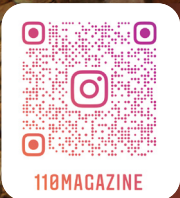


# 110°

EAST COUNTY LIVING  
*lifestyles & perspectives*

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## *Raising Up Others*



110MAGAZINE

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36 AN OASIS TO BE SHARED WITH ALL  
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# *an Oasis*

to be Shared with All

BY CHRISTINE DOUGLAS | PHOTOS PROVIDED





**F**or a duration of about four or five years, two people with the same motivators and same giving hearts would converge regularly in the downtown Antioch area where the unhoused community gathers. Vincent Vidriales noticed Ricka Davis-Sheard giving attention to the people who needed it most. Ricka befriended many in the area who couldn't go out shopping for their meals, didn't have a comfy bed to ease into at night, and nowhere to go for simple life necessities like a warm shower. She ministered to them by providing food and a listening ear. Vincent was there doing the same. He felt drawn to helping those living on the streets and knew there was more he

could do. He thought maybe he and Ricka should join forces—and that was the genesis of the SHARE Community.

Vincent and Ricka formed the SHARE Community in 2019 in order to share hope, abundance, resources, and encouragement with members of the community who have needs but lack resources. They join them with organizations who can better serve them, elevating their lives and putting them on a path to make them whole. Vincent says, "It takes a long time to gain our guests' trust. We know many by name now. They enjoy talking and will talk to you for hours. They just want to be heard." Vincent's vision for each unhoused person he encounters is one that became a reality for



***“It’s the beautiful part of what we do; it’s about treating those who often feel invisible and dehumanized with an extraordinary level of respect and care, and unlocking the opportunities that come with being clean.”***

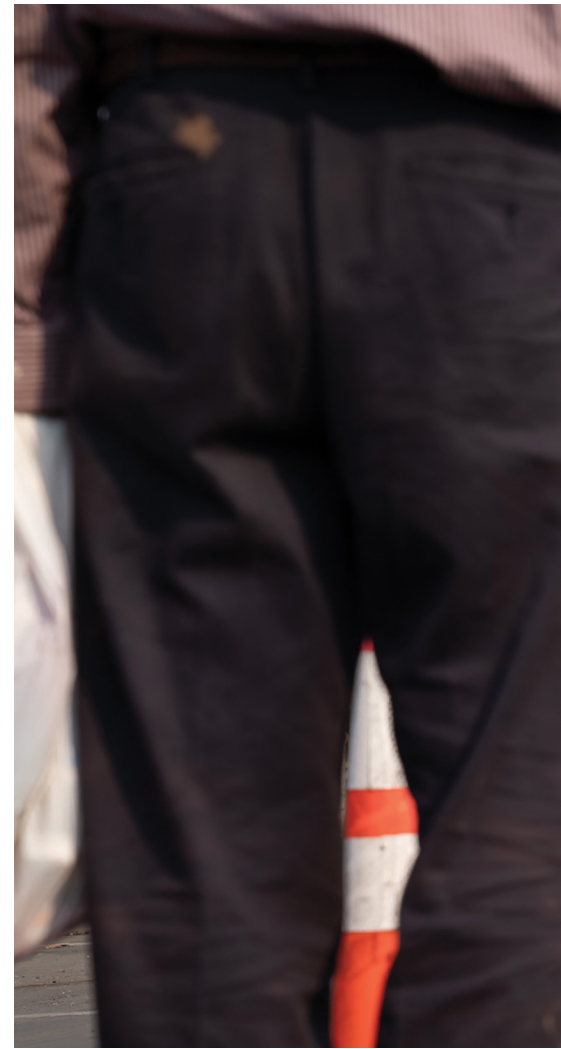
his own father. “My father had a hard time; he was on the streets around Lake Merritt for many years. He had a gentleman who took an interest in him, and every day for three years he would ask him, ‘John, you ready yet?’ to which my dad would reply ‘no,’ until one day when he finally said yes. From that point, he was brought under a canopy of care that included experiencing unity, job placement assistance, and eventually gaining his own apartment. That’s the template I see that works. It can’t work until the person is ready, but when they are, I want to be there for them to make the connections they need to be successful. The SHARE Community helps to do that.”

Ricka shares, “This tough life these people endure doesn’t really hit home until you are face to face with it. These aren’t invisible people; they aren’t a problem that needs dealt with. They are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, and someone’s child. I was out one day running errands and noticed someone sleeping under a tree. It was cold, and all I could think of was how lonely and sad it must be curled up under that tree lying on the dirt like that. I did a triple take and realized that was my own family member. I hadn’t seen her in a while, she was in and out of my home frequently but there she was, my own blood.” With the help of one of their community partners, White Pony Express, SHARE Community has added another benefit to their organization, one that offers a bit of dignity to the unhoused. Dubbed “Oasis,” a portable shower is rolled into place every Tuesday at 10 a.m. at the Community Outreach Center at 525 E. 18th St. in Antioch, allowing

anyone who needs it a 15-minute hot shower. They are given clean towels, soap, a moment of privacy, and a chance to be clean. Clothes are also supplied if needed.

Licensed professionals donate their time to give haircuts. At the same time, if someone needs wraparound services, this is where they will find them. Ricka notes, “On the opening day of the Oasis, Sept 29, 2020, I witnessed an older man having a really hard time getting into the shower. He had trouble walking; he was struggling to use his walker. I had my eye on him. The second week the showers were open, he came back, and I was ready for him. We called the county’s Coordinated Outreach Referral, Engagement program (C.O.R.E), and they were able to access his needs and get him into housing the very next day. It’s the beautiful part of what we do; it’s about treating those who often feel invisible and dehumanized with an extraordinary level of respect and care, and unlocking the opportunities that come with being clean.”

SHARE Community works closely with the C.O.R.E. program. The program acts to engage and stabilize homeless individuals who are living outside. They are continuously directing individuals to health and basic need services and securing permanent housing. The latest addition to services for unsheltered individuals in our area is the former Motel 6 in Pittsburg that was recently purchased by the county and turned into a Project Roomkey motel. The new Homekey program provides \$1.3 billion in funding through the budget the governor signed in June of this year. It allows for the largest expansion of housing for people experiencing homelessness in recent history, and we will see a variety of



housing types: hotels, motels, vacant apartment buildings, residential care facilities, and other tiny homes transformed into havens for help under the Project Roomkey umbrella.

Ricka and Vincent see their newly purchased portable shower unit as a triumphant step in the right direction for their organization. Says Ricka, “The showers were owned by White Pony Express and were never used, sitting dormant for two years. They never had the capacity to make it fully operational.”

This 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization is looking for contributions of any kind. This is an investment made into your own community. From what Ricka and Vincent have learned from the Contra Costa County’s 2020 Point in Time Count, 83 percent of these unhoused neighbors are native to Contra Costa



County where they lost their housing, some even grew up here. With small sacrifices and in small ways, anyone can help. Says Vincent, "There's a lot of need being unmet. More people are appearing every day, new faces and new needs. There's no one solution we can provide and there's so much more to be done. I enjoy seeing the little changes we make and am proud to be part of that change." SHARE Community's mobile showers are a starting point, potentially a catalyst in a person's world when they just don't see a way forward. Folks like Ricka and Vincent are standing by to make the way clear. **110°**

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