A Message from our Founder

I am grateful for a caring community. During this time of COVID uncertainty, it is reassuring that our community of volunteers and donors continue to support us. Difficult times bring us together and remind us that there are others who are less fortunate and have no home or place to quarantine. Our guests who come to our door are served a good sack lunch, a can of food and water. Cloth masks are handed out and everyone is reminded to use them and to maintain safe distancing practices. Those items are all donated through the generosity of our community.

Within the past two weeks, we have slowly opened to a few showers and a load of laundry for our women guests. They often remind us how important the shower, laundry and food is and how they long for our community to re-open. We tell the women that we will continue trying to open step by step in order to keep everyone safe. They understand and are appreciative of what we can do. They too wish to be safe.

I often remind you how important you are to us, but during this time in particular, you are helping another human being to survive. You give a ray of hope, and remind our Guests that they are part of our community and you care.

Thank you for your continuing support.

How We Make a Difference

The administrative team at Sister José Women’s Center was quick to respond to COVID-19 and adapt its programs to serve the best interests of as many homeless persons as possible. The Daytime Door program offers food, water, hygiene, and clothing to anyone in crisis. As we navigated through this crisis, we decided that showers and laundry services could be safely provided to women living outside. Feeling clean from a hot shower has been a wonderful relief for many. So far, we have served 275-plus individuals in more than 2000 visits.

In March when the overnight program was closed to new guests, there were 36 women sheltering in place. We have worked closely with them to increase their income stability and move into stable housing. As a result:

- 7 women obtained permanent housing
- 7 women entered transitional housing
- 6 women moved in with family or friends
- 4 women received hotel vouchers provided by the city during COVID
- 1 woman obtained live-in employment
- 8 women reported receiving the $1200 CARES stimulus check
- 2 women were approved for Social Security benefits

As we move into the summer months, SJWC will carefully increase its outreach to serve more women in crisis. We do not know how long the pandemic will be with us, but we can guarantee that the need for respite services will increase, and that together with your support, we can safely and compassionately continue to serve.

SJWC COVID-19 Response

![Graph showing SJWC COVID-19 Response]

April

May

Day Guests

Overnights

Penny Buckley
Program Director
A specialized group of SJWC Volunteers, nicknamed “First Responders,” have been providing Front Door Services to our guests almost daily since the end of March and will continue to do so until SJWC returns to fully-operational status.

First Responders, of whom there are 35 at this time and the number continues to grow, have received additional training in health and safety protocols developed by the CDC and must follow SJWC strict expectations to protect the guests and each other from exposure and contamination.

It is only due to the strict and consistent demonstration of COVID protocol that Volunteers are then able to provide guests at the door with those items they need to survive, including canned food, sack lunches, water, clothing, and hygiene products.

It is with deep gratitude that SJWC salutes its First Responders for stepping forward in a time of uncertainty to serve and the generosity of the donors who have provided much needed items. If you would like to serve women experiencing homelessness at this time, contact Laura Lynn, Volunteer Coordinator, at 520-909-3905 to arrange for a personal orientation.

**Volunteer Spotlight**

“A popular phrase these days seems to be “new normal.” However after about two years as a Sister Jose volunteer, I’ve accepted there’s no such thing as “normal” - new or otherwise. Sister Jose Women’s Center is a vibrant organization constantly adapting to new challenges. The arrival of COVID-19 was no exception requiring instant dramatic action.

Ideally, a mantra for being a volunteer should be, ‘Flow with whatever may happen and let your mind be free. Stay centered by accepting whatever you are doing.’ (Chuang Tzu)

Easier said than done as I find myself facing the new challenges of Sister Jose’s services as it operates within the COVID-19 guidelines: social distancing and masks. Temperatures taken at the entry. No hugs! Skills at pivoting is an asset as new procedures frequently arise.

Now being a volunteer means I’m part of Sister Jose’s dynamic team as a member of the Front Door Service team. Front Door Services now include hot meals prepared fresh with love by the kitchen volunteers and are a welcome addition to sack lunches and canned goods. When guests are asked if they would like a hot meal, they light up with gratitude. Personal interaction may be brief as we hand out food, water, a change of clothes, hygiene and more to all who come to the front door

Happenings such as these highlight the notion ‘Growth is a spiral process, doubling back on itself, reassessing and regrouping’. (Julia Margaret Cameron).

Together with staff, donors and others, volunteers are a vital part of the spiraling process of growth assuring the mission of Sister Jose Women’s Center continues to be fulfilled during these turbulent times.

Some things never change: The essence of the mission continues to be providing compassionate care to the most vulnerable of our population...women who are experiencing homelessness.

As before, when I enter the doors of Sister Jose, my heart soars for this is where I belong.”

_Diana Magness, volunteer_
It has been twelve months since I joined the mission of SJWC as the Director of Development and Marketing. I have witnessed so much resiliency of the human spirit from the women experiencing homelessness and been awestruck by the tireless dedication from our founder, staff and volunteers who care for them. The women we serve inspire me to be a better human. On the streets they truly live on the front lines and as such, must live one day at a time trusting that there will be hands and hearts to help them literally survive. The gratitude they show for the smallest of acts knows no bounds. There is a level of humility they possess that touches the heart.

Imagine what it would be like to be on the street and unable to seek shelter or care. Imagine not having food, shelter, clean restrooms, showers, or the dignity of clean clothing.

Tucson is a very compassionate community and rises to the needs of those less fortunate. We have received many calls and e-mails from people asking what they can do to help. Now, more than ever, we are experiencing kindness and generosity. It is because of people like you that we have been able to continue to make an impact and give them hope.

When COVID-19 precaution procedures began, we had to make drastic shifts in the services we were able to provide. Our core group of volunteers are vulnerable adults and as such, could no longer come in to the Center to deliver hands-on assistance. Even though many have not yet returned, their presence is continually felt. They answered the call for donations and foodstuffs and provide moral support to the staff.

We are also blessed by dedicated donors and support from the City and County who have continued to remain committed to the sustainability of Sister José’s during this pandemic. Our mission has continued to inspire people to step forward, some of which are brand new donors.

As we plan for the next phase of re-opening overnight stays - We’ve had to reduce the number of women who can receive overnight shelter. CDC guidelines require additional spacing between cots in our sleeping room and that means instead of 34 we will only be able to accommodate 24 women per night. We had plans underway for a much-needed extension that would allow us to accommodate 50 women, but now we will need the extension to simply accommodate the original 34. We hope that in the future as the pandemic eases, we will be able to use the extension area to increase our capacity and serve more overnight guests.

As a result of these impending and necessary changes to keep our women safe, we have launched a Sustainability Fund. Donations made to that fund will help to ensure the continuity of care during uncertain times and beyond.

Our guests at the door ask the same question: “When will you reopen?” The answer is always “When we can. When it’s safe.” While much is different now, our mission will never change.

Thank you for your consideration in supporting the Sustainability Fund and helping us spread care and love to more women in crisis. For more information, I can be reached at (520) 808-8558 or via email at: jdawson@sisterjose.org

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**Mission, Vision & Values**

**OUR COMMUNITY:** The Sister José community goes beyond the center’s walls on Park Avenue. Together with your support, we formed a community and fellowship of shared vision and values which recognizes its responsibility to care for and love those who have no stable or safe home. Our deeply held values and commitment define who we are and guide us every day. Together we face the problems of today and work towards tomorrow’s solutions.

**OUR MISSION:** The Sister José Women’s Center (SJWC) is dedicated to the care and nurture of homeless women in a welcoming environment.

Most visitors are struck by the warm and homey environment of our 9000 sq. ft. center. Wooden dining room furniture, warm welcoming colors, hot home-cooked meals, and truly felt smiles welcome women every day. When women experience homelessness they learn to fade into the shadows for safety, but at Sister José’s they are welcomed by their name, break bread together, use clean fluffy towels for their shower and offered a safe space to lay down and rest. For so many women, Sister José’s is home.

**OUR VISION:** A community where every homeless woman has a safe harbor and a path to a sustainable life.

Safe harbor means stability and a reprieve from the dangers and violence that accompanies homelessness. SJWC is a women-only center because the trauma of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse is so common amongst women who become homeless. In safety, women let down their guard and laughter returns. Breathing space gives women the opportunity to develop a path forward into a more sustainable life. There are many steps to take, and each one is a victory. SJWC supports women in developing their agency and to feel empowered to act.

**OUR VALUES:** Compassion, Respect, and Dignity

At the center of every decision and every program offered at Sister José’s are the values of compassion, respect, and dignity. Compassion for the suffering endured by homelessness and its causes of deep poverty, mental and medical challenges, lack of opportunity, and the pain of not being valued as a worthy and unique person. Respect for the strength and endurance of women who have survived so much and respect for the basic human rights of all of us to live in safety. Dignity to be known by your strengths, not your housing status. Every woman who enter Sister José’s has a name and a story, and with time and trust we learn who women really are and we are honored to know them and to serve them.