



# PAJARO VALLEY SHELTER SERVICES

*Providing Families with a Path to Stable,  
Self-Sufficient Futures*

FALL 2025

## From Sleepless Nights to Warmth and Safety

Crystal is a single mom with two children, Uziel 6 years old and Aleyah 7 years old. They had been living in their car for three months when Monarch Services recommended, she call us. During those long nights, she stayed awake and alert watching her children sleep in case trouble approached. Sometimes she would take the children to their paternal grandma's house. It was somewhere safe for them to sleep, but she could not sleep there. On those nights, she slept in the car alone.

Everything changed on the day they moved into the Family Emergency Shelter. Crystal picked her children up from school and surprised them by driving to the Shelter and moving in. They were so happy.

*"I cried that first night because living in the Shelter meant that I would be able to cook meals for my children."*



For Crystal, being in the Shelter meant safety, stability, and the reassurance that her children wouldn't be hungry. Her favorite part of living in the Shelter was when it was her turn to cook dinner for the other families.

Within two months, Crystal secured a job with FedEx that included health benefits for her and her children. She was making progress towards her goals!

Within five months, she applied and was accepted into the 1-year Transitional Housing program. They've been there a month now and the children like having their own room.

Crystal has been motivated to go back to school. With support from her case manager, she's started a GED program and will graduate before Christmas. She plans to continue with school and become a pharmacy technician.



# Building Skills, Resilience, and Trust Together

**Mike Johnson / Executive Director**

As Executive Director, I am continually inspired by the dedication and resilience of the families we serve. Every day, our programs provide opportunities for families to grow and build essential life skills, develop confidence, and navigate challenges with resilience.

These programs are more than services; they are partnerships grounded in trust and mutual respect. Our program staff work side by side with families, listening deeply, understanding their needs, and offering guidance with compassion and empathy. It is through these relationships that real, lasting change happens.

We are also grateful for our community partners, whose support provides resources we could not offer on our own. From financial literacy, dental hygiene, and parenting support, these partnerships expand our capacity to

meet families' diverse needs, enriching the impact of our programs.

Our work would not be possible without the generosity of our donors. Remarkably, 98% of our revenue comes from contributions by individuals, families, rents, investments and community grantors who believe in our mission. This support was evident during our recent Shelter to Home when guests committed pledges and contributions exceeding our fundraising goals. Every gift directly supports our programs and ensures we can continue to meet families where they are, fostering both growth and resilience.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to serving and expanding opportunities for families to thrive. Together with participants, donors, and community partners, we are creating a path for empowerment and hope that will impact generations. Your support fuels this work, and for that, we are deeply grateful.

## Bold Steps Forward

*We recently sat down with a family who felt strongly about sharing their story but also needed to remain anonymous.*

This family's living situation prior to coming to PVSS was unhealthy and scary. A relative living in their home was mentally unstable and often lashed out making it unsafe for the mother and her two small children. To make matters worse, she and her partner did not agree on how to discipline the children. His responses bordered on abusive. This mother was scared to leave but she knew she couldn't stay.

With encouragement and support from a trusted friend, she found the courage to leave. She remembers being scared and worried in those first few weeks. How would her partner react when he realized she wasn't returning home? Could she really make it without him?

As she came to know the other moms, it became clear she wasn't alone. The Shelter was full of other moms experiencing similar issues. The family settled in and the children made friends. The structure was challenging but also offered comfort and stability, making it easier.

***"I felt comfortable, I felt like I had support. No matter what was going on I had a support system — Woman Power!"***

She is resilient and determined to make a better life for her children. She was working, going to school, and attending case management meetings and workshops.



Worry and stress consumed her. The harder she tried the more stressed she became. The anxiety took its toll, and she fell ill for several weeks. At first, she saw the workshops as another task, another burden, but then she started listening and taking in the information being offered. With her case manager's encouragement, this mom embraced the workshops as a time to focus on her own growth and well-being.

In late summer, they moved into one-year transitional housing.

***"My daughter cried when we moved out of the Shelter. We have happy memories there."***

This mother demonstrates fortitude and continues to work, save money and go to college. She will be completing her degree at Cabrillo this May and is well on her way to a brighter future.

With Heartfelt Gratitude to Our Granting Partners:



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Dine for a Day  
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**Save the Date!**

**The Mother's Day Run & Walk**

**Sunday, May 10 2026**

## Exciting News!

We have been accepted into **Santa Cruz Gives!**



Funds raised this year will help strengthen our ability to serve adults with domestic violence (DV) backgrounds and those with mental health issues. We've seen a 15% increase in just one year of participants reporting DV histories. These individuals face greater barriers to stability and self-sufficiency.

With training and compassionate action, staff can help these participants overcome the barriers, even for the most vulnerable. Our goal is to strengthen and expand our ability to serve participants, prevent further harm, and help them achieve lasting stability and housing.

When you give through Santa Cruz Gives, your donation is matched by generous community sponsors — helping your gift go even further and connecting more people to this important work.

Visit our page on Santa Cruz Gives by scanning the code to make your gift by **December 31**.





## PAJARO VALLEY SHELTER SERVICES

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**74% of families moved into Permanent Housing**

**63% left with Employment**

**73% left with money in Savings**

## Year-End Impact

As the year comes to a close, we're reminded of the small miracles that happen when a community comes together. Your gifts are the difference between a single mom and her children spending another night in the family car or settling into the safety and warmth of the Shelter.

Making a one-time donation or becoming a monthly donor will support more moms like Lenada, Marisol and Crystal working hard to create a future full of confidence, dignity and possibilities.

You can donate online today at [PVShelter.org](http://PVShelter.org) or scan the code:



*Together, we are changing the trajectory of lives and restoring hope.*

## ***Shelter to Home*** Celebration a Success

**Shelter to Home** was a beautiful celebration of resilience, partnership, and generosity. We felt, and hope others did too, that the program truly brought our mission to life. The evening exemplified the resilience of the mothers working so hard to make a better life, the generosity of donors digging deep to give fearlessly, and partner organizations celebrating collaborations and greater impact.

Angel Milhouse, our devoted board member and emcee for the evening, guided us with humor and heart. She energized the room with such brilliance that you would never know it was her first time in the roll.

Together, we not only met our fundraising goal, we surpassed it by raising over \$144,000, demonstrating what's possible when people come together over shared values. Our deep gratitude to everyone who took part in making the evening such a wonderful celebration. **THANK YOU!** We truly couldn't do this work without you!

*Thank you*  
to our generous sponsors

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