SIERRA ROOTS QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2025

Ode to Jackie Wilson

March 15, 1930 – March 23, 2025

Jackie was one of the original volunteers for our Sierra Roots weekly hot lunch program for our homeless participants. She made some of the most beautiful and nutritious salads for our lunches and homemade smoothies. She had a gentle way of integrating herself with our participants. They loved being in her presence and listening to her, they often opened up to her in ways they would not with other volunteers.

Jackie had a soft spot for our participants that came naturally to her, and I thought of her as a mentor to me in working with the homeless. She had such insight to life circumstances that I admired and gleaned as much information as I could from her. She was a philanthropist and huge supporter of Sierra Roots in so many ways.

Before she passed, she asked her daughter, Karen, to make sure all her warm clothing and winter shoes was donated to Sierra Roots for the most vulnerable women. Jackie rest assured I have all your beautiful winter clothes/ shoes to hand out to the women.

Taken from the memorial service for Jackie: You lived well, loved generously, and left a legacy of care for all people and our beautiful earth. May your next adventure be as rich and meaningful. You are forever in our hearts, especially the Sierra Roots Family.

Warming Hearts and Hands: Help Us Make a Difference This Christmas

As the holiday season approaches, Sierra Roots is gearing up to spread joy and warmth to our friends experiencing homelessness in our community. On Christmas Day 2025, we'll be serving a free holiday lunch and handing out Winter Care Packages to our homeless participants. This year, we're counting on the generosity of our supporters to help us make it a special day. Thanks to the efforts of Laura Williams and three dedicated local high school teens, the care packages are taking shape. However, we still need your help to make this initiative a success.

We're in need of donations to purchase essential items, including:

- Waterproof bags
- Beanies
- Warm socks
- Gloves
- Flashlights
- Batteries
- Dog food

Your contribution will help us provide warmth and comfort to those who need it most during the holiday season.

Consider making a donation today to support this worthy cause. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of our neighbors experiencing homelessness.

To donate or learn more about Sierra Roots' holiday initiatives, please contact us at info@sierra-roots.org OR call us at (530) 751-3263. If you would like to donate to our winter care packages, click the QR code. Let's work together to warm hearts and hands this Christmas!

A Heartfelt Thank You to the Briar Patch!

We're overflowing with gratitude for The Briar Patch, our November Round Up partner! Throughout the month, shoppers will be rounding up their change at checkout, and those donations will come directly to Sierra Roots. We're so thankful for this incredible support!

The Briar Patch is more than just a grocery store - it's a champion of local

farmers, producers, and community. With over 11,500 community owners and a commitment to sustainability, they've been a staple in the Sierra Foothills since 1976. This dedication to local sourcing not only benefits the community but also promotes a resilient food system. We're grateful for partners like The Briar Patch who understand the importance of giving back. Their Round Up program is just one example of their dedication to making a positive impact.

Thank you, The Briar Patch, for choosing Sierra Roots as your November partner!

Your support will help us continue to serve our neighbors in need. If you're not familiar with The Briar Patch, we encourage you to visit their stores in Nevada City and Auburn. Your business will support local farmers, producers, and the community as a whole. And don't forget to round up your change at checkout to support Sierra Roots

A Decade of Warmth: Celebrating 10 Years of the Sierra Roots Emergency Weather Shelter!

Each winter, as temperatures drop and storms move through Nevada County, Sierra Roots activates its Emergency Weather Shelter (EWS) - a lifeline for our unhoused neighbors during the harshest nights of the year.

The EWS operates under a low barrier, “come as you are” model, offering participants a safe, warm place to sleep when the weather poses a threat to human life. Dogs and all companion animals (leashed, of course) are welcome too, because we believe no one should need to choose between safety and the bond of a beloved pet.

Because of our low-barrier approach, we do not screen our participants and often accept whatever information a person is willing to share. For this reason, the EWS serves only adults 18 and older. If someone under 18 or with a child arrives at our door, Sierra Roots works quickly with local partners to help find a safe alternative for the night.

When and How We Activate

The Sierra Roots EWS team monitors forecast data for downtown Nevada City (approximately 39.2614° N, 121.0170° W, elevation 2,477 ft) as reported by the National Weather Service (NWS). The decision to open the shelter is made when forecasts meet the established Activation Criteria outlined below :

1. **Temperatures** of 32°F or below are forecasted for three or more consecutive overnight hours; or

2. A **winter storm warning** is issued by the NWS for elevations at or below 3,000 feet; or
3. Combined **wind chill** and temperature create conditions that pose a significant threat to human life.

When any of these thresholds are met, our Shelter Coordinator sends an activation notice - a signal that the shelter will open that night. With as little as a day's notice, our small but mighty team moves quickly to transform Nevada City Veteran's Hall into a warm refuge. Guests are greeted with hot food, clean bedding, and a spirit of dignity.

On activation nights, participant intake runs from 4:30 to 8:00 p.m., with a hot dinner served at 5:30 p.m. In the morning, coffee and a hot breakfast are served at 6:30 a.m., and the shelter closes at 7:30 a.m. Occasionally, when storms last several days, the shelter reopens on consecutive nights - but it never operates during the daytime, allowing staff to reset and prepare for the next evening.

After dinner, participants are invited to visit Dianne's Giving Table, where they can receive warm, dry clothing, toiletries, and other essential supplies. It's a simple but powerful gesture of care that often makes the difference between getting through the night in comfort or in struggle.

Many of our guests are long-time Nevada County residents navigating difficult chapters - job loss, illness, or the high cost of housing. For some, the shelter offers a temporary reprieve; for others, it's the only place they can safely rest. Each person who walks through our doors is met as a neighbor.

Beyond providing warmth and safety, the EWS serves as a point of connection. While we don't formally provide case management, we're fortunate to have a knowledgeable and compassionate team of local staff and volunteers who often help participants navigate wraparound resources beyond the scope of the shelter - linking them with vital services throughout the county. In this sense the EWS extends beyond just being a response to weather – it becomes a reflection of community values in action.

The Emergency Weather Shelter operates through a contract with Nevada County, supported by the commitment of Sierra Roots staff, volunteers, and community partners. Each activation is a reminder that when we prepare together, we endure together - and that safety, in the truest sense, is something we create for one another.

Now in its tenth season, the Sierra Roots Emergency Weather Shelter continues its mission to provide safety, warmth, and connection to those facing the elements without a home. What began as a grassroots response has become an essential lifeline for our community.

Although this season's shelter is nearly fully staffed, we still have a great need for volunteers – especially contribute meals (by donation), setup and

breakdown, and our all-important "cardio cleanup crew." This small but mighty team helps sweep and mop the shelter from about 7:30 to 8:00 a.m. on mornings after a shelter closing - a perfect opportunity for early risers who want to lend a hand (and break a sweat!) before work!

If you or someone you know would like to volunteer, please contact our EWS Manager at mike@sierra-roots.org

Homeless Hero: Local Man Returns Phone to Non-Profit Helping the Homeless

Sierra Roots receives calls through our answering service for a variety of needs for the homeless in our community. It could be someone wanting to donate clothing, sleeping bags or other items for our most vulnerable participants. It is an avenue for the homeless to reach us with specific needs, especially as the weather turns colder.

We received a call from a homeless gentleman that needed a sleeping bag, I agreed to meet him at Community Church where we serve our lunches. When I arrived with a sleeping bag, he was very grateful for the warmth he needed as the nights are getting colder. He also handed me a brand-new phone he found on the ground by the Church. He asked if I could find the owner and return it.

He could have easily sold it or kept it, instead he wanted to make sure it got back to the owner. It is a reminder that integrity and kindness are not defined by circumstances.

It took me a couple of days of research, but I was finally able to connect with a family member of the owner and returned the phone. I explained that one of our homeless participants had found the phone and turned it in to us. She was extremely thankful for the return of the phone and made a generous donation to Sierra Roots.

UUCM Welcomes Sierra Roots

Sierra Roots was invited to speak at the Unitarian Universalist Community of the Mountains (UUCM) in Grass Valley. Sierra Roots was also the grateful recipient of UUCM's "Share the Plate" program in which the congregation donates half of the week's offering to a local community organization. SR board member Nick Wilczek shared our mission to support and advocate for our unhoused neighbors through compassionate relationship building.

The timing and spirit of the invitation could not have been more fitting. Reverend Kevin Tarsa's thoughtful

message that morning centered on *speaking with strangers*—the courage and openness it takes to reach out to those we don't yet know. His words reflected the heart of what Sierra Roots strives to do every day: building relationships with people who are too often unseen, listening without judgment, and walking alongside them as equals.

We are deeply appreciative of the work and generosity of the Unitarian Universalist Community of the Mountains. Together, we are reminded that meaningful change begins with the simple act of saying hello.