About Gemma**

The Gemma program is dedicated to help women as they transition from the justice system back into their lives. Gemma holds programming in the jail to best prepare them for the transition to living at Gemma. Once they are released from the county jail, they are provided a living space and ongoing case management that supports them in substance abuse recovery and life skills. Gemma is an 18-month program, however this time frame can be extended on a case by case basis. Gemma also provides an ADU for women who graduate from the program to continue to provide them with a sober living space.

### **About New Life Community Services**

New Life Community Services ("NLCS") is a non-profit residential substance use disorder treatment program licensed by the California State Department of Health Care Services. Residential and aftercare services are provided for 90-days, 6-months, and longer, and clients are expected to engage in employment, education, and/ or community volunteering while in program. NLCS's main residential program is co-ed and can accommodate up to 38 residential clients and 10 children (who may stay with their parents while in treatment). Additionally, NLCS manages the Gemma program, which includes a transitional home where individuals receive intensive case management and reentry services. New Life Community Services exists to provide

effective and authentic reality-based services for individuals and families supporting their transition into society and living meaningful and productive lives.

### **About Janus of Santa Cruz**

For over 45 years, Janus has remained dedicated to its mission: to provide supportive, hope-inspiring and successful SUD treatment services in a professional and compassionate environment while assisting individuals and families on their journey toward wellness and recovery. Janus of Santa Cruz was founded in 1976 by physician Dr. Robert G. O'Brient, who introduced a highly effective approach for treating alcoholism in a social model setting. In 1981, Janus became a private nonprofit organization and has continued to add, expand, and improve programs over the years. Currently, Janus offers quality programs that treat over 2,500 clients annually using the full continuum of care for substance use disorder (SUD) and co-occurring disorder treatment including detoxification, inpatient and outpatient treatment, perinatal services, DUI education, medication-assisted treatment, behavioral health services, and supervised Sober Living Environment (SLE) housing.

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