



Resident Empowerment Highlights

FRESNO VIBRANT COMMUNITIES
QUALITY HOUSING ENGAGED RESIDENTS

OCTOBER 2021

PROFILE

Another Chapter in a Storied Life:

Mama Sharon shares her history and sage advice

CHAPTER 1: Child-mother

At the tender age of twelve, when Sharon Williams was still a child, she had her first baby. Raised by a single mother, Sharon was the middle of seven siblings. As the eldest girl, she shouldered most of the domestic chores when her mother was away working from "sunup to sundown." Mature for her age, both in responsibilities and looks, Sharon could have passed for 14, still quite young, but old enough for the boys to pay her the male attention the fatherless teen craved.

CHAPTER 2: Turbulent transition to an adulthood

Sharon became withdrawn, rarely leaving the house, she believed that she didn't have a reason to be happy because of the shame she brought upon herself. It was difficult for her to talk with her mom. Sharon reflects, "I thought about suicide but my babies already didn't have a daddy what would they do without a mama? I didn't know where my ground was." Caught in the space between child and adult and overwhelmed by her situation, Sharon left her kids, mom, and home. As a minor, she became a runaway, an illegal act in the 1960s. After two weeks, she turned herself in and was incarcerated, first in Juvenile Hall and then with the California Youth Authority. While only detained

for 14 weeks in total, the time made an impact. She vowed never to return.

CHAPTER 3: Finding hope in the Job Corps

While in custody, Sharon attended a presentation about the Job Corps. She joined as soon as she was able and was sent to Muroc Creek, Washington. "About the furthest place away from my life," she says. "I'm 4'11" and it gets four feet of snow there." The program format was split into a half-day of training and a half-day of working. She loved it. She soon found out that the farewell gift from her boyfriend was her fourth pregnancy. Even though she had to leave the Job Corps program, the experience gave her a glimpse into the possibility of what life could be.

CHAPTER 4: Looking for more

Returning home, Sharon focused on raising her kids, received her GED, and became a data transcriptionist for the Internal Revenue Service. However, she had a sense that there was more. She remarks, "My life was pulling on me for something else." Sharon didn't think she was smart enough to go to college; however, after hearing a commercial from Fresno City College, she was inspired to enroll. "My first semester, I got a B average, and I learned that I wasn't dumb. That summer changed my life. I finished City College and went onto Fresno Pacific to study counseling." Sharon had found her passion, social work, and began working at a group home. "I stopped

looking for others to tell me I was okay." She says that her confidence showed up, adding, "I watched my kids watch me. They were proud of me."

CHAPTER 5: Mama Sharon

Sharon went on to land her dream job as a group counselor at Fresno Juvenile Hall, coming full circle to where she was once incarcerated. The youth affectionately called her Mama Sharon. Her message to them was unwavering, "This is not your life. This is just a chapter. Turn the page, baby. It's your choice. If it's not the best choice, choose again. You don't need to get stuck here."

Turning the page

Sharon retired in 1996 and continues to serve the community through her work with Bringing Broken Neighborhoods Back to Life program, on the board of Fresno Housing, and as a local youth minister. She is most proud of her family — consisting of five children, 23 grandchildren, and about a dozen great-grandchildren — and her relationship with God. She feels that it is crucial to share, "I learned by reconnecting with my faith that I was enough, and I was worth loving." Sharon is now literally writing her own story with plans on recording songs and spoken word pieces.

Sharon Williams on her path at Legacy Commons, a Fresno Housing development.

"Each life is an empty book. It's your job to write the story. I learned that later in life. I stopped making other people responsible for me. I began to write my own story."

LEFT: Spread from Stories of Hope magazine. RIGHT: Sharon Williams speaking at magazine launch event.

Resident-Board Member featured in a magazine

Focus Forward's Stories of Hope is an annual magazine that threads together stories of perseverance in the face of adversity. On October 20, the magazine launched its sixth issue, which featured our very own Commissioner Sharon Williams as one of the inspiring storytellers sharing her powerful messages of hope.

Sharon Williams had her first child at the tender age of twelve. By 16, she had three young children, and her mom insisted that she quit high school to raise them. After a turbulent transition to adulthood, she found hope, received her GED, and enrolled in college, eventually landing her dream job as a group counselor at Fresno Juvenile Hall. The youth affectionately called her

Mama Sharon. Her message to them was unwavering, "This is not your life. This is just a chapter. Turn the page, baby. It's your choice. If it's not the best choice, choose again. You don't need to get stuck here."

Sharon, a resident of Legacy Commons, is the mother of five, grandmother of 23, and great-grandmother of another dozen. She retired in 1996 and continues to serve the community through her work with Bringing Broken Neighborhoods Back to Life program, as a local youth minister, and on our Fresno Housing board.

Read the current sixth issue as well as past issues of Stories of Hope at www.focusforward.org/read-me

Sherwin Williams Paint Program



Sherwin Williams continues to provide residents with training skills for the basics of painting. Residents will have the opportunity to register for a five-day course beginning November 1, 2021. This training includes two-day classroom instruction and two-day hands-on training. Residents will earn a certification of completion and resource materials for employment at the end of the course.

To register, contact:

Irma Garcia

Resident Services Coordinator,

559-513-5411

residentempowerment@fresnohousing.org

Meet the Employer Workshop: Quality Biomedical

Continuing our focus on workforce development for residents and their families, we will be collaborating with Quality Biomedical on a virtual Meet the Employer Workshop. Quality Biomedical provides health care companies with medical equipment management services. Participating

residents will have the opportunity to talk with representatives from Quality Biomedical. The firm currently has several open positions for people eager to learn a new skill. Those hired will be trained to troubleshoot, repair, and maintain medical equipment for hospitals.

**Virtual Meet the Employer Workshop
Thursday, October 28, 2021
2 PM**

To register, contact:

Irma Garcia

Resident Services Coordinator

559-513-5411

residentempowerment@fresnohousing.org

Trunk or Treat with Boys & Girls Club

This year, Fresno Housing will be partnering with Boys & Girls Club East and West Fresno Boys & Girls Club to host their annual Trunk or Treat event. As a safe alternative to Trick or Treating, Trunk or Treat provides a safe family environment for the children of our community to dress up and participate in traditional Halloween festivities. Instead of going door-to-door, the youth go car to car to collect candy and treats. Local agencies will also provide information on services offered in the community.

Boys & Girls Club East
For FH Residents and B&G Club members only

Cedar Courts Parking Lot
4430 E. Hamilton Avenue
Fresno, CA 93702
Friday, October 29, 2021
5–7 PM

West Fresno Boys & Girls Club
Open to the public

930 Tulare Street
Fresno, CA 93706
Friday, October 29, 2021
4–6 PM

Virtual After-School Program Halloween Activities

The Virtual After-School Program celebrated Halloween spirit this month with virtual movie presentations. Before each movie, the participants received an educational presentation on how to be safe during Halloween. Participants also received a goody bag with crafts and books.

Trunk or Treat & Vaccine Clinic

Granada Commons in Kerman will be hosting a Vaccine Clinic and Trunk or Treat event in partnership with Centro La Familia and Valley Health Team. Gift cards will be given to the first 50 people to get vaccinated. Participants of the event will also receive resource information from local agencies and free tacos.



QPR: Question, Persuade, Refer

Suicide Prevention Training with Hinds Hospice

In partnership with Candice Wilkins from Hinds Hospice, the Resident Empowerment Department offered a Suicide Prevention Training Workshop on October 22. The training taught participants to recognize and respond to the warning signs of suicide by using the question, persuade, and refer system (QPR). The QPR is an emergency mental health intervention that interrupts the crisis and directs the person in need to proper care. All attendees who participated in the virtual, one-time, two-hour training received a certificate of completion.



Housing America Month

In 2007, NAHRO created the Housing America campaign and designated October as Housing America Month: a time for the organization and its members to collectively raise awareness of the need for, and the importance of, safe, decent, and affordable housing in quality communities.



CELEBRATING

HOUSING AMERICA MONTH

Fresno Housing is proud to recognize October as Housing America Month. We are honored to develop well-designed, quality affordable housing that supports families, empowers residents, strengthens neighborhoods and builds vibrant communities throughout Fresno County.



October is National Crime Prevention Month

Local law enforcement observes National Crime Prevention Month by working with residents to prevent crime. On Thursday, October 21, Officer Luis Garcia, Community Service Officer with Southeast Police District Crime Prevention Unit, presented a workshop on improving residents' safety at home and in their community. Topics included recognizing and reporting suspicious activity, personal safety, and burglary and theft prevention. The presentation was followed by Q&A session and discussion.



The Yo'Ville Farm Stand is open

The Yosemite Village Community Garden and Urban Farm Incubator (Yo'Ville) is a collaborative 7.5-acre fresh food production space planned and designed to enlist and serve the residents of Southwest Fresno.

Yo'Ville aims to create a just and local food system by providing residents and community members with tools, knowledge, and access to land by utilizing vacant lots for residents to grow their own food, creating opportunities to share knowledge on growing and eating healthy food, and organizing residents to improve access to fresh produce and green spaces.

First & Third Saturdays
8-11 AM
872 W Atchison Court
Fresno CA 93706



Yo'Ville Farm Stand **NOW OPEN**

**EVERY 1ST AND 3RD
 SATURDAY OF THE MONTH**

8AM - 11AM

Yo'Ville Community Garden and Farm
872 W Atchison Court, Fresno CA 93706

For more info, contact 559-485-1416 or
chris@fresnometmin.org



The Yo'Ville Community Garden and Farm is supported by California Strategic Growth Council's Transformative Climate Communities Program with funds from California Climate Investments – Cap-and-Trade Dollars at Work."

PG&E COVID-19 Relief Payment Plan

The New COVID-19 Relief Payment Plan provides financial assistance programs offering solutions for paying past-due energy bills and additional support programs that provide guidance to reduce future household expenses. Customers may qualify for several programs and can begin applying or enrolling now.

Contact PG&E: (800) 743-5000

Learn more: pge.com/covid19





WE ARE BACK!
Legacy Commons
Community Music Studio

Our team is back to provide music instructions and sessions

PIANO LESSONS
 VOCAL LESSONS

GUITAR LESSONS
 RECORDING / MIXING
 ENGINEERING

Contact Marcel Woodruff at:
 (559) 355-5465

For more information on joining lessons and getting equipments.
**Equipments are limited on a first come.*

Lessons will be over Zoom - Contact Marcel for links & schedule.

Music program is offered to all youth and adult residents at Legacy Commons and HCV residents in Southwest Fresno.

FRESNO VIBRANT
 QUALITY HOUSING
 ENGAGED RESIDENTS

PAST EVENT



NEUFELD
 PRESENTS

**HOME BUYING
 101 SERIES**

WITH LISA NEUFELD
 & PATTY GRISSOM

TOPICS THAT WILL BE COVERED: CREDIT,
 BUDGETING, THE LOAN PROCESS, AND THE HOME
 BUYING PROCESS FROM SHOPPING OF YOUR NEW
 HOME TO CLOSING OF ESCROW CLOSING ESCROW

OCTOBER 13TH & 27TH
 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM



UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out our online calendar
 at fresnohousing.org/events

Scary Stories To Tell In The Dark
 Book Reading & Activity
 October 26 | 3 PM
 Recurring Event • Virtual

Halloween Holiday Fun
 Halloween Costume Contest, Door
 Decorating Contest, Book Readings, Activity,
 and Halloween Safety Information.
 October 27 | 3-5 PM
 Virtual

Trunk or Treat & COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic
 Candy, prizes, & fun • Gift cards for the
 first 50 people vaccinated • Free resources
 from local agencies • Free tacos
 October 27 | 5-7 PM
 14570 W California Ave
 Kerman, CA
 For more information: (559) 369-6382