

Draft Board of Supervisors Regular Meeting
May 21, 2024
Agenda Item #51
Impact of Closure of RAIN Transitional Living Center
Presented by Ami Milla, Co-Founder RAIN Communities, Inc.

I am Ami Milla, Co-Founder of RAIN Communities, Inc. RCI has partnered with the County of Ventura and RAIN Transitional Living Center for over 22 years working with homeless families.

As the BOS considers the 2024 Continuum of Care Homeless Count, we would like to draw your attention to homeless children.

2024 VC Continuum of Care Homeless Count

- Despite best efforts, women and children will always be under reported because they hide, and may be living in their vehicles or friend's couches, etc.
- This was proven when Kathy Jenks (God rest her soul) started RAIN Transitional Living Center (RAIN TLC) back in 1997. While intended to house adults living in the Ventura river bottom, RAIN TLC was unexpectedly flooded with women and children.
- As the County has invested in plans to address homelessness, there is one glaring omission; There is no mention of specific plans to address the unique needs of homeless children.
 - The Ventura County Homelessness Plan dated December 2023 has no mention of strategies to address homeless children in its 57 pages.
 - The Lewis Road Vision Plan dated May 16, 2023 does not mention homeless kids
 - 2024 VC Continuum of Care Homeless Count report also does not have any recommendations specific to serving homeless children.
- Homeless children are invisible and silent victims that need our attention.
- RAIN TLC has served about 120 homeless residents each year, with over half its population being children.

Lack of Communication:

- Now we have been informed that the County plans to permanently close RAIN TLC.
- RAIN Communities, Inc. (RCI) has been a partner that has dedicated itself in support of RAIN TLC raising over \$3 million and investing over 28,000 volunteer hours. We are deeply disappointed to learn of RAIN's closure after the decision had been made.

- We have expected to be considered a stakeholder that would have had the opportunity to offer solutions and be part of the conversation. For years we have made regular requests for updates. Clearly, that did not happen.
- RAIN TLC has universal support of virtually every demographic.
- Donors sponsored rooms, helped build the playground and create the beautiful backyard, and continue to give regularly. Recently, we have received large grants and donations that we are in the awkward position of informing donors of the closure after the fact.
- RAIN's loyal donor base deserves to have full transparency.
- The community has rallied around helping homeless women and children in crisis, recognizing that a comprehensive solution was necessary to heal, transform and thrive. They should be informed of RAIN TLC's closure, if it is indeed permanent.

Impact of RAIN TLC Closure on Children:

- Homeless children will be invisible collateral damage
- RAIN TLC is the only program that accepts families with boys >12 years old and can accommodate any family size.
- Homeless children suffer trauma of homelessness by:
 - Poor nutrition
 - Poor sleep
 - Lack of medical, dental and vision check-ups
 - Lack of help in school/poor attendance
 - Depression/anxiety from trauma
 - Isolation
 - Lack of safe play areas
 - At risk for substance abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence and neglect
 - Lack mentors
 - Lack exposure to activities most children take for granted

Homeless kids are invisible like an anchor under the sea being drug along the rocky bottom by currents they can't control. Often their parents are not equipped with the skills to change course. Where we sit upon the surface it may not seem like an emergency, but IT IS and we have a responsibility to help pull them up to safety.

The impact of RAIN's closure on children will be significant. Homeless children are at much greater risk of exposure to substance abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence and neglect. RAIN offers a fortress of protection where children thrive under the watchful eye of trauma-informed staff and their parents are held accountable for healthy choices.

For over 20 years, RAIN Transitional Living Center has been that lifeline that has rescued these vulnerable kids by providing a home-like setting with nutritious meals, on-site counseling, child-care, tutoring, enrichment activities, indoor play spaces, and a huge outdoor playground. Their parents received on-site life-skills training, parenting classes, counseling, job transportation, and dedicated social workers to help create a plan for their sustained independence. Adults were held accountable for their actions, and children thrived under the watchful eye of trauma-informed staff. RAIN TLC didn't just house families, it transformed their lives having generational impact.

To solve homelessness for families that have experienced trauma, you need to address the root cause:

- Substance abuse
- Domestic violence
- Mental health issues
- Often multiple barriers to unwind

RAIN is a domestic violence shelter, sober living environment, foster care reunification program and mental health program wrapped in one. For families in crisis, intensive case management is necessary to set goals, provide accountability, and ensure needs of the children are being met. On-site wrap around services are necessary to create positive changes. For services to be utilized, the barriers of transportation and childcare need to be solved. At RAIN TLC, all of these needs are met.

The County's proposed replacement is a scattered site model of serving families in motels and master leased apartments:

- Providing free rent in a motel room or apartment does not change toxic behaviors. It enables them.
- Offering off-site wrap around services are only effective if utilized. Lack of transportation and child care are barriers.
- A once weekly scheduled visit by a social worker will not provide enough support for a family overwhelmed and in crisis, and cannot replace the daily interactions with staff at RAIN.
- To solve homelessness for families that have experienced trauma, you need to address the root cause.
- RAIN is a domestic violence shelter, sober living environment, foster care reunification program and mental health program wrapped in one.
- What does that equate to in the county budget savings?

Checking a box that a homeless person stays housed in a taxpayer paid motel room is not an effective measure of success. Have they stayed employed? Sober? Are the children safe? RAIN measures success not only by a move to permanent housing, but by personal growth, employment, debt repayment, sobriety, learned parenting skills, and child welfare.

Reasons behind RAIN's Closure?:

- **Lack of staffing** – This was a temporary issue. RAIN TLC had interviewed and was ready to extend offers of hire before the plug was pulled. RCI could also help fund temporary positions if needed.
- **Lack of need**- Not true. RAIN TLC and RCI get frequent calls for help but RAIN closed its waiting list for about 5 months starting back in October 2023. Using an outdated wait list takes longer to track homeless families down.
- **Too expensive**- It is true that 24/7 on-site staffing is an expense to the County but it ensures a safe environment for the kids and guard rails for ill-equipped parents. Alumni credit daily interactions with staff as key to their success. Any cost analysis of RAIN should include an offset of savings to other County agencies such as police, jails, courts, and foster care whose burden is lessened as families thrive. County has been begun scaling back program services since 2020 despite some of them being funded by RCI. RCI funded the counseling, childcare, children enrichment programs, Uber rides and more. RAIN has been operating at less than 50% of capacity making cost per family much higher. With vacancy rates in VC so low, rents will continue to trend up. Operating in motels or a leasing model will ensure costs climb and it will lack the comprehensive programs of RAIN TLC.
- **Aging building**- It's too old for RAIN, but not too old to be used for County offices as a proposed option in the Lewis Road Vision Plan? The building was donated and designated for homeless use, HomeAid renovated the 1st floor, RCI funded or coordinated the donation of virtually all the furniture in the building, the playground, and the expansive backyard including hardscapes, parking lot, and much more. It would be much more expensive to buy another building, and lack of inventory are major barriers.
- **Congregate housing** -- We have been told that congregate housing is not a best practice. The results coming out of RAIN and the alumni testimonials (attached) prove differently.

Each family at RAIN has private living quarters. The shared spaces (dining room, living room, playrooms) help build a sense of community which is critical for adults that have burned all their bridges and do not have access to a support network. RAIN alumni credit the daily interactions with staff and other residents that offer encouragement and accountability as an important building block in their journey to independence.

- **Isolation-** County leadership has mentioned that RAIN's location may be too isolated, and families are better off in their community of origin. Many RAIN alumni mention the serenity of RAIN's location, and removal of chaos and temptations from toxic relationships was an important part of self-reflection and made it easier to focus on goals. On the contrary, being isolated in motels can exacerbate mental health issues. Per a May 8, 2024 article in the Ventura County Star, one homeless individual being housed in a VC motel had this to say, "Physically I was getting better when I was at the hotel, but mentally...I was too isolated. I needed more interaction." At RAIN the kids can play together in the enormous backyard with a giant play structure. In motels, the parking lot will be their only playground.
- **Social Worker interactions will be the same in motels-** Not true. A once weekly text or scheduled visit M-F from 8-5 pm from a social worker to check in while living in the motel, does not match the regular on-site interactions at RAIN where behaviors can be monitored and immediate guidance can be given. The welfare of children is much more protected at RAIN TLC.
- **Motels are just as effective-** Not true for many families experiencing trauma. These families are often not equipped with effective tools to handle crisis. Checking a box that a homeless person stays housed in a taxpayer paid hotel room is not an effective measure of success. Ask about the details of any stats provided to you. Have they stayed employed? Are they sober? Are they inviting toxic relationships into their motels? Are their children getting to school regularly? What kind of nutrition are the kids getting? Are they getting preventative medical care? Are the children safe and nurtured?
- **Liability-** RAIN has been operating since 1997. It has an incredible safety track record. In over 2 decades of operation and an estimated 3,000 individuals served, it has had 1 incident resulting in a safety rating of 99.97%. What other County program can match that? With 50% of RAIN's population coming from a background of trauma, the County has to know that the risk of the kids being subjected to further trauma in a motel room where nobody is observing is tremendously greater than out at RAIN with 24/7 staff and cameras. This may be easily forgotten when focused on a more cost-efficient model. Has the county considered this potential outcome?

What we ask of the Board of Supervisors:

- Provide a budget analysis made to the public of why RAIN is closing;
- Reopen RAIN until there is full engagement with the public on how the children will be safeguarded, and their welfare measured, tracked and reported.
 - Will their school attendance be tracked?
 - How about their grades to ensure they are not falling behind?
 - Will someone ensure the kids are getting medical, dental and vision check ups?
 - Will someone make regular in-person visits with the kids to make sure they appear nourished, and physically and mentally stable?
- Read the testimonials from former RAIN residents to understand why motels can't match the RAIN's transformative impact.
- Include RCI as a stakeholder and communicate openly.
- Keep the public informed.
- While reviewing costs of operating RAIN TLC, include the cost of other County agencies impacted such as police, courts, CFS, etc., as well as human toll. Today homeless kids may be tomorrow's homeless adults.
- Any Lewis Road plans will take years to complete. Why leave RAIN empty to fall in disrepair? Other site tenants will not want that either. Until a plan is ready to implement, at least continue to utilize RAIN for homeless families which can serve 120 people in a year, versus the 10 households the County now plans to motel.
- The County currently has empty office spaces that has sat empty for years. Please don't let RAIN be replaced by more non-critical office space.
- We request a formal report on the program details of the proposed changes.
 - What is the timeline for acquiring master leases?
 - Will they be scattered or in a centralized location?
 - What community-based services have you linked residents to? How do you track whether they are being used?
 - Will transportation be provided? Will they be provided childcare? Both are necessary components to access services.
 - Will meals be provided?
 - Will transportation to jobs be provided?
 - What do you anticipate the length of stays in motels?
 - What program metrics will you track other than the fact that a household remains housed
 - What is the estimated budget of this program?
- Please report back on these issues raised.

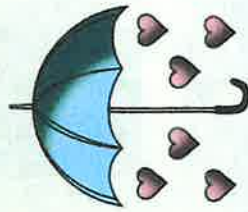
Bottom line, for a homeless family in extreme crisis, a comprehensive support network of on-site staff and on-site wrap around services protect children and guide adults to make positive changes leading to life transformations. While free housing with no accountability can enable unhealthy choices perpetuating destructive patterns. The children will be the silent victims. This knowledge is what has attracted donors, grantors, and virtual universal community support for RAIN throughout the years.

RAIN Transitional Living Center is a proven effective homeless service model that promotes mental wellness, supportive services, a sense of community that has perfect synergy with the Lewis Road Vision Plan. Please don't allow children to become invisible collateral damage. Over 20 years, every single supervisor has had to weigh limited County budgets with the will to keep RAIN open. For the sake of the futures of homeless children, please don't let its closure be your legacy.

A Bridge to Permanent Housing

Since 1997, the RAIN TLC has provided short-term housing and services to local families and single adults to help with the transition from being homeless to permanent housing. RAIN TLC provides a future of independence and security to families and individuals experiencing homelessness in Ventura County.

We work with other agencies to give our clients access to resources and services they need.



Partners in Transforming Lives

RAIN TLC works with other agencies and community organizations who share the mission to offer families and individuals experiencing homelessness a future of independence and security.

RAIN Communities, Inc. (RCI), is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that provides:

- Child Care
- Counseling
- Enhancement Programs for children
- Volunteers

Visit the RCI website at www.raincommunities.org

For more information about RAIN TLC,
please call (805) 383-7505



Empowering Ventura County's Residents

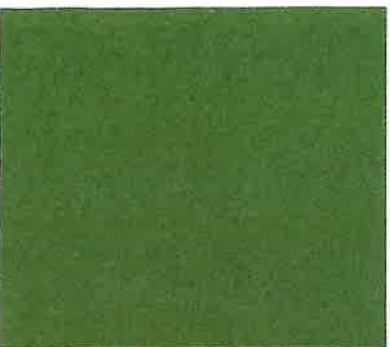
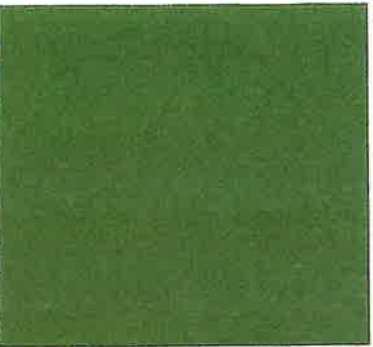
The County of Ventura Human Services Agency provides public services that promote self-sufficiency, health and well-being. Our programs help ensure the protection of children, the elderly, and dependent adults, and provide a safety net for individuals and families who need assistance with basic necessities, such as food, housing and health care. Additionally, we help people secure employment through education, training, job search skills, and job placement.



Toll-Free: 1-(866) 904-9362
www.vchsa.org

HSA-034 6/19





RAIN Transitional Living Center

RAIN Transitional Living Center (TLC) is operated by the County of Ventura, Human Services Agency. Its mission is to strengthen families, promote self-sufficiency, and support safety, health and well-being.

RAIN TLC provides temporary housing and services to families with children under the age of 18 years old and individuals transitioning from homelessness to self-sufficiency. Located in Camarillo, the setting includes:

- Private rooms
 - Shared living spaces such as bathrooms, dining area and living room
 - Nutritious meals
- Clients work with a social worker in setting goals leading towards independence and housing stability.

Services that Promote Self-Sufficiency

In addition to supportive case management, RAIN TLC offers:

- Transportation to and from work
- On-site therapists
- Parenting classes
- Enrichment programs for children
- Life skills courses
- Employment assistance
- Housing assistance
- Credit counseling
- Money management
- Relapse prevention



Entering RAIN TLC

Ventura County residents who are currently homeless and agree to obtain employment may be eligible to enter RAIN TLC. RAIN TLC provides a safe place by supporting a clean and sober living environment where residents participate in a mandatory savings program to help them establish financial stability. To ensure the safety and well-being of residents and staff, a background check and a tuberculosis clearance are required before entry.

Other eligibility criteria may apply



Achieving Self-Sufficiency

As residents begin their path to independence they are given the opportunity to build on their strengths and learn new skills. The building blocks they will learn prepare them for success as they move into rental housing. Residents at RAIN TLC are motivated to meet their goal for economic stability by finding and obtaining employment. The staff at RAIN TLC provide the support needed to help residents achieve self-sufficiency.



RAIN Communities, Inc.

*Helping Homeless Families
Help Themselves*

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May 21, 2024

Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 S. Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Dear Supervisors,

Please Read the following testimonials of RAIN alumni that want their voices to be heard.

RAIN Transitional Living Center was their lifeline. The daily interactions with staff and other residents helped them build a community providing them encouragement, accountability and a supportive network that was integral to their healing and journey to independence.

RAIN Communities provides funding for on-site wrap-around services such as counselors, childcare, children's enrichment programs and much more.

As you read these letters, we hope it will make it more clear why RAIN in its Lewis Road setting is much more supportive than being isolated in scattered motels as is being proposed as a replacement to RAIN Transitional Living Center.

Please keep RAIN on the Lewis Road Campus; It has perfect synergy with the other mental health and wellness services on site. If the building is lost there will likely never be another opportunity for such a unique program.

RAIN Communities welcomes any discussions to help find solutions.

Sincerely,

Ami Milla
Co-Founder
RAIN Communities, Inc.

To whom it may concern.

Today I am grateful for the journey Ram has helped me through. A year ago, I was running from an abusive marriage and I had lost my job, my home, and I had nowhere to go 6 months pregnant and with a 3 year old. Life seemed heartbreaking. I was on edge, defensive, anti-social and untrusting. I felt alone, I was tired and I was angry. Through my 12 months at Ram I started counseling, opening up to staff, asking for help and everything slowly unfolded with grace. I wasn't in a house full of strangers but in a house full of tools, resources and the most important of all a house full of compassion for the well being of myself and my family. I was given the opportunity to get through those hard times and be around supportive ~~members~~ ^{individuals}. I was able to structure a routine and a schedule. Most important of all I was able to feel like myself again. I don't question my motherhood or my direction anymore and I have Ram to thank for ~~that~~ ^{that}. So Thank you, for being apart of this journey, being there when no one else was and for helping me find my confidence.

Jane Doe 4 Testimonial

I joined RAIN in November. It was just my one-month-old son and me. I was extremely nervous considering I wasn't too sure what to expect. I was previously homeless in the streets of Ventura, CA. Being at RAIN I have learned to interact with people again instead of hiding from them. I've made connections with some of the families who are still here with me. I've made amazing connections with staff and have been welcomed with open arms since arriving on my first day. RAIN has taught me to explore all my options instead of giving up after being told no with my first choice. A lot of the staff have kept me grounded and motivated me to continue to strive for my goals which is to gain stable living for my son and me. While at RAIN I have been able to gain stable employment and open a checking account. I have been able to learn new parenting skills from the classes they have provided, especially being a first-time mom that has helped me as I go through this journey with a now 1 year old. I have learned to manage and save money when it felt impossible to do so. I have also learned that pretty much anything is possible if we ask for it. Being at RAIN has been such a blessing especially having been homeless and pregnant, I am out of words to express how grateful I am for the staff and the program being accessible to assist me get on my feet to be able to be a functioning and stable mom for my son.

Thank you.

Jane Doe 3 Testimonial

Growing up I watched my mother battle cancer and she passed away when I was 9 years old. My father raised me but after the death of my mother he fell apart. The time I was 11, my father lost everything. He had also become an addict. Watching my father do drugs I also turned to drugs and by the time I was fifteen I was strung out on meth and I was in and out of juvenile hall. At 17 my dad also was in jail and I was living with a family member. I got clean for a year and graduated high school. But my addiction wasn't over; after high school I started to live on my own. I was in an abusive relationship and had become a heroin addict. I was in and out of jail. I became pregnant with my first son, and decided to go to rehab. It was rehab or prison. I stayed clean for 3 years and once again I relapsed. I was pregnant with my second son and could not stop doing drugs. I gave birth and they took both my kids. At that point I knew I didn't want this for me and my kids.

Now here I am at The Rain Project, I have 2 years clean. I have full custody of my kids and my case is closed. I was able to get a job and keep it. I also got the chance to buy my car in cash. I was able to pay off all my court fines and fees, a total of \$4,200.00. I was also able to pay off all my collection and bills I had from my past, a total of \$4,500.00. I reunited with my family and also got the therapy I needed. My case worker also helped me to get my cases expunged. I am currently in full time school, and working and I have recently found permanent housing.

I love who I am today and I have the resources and the support system to stay clean, and support my family. Thank you Rain Project.

Mr. and Mrs. John Doe Testimonial

When my wife and I arrived at the RAIN TLC, we were fighting a CFS case and were living in a motel. Our children were taken from us due to the unacceptable living situation we were stuck living in, not because we were bad parents. We arrived with \$200 in our pockets and backpacks with our only belongings. Upon our arrival, we were greeted with open arms and love. It was nothing like we expected; we were grateful. Since CFS knew we were at the RAIN TLC, we were immediately given overnight visits with our children and a few weeks later, our children were placed back with us. My wife and I could not believe how things were changing for us for the better.

We immediately developed a case plan with our Case Manager and we attacked it full force. We were assigned therapists and sent to meetings to better ourselves. It felt like a lot to handle but the plan of this program is to get you ready for the real world, and that's exactly what they do. Believe me. It is not a vacation, its preparation for the real world. I was already employed but would not have been able to keep my job without the help for this program. As for my wife, RAIN really helped her. She couldn't read or write, so they started with tutoring, and then sent her to Goodwill Job Club to learn how to become employable. Now she can read, write and has a permanent full time job.

We arrived with \$200 and with the help of this program saved up to \$12,000 in only six short months. We paid various debts, addressed our evictions, purchased a car, and I obtained my driver's license. Now to say that our stay here was perfect, would be an incorrect statement. We came across a few bumps in the road, but not once did RAIN turn their backs on us. They helped us every step of the way. I have never been one to ask for help or believe in programs like this. I am stubborn and maybe that's why we ended up here. But the end of the day, this program saved my life, my relationship with my wife and the lives of my children.

As of today, I am holding the keys to my new 2 bedroom apartment. I still have \$3,000 in my bank account, and I am ready for my new life to begin. For anyone reading this letter always remember that RAIN is not a permanent residence, it's a transitional living center that was created to help homeless families get back on their feet and give you a chance at life. So use this program for everything that its worth and you will make it. Because if a person like me can do it, than trust me when I say, anyone can do it.

Jane Doe's Story

This letter of gratitude was personally written by a former RAIN TLC resident. She and her three children were victims of traumatic domestic violence.

I want to give thanks and remind you at those times when you may feel your work is just a job, your presence is so much more to me and my children. I have come from a place of isolation resulting in a struggle to protect myself and my children with limited resources and very little hope. RAIN has become a place of support, stability and also provides a safe place for our family to recover. It is the bridge that will enable me to reach my goals professionally and financially. Here we can play, heal, and feel that people believe in us. Your participation and interaction are embedded in this healing process for me and my family. These differences will permeate through my children's lives and their children's lives. So when you might feel tired or frustrated or that your job is not what you perceive, please remember my thank you and you are a part of the life changing gift. And for those of you, who have taken the time to smile, acknowledge us with respect and a positive attitude, you enable us to create a stronger faith toward success. Thank you!

“Margaret’s” Story

This personal testimony was written by “Margaret”, a former RAIN TLC resident. The outcome is one more example of how RAIN has changed the life of another Ventura County family that was in deep crisis.

I’d like to tell you about how the RAIN program has – and still is, helping me and my family.

I was using drugs and living with my husband in the bushes behind a local motel. I had already had my children taken away from me, so I really had no reason to live. But somehow, every morning, I woke up. On a daily basis, my husband and I would fight, sometimes yelling and screaming, but our fights always would end up with us hitting each other.

Then I was arrested and put in jail. That’s where I found out that I was pregnant again. I was lost, scared and didn’t have a way out.

I wanted to have this baby but I didn’t know how I was going to stop using drugs. And since I was sleeping in the bushes, it wasn’t the place to have a child.

When I got out of jail three weeks later, I told my husband I was pregnant. He was just as scared as I was. That night I cried the hardest I ever cried in my life. I had no idea what we were going to do.

But the next day my husband said that we were going to do it right this time. He went to the Rescue Mission in Oxnard and I went to a Maternity Home where my daughter was born.

The same day my husband graduated from the program at the Rescue Mission, we moved into the RAIN TLC in Camarillo. When we moved into our room, I expected an empty space, but it was beautifully decorated, with furniture and every single thing a person could need. There was even a crib for our baby!

RAIN provided a safe and loving environment for us and for our daughter. We had daily chores and they provided child care for the baby while I worked. Through RAIN, we’ve had anger management classes, parenting classes, self-sufficiency and relapse prevention classes, along with individual therapy. Now we can work together better as a couple and as a family.

We even got to go on family outings – nice things we'd always wanted to do but couldn't. Now I've learned how important it is to put money away for those kinds of times together. It's not only fun but also important for building relationships. I now can say that I have healthy boundaries and high self-esteem.

RAIN has given me my life back, because if we hadn't had a safe place to stay after graduation, we might have ended up back on drugs without our beautiful daughter.

I have now been clean from drugs for 2 years. The RAIN program is the best thing to come along in my life. They have not only helped us by giving us a safe and healthy shelter. They also have a program for us to save money so that we were ready to move into another place. They have also helped us to transition to life in our new home. They gave us almost all of our furniture, dishes, silverware, food and even a gift basket! They have told us they will be visiting every month to check on us and help us with any problems that come up.

When I had nowhere to go, RAIN gave me the tools that will help me to be a productive member of society. Thank you for letting me share a little of my story. God has been very good to us through the gifts and help of the RAIN!

RAIN Communities, Inc. funded the counseling program, childcare and family bonding activities such as whale watching, the theater, Dodger games, outdoor movie nights, etc. RCI also furnished the RAIN TLC building (bedrooms, living rooms, play rooms, and dining room) and landscaped the entire exterior including the hardscapes and large playground equipment. We also fund basic furnishings for RAIN families moving out, auto repairs, rental assistance, holiday Adopt-a-Family program, and much more.

This funding comes from community donors including churches, civic groups, businesses, and individuals. RAIN TLC has universal support from virtually every demographic in Ventura County.

"Lisa's" Story
A Personal Testimony

I came to RAIN struggling to overcome drug addiction. I had my young son with me when I arrived. I was alone, scared and defiant. I knew that there were things that I would have to do.... and I resented it. I fought it for a while, and they were patient with my attitude. Then I started to look around and realized that things could have been much worse. It was at that time that I started to cooperate. Then, when I found a job and was told I was required to save 80% of my check each payday I was indignant. I did it because it was required of me, but soon, the funds built up and I discovered that I did not need money in my pocket because everything was provided for us. Soon I had the money saved and the experience behind me to get a place of my own and make room for the next person in need of my space.

The mere thought of RAIN turning my life around in order to help someone else after I left, still helps me understand the importance of the program. Having such a serene atmosphere at RAIN takes the sting out of the unfortunate circumstances that brings people here in the first place. I am not the same person I was when I arrived here. I have been going to counseling for the entire time and have been able to talk about all of the things that have happened in my life and not be judged. RAIN affords all of us the knowledge that no matter what... we deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

Reunited at RAIN

We have been struggling with homelessness for four years. This past year, we held a homeless family sign and relied on the community for donations of food, money and hotel rooms. This was degrading and humiliating. We took baths at the park and slept in our van, all seven of us. Every night our sleep was disrupted by police who threatened us. No place was safe and there was nowhere to hide. Schools would not enroll my kids because they had no address, until the homeless liaison at the School District stepped in and enroll three of our children. September was the worst time ever, as all my children were taken away by Children and Family Services (CFS). I told them that I had applied for help with housing authority and shelters everywhere, but we were denied because there was no place for a family of seven. With the kids gone my husband and I were scheduled for weekly visits, my husband and I started recycling every night, the police continued to wake us nightly, but we stayed busy at night going through dumpster for recycled items. It was our CFS worker who brought us to RAIN. As soon as we came to RAIN our kids were returned to us. My husband and I attended Relapse Prevention, Self-Sufficiency Class, Job Club and we received certificates for Parenting Class. My husband completed Homeless Court/Community Service hours and got his drivers license back. We sold the old van, and bought a van in better shape, and we are now moving into permanent housing.

Both my husband and I were employed as soon as we got to RAIN, thanks to the Job Club. I work for a company in Ventura, and my husband also got a very good job. We found childcare through Children's Home Society. While at RAIN my children had tutors, were in the homework club and we all had therapists. In six months we completed our program. The Case Workers were great. Our Case Worker gave us the opportunity and second chance to improve our life. She helped us with our goals; she gave us praise when we did well and helped to motivate us to accomplish the things we needed to. I will genuinely miss all the RAIN staff and Case Workers. They made our family complete again. Last night we took our five kids to see our 3 bedroom, 2 bath apartment. Just watching them run to their new rooms, laughing was the most amazing feeling and a memory I will not forget. Thank you RAIN. I hate to leave the friends I made there, but know that someday soon they will share the same excitement with their family.

Jane Doe 2 Testimonial

Me and my family are so grateful for the rain Transitional Living Center. From the start me and my husband were having the hardest time living in a room that was not a room and the house of a relative. And then to find out that I was pregnant and couldn't continue to live in that situation. We then had to separate and I had to go into a women's shelter for the sake of my pregnancy and my health. He stayed at that location but what time every day to see me and spend time with me and take me over to the relative's house to hang out and bring me back to the center. During that time we spent approximately 8 months and then the birth of our son. I will be honest he was still unable to completely let go of substances before we were yours interviewed for the program. This was brought to his attention that you would have to become sober but he was willing and up for the challenge. They contacted us shortly after and maybe within 2 to 3 weeks we were on our way to the program. We were welcomed with open arms. The councilors were very understanding and helpful and the staff was very helpful. We were no longer looking where our next meal would come from or where we would have to go and look for a place to stay that has a roof over our heads specially with an infant and how to be able to provide. At time of entrance to the program we both had gotten jobs and were able to work and it was new to him so the fact that he hadn't used and we were on our way to the program so sobriety with a new thing for him but they were right there with him alongside to help him out. We were there for about a total of 8 months since we were new there and you knew buddy there it was a shock but we quickly adjusted and loved every time we were there we love the outings you guys have provided we loved the events the opportunities for the kids and the area in general even the playground and just the overall environment we progressed quickly in the program. You made friends and we said goodbye to friends that were at the program as well. We eventually made enough savings to be able to afford our own place. This all happened right before the pandemic got really bad and shut a lot of things down. Even the program we were lucky to still be able to do things with the program but just under a lot more restrictions. When we finally moved into our own place the program helped us by giving us a basket of Essentials to help us get things we needed for our apartment. We love the fact that we had to help for Christmas as a long night and holidays and things helped out so much and their children loved everything that they were given. We loved the fact that we can call for help at any time and ask if we can have assistance. It is a little different now that we are no longer residents or within the two-year Gap but they still help whenever we need them. Every little bit helps. I would consider Rain Transitional Living staff and that environment and location as our first home. It was able to bring our family together, help my husband with his sobriety, help us become financially stable and help us just become better over all people. The Rain Transitional Living Center will always be family to us and will always be our first home.