

## Abode's First 25 Years — Part One of the Journey

Crowded offices, seat-of-the-pants planning and a growing need for a homeless shelter in Fremont are how Jose and Jean remember the beginning of Abode Services.

A community-wide debate about where that shelter should be located is how Louis remembers the start.



*Remembering the early days: CFO Jose Sanchez, Community Outreach Director Jean Morgan, and Executive Director Louis Chicoine.*

All three directors began working for Abode Services during the organization's infancy in the early 1990s and remain key leaders of a nonprofit currently celebrating its 25th anniversary. Their memories illustrate the remarkable

transition of an organization that began by reacting to the crisis of homelessness to one that is now solving it.

"In the beginning, it was a very simple, shelter-focused, crisis-oriented organization that was reacting to a problem," Abode Services Executive Director Louis Chicoine said. "But we were initially successful because people were ready and willing to find and support a different way."

The passion and dedication to keep searching for a solution helped transition Abode Services from a nonprofit that served hundreds of people in the Tri-City area, to an organization that, today, serves thousands of people across Alameda and Santa Clara counties.

It all began in a small corner of a Society of St. Vincent de Paul building on Decoto Road in Fremont. Desperate to address what

# Sunrise Village Gets a Library

Residents staying at Sunrise Village Emergency Shelter now have access to a new library — just feet from where they sleep.

As part of a unique partnership, the Alameda County Library installed a P.U.L.S.E (Pop-Up Library Services for Everyone) site at the shelter that provides 24-hour access to library books and daytime use of computer learning centers for children.



The centerpiece of the P.U.L.S.E. library branch is a kiosk filled with hundreds of books that range from children's books and novels to nonfiction, and includes study guides and other resource materials.

Residents can access the kiosk, located in the shelter's lobby, with a county library card. The collection will be rotated regularly, so that children and adults can continue to enjoy new books. The kiosk will also be equipped with a device that allows users to download e-books to their mobile devices and/or e-readers.

Our partnership with the library will also bring additional benefits to the hundreds of children we serve. The library purchased and installed AWE Early Literacy Stations as part of the library branch expansion. These digital learning stations are bilingual and promote early childhood engagement with reading by offering programs that can be tailored for each child.

The new library branch will enrich the lives of residents, both children and adults, on their journey to a new home.

"We are thrilled to be given the opportunity to provide yet another valuable resource for the people we serve," Abode Services Executive Director Louis Chicoine said. "Our mission is to end homelessness, and providing people with tools to help in that process is crucial. This is another great example of how private-public partnerships benefit society."

Interim County Librarian Carmen Martinez agreed, "What better way to provide information in a family's "abode," than to fill the place with a multitude of library materials and resources to help them stay connected."



## A Four-Star Rating

For the tenth year in a row, Abode Services has earned a four-star rating from Charity Navigator for our sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency. We could not be more excited!

The four-star rating, the best rating possible, shows that Abode Services continues to belong in the top echelon of nonprofits in the country. In fact, only 1% of the thousands of nonprofits evaluated by Charity Navigator have received at least 10 consecutive four-star ratings.

“We pride ourselves on delivering the best services we can to the people in our community who are working to find a permanent home. This rating speaks to how well we are doing our job,” Abode Services Executive Director Louis Chicoine said. “We are able to accomplish our work because the people involved with us — participants, donors, volunteers, funders, and partners — trust that we are doing the best job possible to fulfill our mission to end homelessness.”

To learn more about what this rating means, please visit Abode Services' profile on [charitynavigator.org](http://charitynavigator.org).

Our success is made possible by your support. We can't thank you enough for everything you do to help us work towards ending homelessness in our community. Thank you!

# The Candle Lighters Help Light up a Room

The furniture in the single adult community room at Sunrise Village Emergency Shelter needed replacing.

The Candle Lighters came to the rescue.

The 45-year-old Fremont organization donated the funds necessary to purchase leather furniture that immediately brought a new level of dignity and joy to a room that addresses critical needs.

The community room is a place where single adults can relax as they battle the stresses that come with homelessness. The room provides single adults a space to participate in classes and socialize with each other. With this support, participants can recover emotionally from their days living without a home and build new social ties as they plan their next steps in life.

The Candle Lighters nonprofit was able to help us through its popular Fremont-based Ghost House attraction. Every year, the volunteer group transforms the 19th Century Chadbourne Carriage House on Fremont Boulevard into a haunted house. The Candle Lighters volunteers also build a midway of carnival games to greet visitors.

The October attraction is popular among Tri-City area families and routinely raises tens of thousands of dollars. Money raised through the Ghost House is distributed to up to 10 nonprofits in the Tri-City area that need funding for urgent projects each year.

Claire Douglas, Board President for the Candle Lighters, said the



organization's board agreed that ending homelessness is a critical mission that will benefit the entire community. It's one of the reasons why the organization selected Abode Services as a recipient of the generous grant.

"Helping single adults escape homelessness provides less impact on city resources which in turn provides more funds to be used on other needed city projects. This greatly improves the health of individuals that once had to live on the streets or in cars," Claire said. "This is just a small part of what we are proud we were able to help with."

Not only did the Candle Lighters donation help us replace worn furniture, it also allowed us to show the single adults at our shelter that the community cares about them and wants them to succeed.

"[The new furniture] immediately brought a freshness and dignity to the room," Community Outreach Director Jean Morgan said. "It lets the residents know that someone cares about them, and that is critical as the residents begin their journey to a new home."

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## Holiday Season is Around the Corner!

We're sure you've already begun planning for the holiday season. Where are you going for Thanksgiving dinner? Are you traveling to visit family for New Year's? What gifts will you purchase for friends and family this year?

Your generous donations help others celebrate the holidays as well. You can donate on our website, [www.abodeservices.org](http://www.abodeservices.org), or send a check to the address on this newsletter.

Gift cards are also excellent donations, as they allow our participants to purchase exactly what they need. Gift cards from grocery stores, gas stations, BART, and stores such as Target are especially helpful. If you are interested in donating gift cards or have questions about other ways to help people in need during the holidays, contact Community Outreach Director Jean Morgan at (510) 252-0910 ext. 804 or [jmorgan@abodeservices.org](mailto:jmorgan@abodeservices.org).

Thank you for your support!



## ABODE'S FIRST 25 YEARS (cont. from page 1)



many saw as a rising number of people experiencing homelessness, the faith-based community in the Tri-City area decided to help. Community members began by offering to cook meals and house those without homes at area churches.

Volunteers collected dues to help pay for the meals. After cooking and serving dinner, volunteers used their own vehicles, and a donated red van, to shuttle participants to various churches to sleep for the night.

“We would run out of food and then we had to run over to the grocery store and get whatever we could,” Community Outreach Director Jean Morgan said. “There was just so much, there was just so much we did, but it all came together.”

Chief Financial Officer Jose Sanchez remembers having to constantly find room on his desk to work on the organization’s finances. Jose shared a tiny office with founding executive director Tom Bolan and routinely had to maneuver around piles of donations such as blankets, canned food and toiletries.

“We had to find space to do our work,” Jose said with a laugh. “And, when I did the work, it was all by hand on spreadsheets. There was no accounting system at all.”

Things began to change when Abode Services, then known as the Tri-City Homeless Coalition, won approval, and funding, for a shelter from the City of Fremont.

The battles to win funding, and a location, for a shelter were not easy. Louis remembers those debates as his first introduction to Abode Services. He was working for a church in Niles and organized members of a youth ministry to attend a city council meeting in support of a shelter.

Although Sunrise Village Emergency Shelter did not win approval at that meeting, a persistent group of supporters eventually negotiated



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## ABODE'S FIRST 25 YEARS (cont. from page 6)

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with the city for funding and a location on Brown Road. The shelter was born.

The idea for the shelter was always to offer temporary housing while participants searched for a permanent place to live. Abode Services employees and supporters constantly worked to find homes for participants in the Bay Area.

But the search for affordable housing was stymied by the housing boom of the late 90's. Rents and home prices were skyrocketing, and participants were soon forced to leave the area to find work.

Jean, Jose and Louis all remember watching a caravan of participants leave the shelter headed to Las Vegas. The housing in Nevada was affordable and Las Vegas had plenty of job opportunities.

It was the turning point. At that moment Abode Services decided to solve homelessness — not just react to it.

“The housing crisis was so intense that it woke us up to the fact that we could not do our mission without developing housing opportunities,” Louis said. “That is when the thinking changed and when we decided that we had to become about housing.”

*Learn more about our first 25 years in the next edition of “Voice of the Village.”*

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### MANAGEMENT TEAM

Louis Chicoine  
Executive Director

Vivian Wan  
Associate Director

Jose Sanchez  
Chief Financial Officer

Carol Arata  
Director of Development

Stacey Murphy  
Director of Strategic Initiatives

Jon White  
Director of Properties and Assets

Kara Carnahan  
Director of Health and Wellness

Jason Blair  
Director of Housing Programs

Sheryl Thomas  
Director of Social Services

Jean Morgan  
Community Outreach Director

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***Because everyone  
should have a home.***

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