

A web of partnerships: Mutual Housing residents benefit from supportive services

Every Thursday, Ricky Chan stops by Panera Bread on Third Street in downtown Davis to pick up bread and baked goods.

The 59-year-old takes that day's unsold products to the Moore Village Mutual Housing Community recreation room where residents can take whatever they need.

For some residents, it makes the difference between putting bread on the table that day, or not.

Chan, who lives by himself and grows a few vegetables in the Moore Village community garden, admits he doesn't eat much bread, but says that "... having the extra helps."

Each evening, Panera Bread staff package all unsold bread and baked goods for local hunger-relief and nonprofit organizations. In 2014, Panera donated \$100 million worth of unsold items to communities across the country.

For Mutual Housing, the Panera Bread partnership is just one of dozens that the nonprofit has created to support its resident members. Low-wage workers, the elderly, people who are disabled or had been homeless make up most of the residents.

Another local nonprofit, Davis Community Meals and Housing, provides 700 meals a month to people in need.

With a local resource center and day shelter, DCMH also gives people a place to shower, do laundry and get clothing and other necessities.

DCMH's partnership with Mutual Housing California and other nonprofits allows it to offer more housing to clients than its apartments at César Chávez Plaza.

While living at Mutual Housing, DCMH clients receive supportive services that help stabilize their lives.

"We've had a partnership with Mutual Housing for 14 years," said Bill Pride, DCMH executive director. "It's been a great opportunity to house homeless families with minor children in a safe, stable environment – and given us the ability to provide them with services to become self-sufficient so they'll be able to maintain permanent housing."

Over the years, one of the biggest contributors to the web of partnerships Mutual Housing has created is UC Davis and its students.

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Ricky Chan loads donated bread and other baked goods from Panera Bread into the back of his truck on Thursday evening in downtown Davis. He delivers the unsold bread to the Moore Village Mutual Housing Community recreation room where residents can take whatever they need. The Panera Bread partnership is just one of dozens that Mutual Housing has created to support its resident members. *Wayne Tilcock/Enterprise photo*

Founded in 1988, Mutual Housing California develops sustainable housing that is affordable to a diversity of households. Our housing builds strong and stable communities through resident participation and leadership development. For more information, call (916) 453-8400 or visit our website at mutualhousing.com.

A UCD community and regional development major, Amanda Manning, is interning at Mutual Housing, where the nonprofit's community organizers make a big difference in the residents' lives.

A senior who plans to graduate in August, Manning is getting hands-on experience in doing the research that goes hand-in-hand with being a community organizer.

She is helping plan the early stages of an event for the teenage residents that will encourage them to pledge 30 hours of volunteer work in the community.

Because there are going to be swag bags as raffle prizes, Manning did research first – asking the student residents what stores from which they would like items and gift certificates.

“The internship has helped me hone my skills,” said Manning, 32. “I’ve taken classes about it, but it’s not the same as going into an open environment and working with people.”

During a meeting with residents that included developing the event budget, she researched the prices of items while the residents discussed what they wanted to help them make an informed decision.

“We don’t do an event for them,” Manning was quick to point out. “They are the catalysts – they decide what they need. Then, they plan, organize and carry out the event.”

The community and regional development major helps develop an understanding of the economic, political, social and cultural forces that influence communities.

While internships help the student, those skills also improve the quality of life for the residents.

The model of resident participation and leadership development that Mutual Housing uses rests on the belief that resident engagement in the community leads to better long-term health and stability of the families.

Because the fit between the Mutual Housing internships and students majoring in community and regional development is such a good one, internship coordinator Rachael Crotty is working to strengthen the partnership between the two organizations.

“It makes sense to be able to offer internships in careers our students want to pursue,” Crotty said. “Affordable housing is one of our most popular fields. The work students do as interns at Mutual Housing fits in very well with this.”

The web of partnerships between Mutual Housing, Panera, DCMH and UCD helps local residents in many important ways.

“We are extremely lucky to have such wonderful partnerships in Davis,” said Rachel Iskow, Mutual Housing’s chief operating officer. “Community engagement is part of the larger Davis culture.”

“That culture is an inspiration to Mutual Housing residents while our residents also benefit from the charitable giving and volunteerism of the local residents, businesses and university.”

Founded in 1988, Mutual Housing California develops, operates and advocates for sustainable housing for the diversity of the region’s households. Its affiliate – Mutual Housing Yolo – has five mutual housing communities in Davis.

A member of NeighborWorks America – a congressionally chartered nonprofit organization that supports community development nationwide – Mutual Housing has more than 3,200 residents, nearly half of whom are children.

For information, visit www.mutualhousing.com.