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Emergency Weather Shelter Wrap-up

The Sierra Roots Emergency Weather Shelter successfully completed another season of service. The shelter is operated by Sierra Roots in collaboration with Nevada County. The county provides funding for staffing and some operating expenses, while most of the food for meals, hygiene items, and clothing distributed at the shelter were donated by volunteers.

In the 2024-2025 winter season, we operated the shelter at the Nevada City Veteran's Hall a total of 15 nights between January 28th and April 2nd. March was our coldest month with 5 open nights between the 6th and 17th.

As some of our guests don't stay for the duration of our open hours, here is a bit more detail on the services we were able to provide:

- 253 overnight guests who benefitted from a safe, warm, dry space to rest and recuperate
- 268 hot dinners served
- 243 hot breakfasts served
- 260 recipients of clean clothing and hygiene supplies

This incredible demonstration of mutual aid is only made possible through a small but dedicated team of staff and volunteers. Given the temporary nature of our shelter, each open night presents a unique logistical puzzle of communication, availability and willingness. Throughout the season, we were blown away by the readiness of volunteers to quickly assemble and deliver a meal for 40 and by staff to shuffle personal schedules to cover shifts and ensure we could serve our participants. Over and over again, we witnessed selflessness and dedication to the greater good demonstrated by this team.

It's also imperative to note the incredible contribution from our Shelter Manager, Mike Cannatella, for being an ever-present source of energy and innovation. Mike was always willing to work creatively to cover staffing holes, support participants with calm and loving energy and serve as a great collaborator to

improve the function and feel of our shelter. As the Shelter Coordinator for the 2024-2025 season, I was thrilled to work alongside Mike and our incredible volunteer and staff teams to show up for our vulnerable neighbors who are too often overlooked.

Thank you all for a successful season. Here's to many more!

Megan Wells, Shelter Coordinator

A Note from the Board of Directors

Dear Friends and Supporters of Sierra Roots,

As a proud board member of Sierra Roots, I'm honored to reflect on the incredible strides we've made together this past year—and to extend an open invitation to those who are inspired to help shape what comes next.

Sierra Roots was founded with a vision rooted in compassion, community, and dignity. Over the past year, we've seen that vision bloom in powerful ways. From expanding our winter shelter efforts to deepening our relationships with unhoused neighbors, every step forward has been fueled by the unwavering support of volunteers, donors, and local partners like you.

We've welcomed new team members, launched innovative programs, and continued our mission to provide consistent, loving support to those most in need. The heart of Sierra Roots beats stronger than ever, thanks to a community that believes in lifting one another up.

As we celebrate these successes, we are also looking ahead—with hope, determination, and a call to action.

We are actively seeking new board members who share our commitment. If you have experience in financial management, fundraising, or community outreach, your expertise could be a game-changer for our mission. Even more importantly, if you believe in working collaboratively to create lasting change, we want to hear from you.

Serving on the Sierra Roots board is more than a position—it's a meaningful opportunity to build solutions, relationships, and hope. Whether you're a seasoned professional or someone newly inspired to contribute, your voice matters here.

Susan Rice has rotated off the Board as Chair of the Board, due to maximum time served. She will remain as Acting Executive Director as we recruit more members.

Dianne Weichel - Chair of the Board, Laura Williams -Secretary and Nick Wilczek Board Member welcome you to join any of our meetings to see what we do. We meet the 3rd Wednesday of every month at the Madelyn Heeling Library at 3:30pm.

With gratitude, Nick Wilczek Board Member, Sierra Roots

Housing First!

Housing First for homeless people is a great idea – but it only works if there's housing to be had.

Creating housing is the objective of the Sierra Roots/No Place to Go Project.

Last year, the Project scored a victory by proposing and getting Title 25 construction reinstated in Nevada County. Title 25 relaxes many of the required construction standards under Title 24 of the California Building Code. This can reduce construction costs by as much as 25%.

Title 25 owner-built construction is only permitted in rural areas on five acres or more, and the house size is limited to no more than 1,200 square feet. It still must meet minimum health & safety standards (septic, running water, etc.).

Also, last year, the Nevada County Board of Supervisors approved the tiny homes on wheels ordinance – despite the Project's concerted efforts to amend the ordinance to include all homes on wheels (trailers, RVs and mobile homes).

Nevertheless, a standing-room-only crowd of citizens Jan. 14 convinced the supervisors that their constituents are serious about wanting RVs/trailers to be declared legal housing. That's the only affordable and available housing option for homeless and low-income people right now.

On May 27, the county held its first public hearing on what will become a proposed ordinance to allow RVs/trailers as legal alternative housing.

The meeting went well. There was the expected NIMBY (not in my back yard) opposition, but they were outnumbered by Project supporters who spoke eloquently in favor of the ordinance.

The Project also neutralized a major NIMBY objection by proposing that it should be illegal to move RVs/trailers and tiny homes on public roads during a wildfire evacuation warning or order.

The next public hearing is scheduled for early July when a draft of the proposed alternative housing ordinance will be up for discussion. The Project will once again rally supporters to speak in favor of the ordinance. We will also seek any modifications we believe will make the ordinance as inexpensive and least restrictive as possible.

The Project will continue to birddog this ordinance through all scheduled hearings, the Planning Commission and the ultimate up-or-down vote by the Board of Supervisors later this year.

RVs/trailers as alternative housing is a somewhat radical idea that will face considerable opposition, but as several people said May 27, "It's the right thing to do."

There are no guarantees that we will win – but if we can continue to get people to write in, show up and speak out, civilly and respectfully, we have a very real chance to create new affordable housing without spending millions of dollars or building anything.

It's all about housing for the people by the people.

Tom Durkin is the creative director of the Sierra Roots/No Place to Go Project, the social justice advocacy arm of Sierra Roots. The Project is funded by grants and private donations, which are tax deductible. Durkin may be contacted at tomdurkin@sierra-roots.org, 530-559-3199, or www.noplacetogoproject.com.

Sierra Roots Answering Service

Did you know Sierra Roots has an Answering Service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for all 365 days a year? You will speak with a live person who can assist you or transfer you to a Sierra Roots volunteer who can help with your questions.

Many times, we assist people with simple requests such as needing a sleeping bag, clothing, shoes; there are also questions, such as where our weekly lunches are held. We also receive calls from people wanting to make donations of clothing, sleeping bags or tents. The volunteer will arrange a time and place to pick these items up so they are available for our homeless participants.

We also work with Spirit Empowerment Center, Crisis Stabilization Unit and Hospitality House if they have specific needs for a person.

Depending on the time of year we can average anywhere from 20 calls a month to more than 30 during the winter months. We take the time to listen to each person's situation and help where needed. Sometimes they are referred to other non-profits that can better meet their needs. They are always grateful to speak with someone.

We had a gentleman see our flyer at Madelyn Helling Library with information about our weekly hot lunch program and he called our Answering Service. Inquiring about our hot lunches, he was wondering if he could assist. Herbert is from Germany and visiting family for 5 weeks and was looking for a way to help in the community. He has a background in Social Work and has a degree. Herbert worked in drug/alcohol rehab in Germany and with a winter shelter.

He mentioned that what Sierra Roots was doing for the community was fantastic! Our relationship based, supportive, nonjudgemental, and positive communications were just what our homeless participants needed. He also commented on the great American food we served at our lunches. It is an absolute pleasure working with Herbert. Although he has gone home to Germany, he will be back in October and looks forward to assisting Sierra Roots upon his return.

For more information or for questions please contact our Answering Service at 530-751-3263.

Volunteer Appreciation Gathering

Sierra Roots honored our faithful Volunteers and Staff at a party held at Madelyn Helling Library Amphitheatre on June 18th in the afternoon. Light refreshments of fresh fruit skewers and

homemade cookies were served along with Strawberry Lemonade and Iced Tea.

Approximately 25 people attended in addition to our Board Members Dianne Weichel, Laura Williams, and Nick Wilczek. Also in attendance was our Acting Executive Director, Susan Rice, Megan Wells the Emergency Weather Shelter Coordinator and Mike Cannatella our Shelter Manager.

It was a beautiful gathering of our "Lunch Bunch" volunteers and our Emergency Weather Shelter Group. A small gift as a token of all the work that was accomplished during the year was presented to everyone in attendance.

We only have a small number of paid staff for the Emergency Weather Shelter during the winter months. We also have a weekly hot lunch program that provides meals 52 weeks a year that is all-volunteer.

Sierra Roots could not exist or do the work we do without volunteers. These people are the backbone of our organization, and we could not exist without them. Volunteers are ordinary people with extraordinary hearts that give willingly of their time.

Each volunteer was asked to complete the following sentence: "Why do I volunteer for Sierra Roots …..?"

Here is a sampling of their responses:

❤ I volunteer because this organization's focus is a community-based approach to addressing homelessness, prioritizing empowerment. Meeting people where they are, such an approach is about healing and connecting a community to seek real solutions together.

❤ I volunteer to support our community directly and be able to witness the immediate and long-lasting positive effects if has for our participants.

❤ I volunteer because I have lived in Nevada County for many decades and the community has always been a welcoming place for everyone. Part of that is the people who also love the community and give back by volunteering in different ways. Now that I am retired it's time for me to give back

and make this a better place for all. I like Sierra Roots' philosophy of casting no judgement on anyone that requires services. This is a very important facet of my volunteering.

❤ I volunteer because I live in downtown Nevada City and the people we serve are the faces I see walking by my house and around town, and I care deeply about them.

Fund Raising News

As a nonprofit, Sierra Roots is powered by passionate volunteers in our community. Our mission is to serve a weekly hot meal, connect with unhoused folks in our area, and offer unconditional support and respect to all participants in our program. During the winter months we operate the Emergency Weather Shelter in Nevada City, which has helped many people find warmth, safety, and solace during dangerous weather conditions. In order to maintain this shelter, as well as provide clothing, shoes, and other basic necessities each week, we have to raise funds from those in our community who have a little extra to share.

This summer we will be hosting a benefit, "The Root of the Issue," at The Fern, located at 235 Commercial St., Nevada City, Ca. The fun begins at 7:00 p.m. on July 10th, and we will dance with a purpose to a few local DJ's who have generously donated their skills and time to this cause. This benefit is open to the public, and we encourage a donation on a sliding scale at the door. Any extra financial support that you can give is most welcome, and no one will be turned away! It takes a village to care for the collective, and we are only as collectively strong as our most vulnerable members. Please join us in a fun-filled, light-hearted evening to support a serious issue that is growing not only in our village, but in many places across our country.

If you can't join us on July 10th, we will miss you! You can still support us by scanning the QR code below:

If it is more convenient, you can support us by going to www.sierra-roots.org/donate, or sending a check to P.O. Box 2086, Nevada City, CA 95959. Whichever way you choose, and whatever the amount you are able to donate, many thanks!