



An Initiative of United Way
of Santa Cruz County



May Update



[Smart Solutions to Homelessness-](#)

[Become an Ally!](#)

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What Are Smart Solutions?

Evidence-based

Produce measurable results

Cost effective

Benefit the entire community

Take a step toward ending homelessness

Support the dignity of each individual

Our VISION is a Santa Cruz County in which every community member has some

Introducing Our New Community Organizer: Maria Romero



We are pleased to announce our new Community Organizer for Smart Solutions to Homelessness, Maria Romero.

Maria comes to United Way with degrees in Anthropology and Sociology from UC Santa Cruz. She has experience with several organizations in the Bay Area and Washington D.C. like MapLight, Public Citizen and PowerPac+.

In the past, she has worked on getting money out of politics, and increasing diversity in politics. Maria is passionate about creating a world where empathy and love overflows. She cares deeply about creating smart solutions to homelessness.

form of safe shelter, and where homelessness is a rare occurrence.

Our MISSION is to build the community will to reduce and ultimately end homelessness in Santa Cruz County through education and collaborative action.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS ...AND READ!

Starting in late June, several journalists and news outlets will join forces to provide intense and comprehensive reporting on the crisis of homelessness in San Francisco.

Successful solutions to homelessness always begin with good information and a clear understanding of both the current situation and the best options for action.

We invite you to follow this news media coverage and to use it to help Santa Cruz County move further toward the most effective solutions.

Learn more [here](#).

We want to thank and welcome Maria to the team!

Crisis and Opportunities

The County of Santa Cruz, local city governments, in conjunction with the Homeless Action Partnership, will be working hard in the next few months to come up with a new Winter Shelter plan. Time is short for coming up with a new way to provide a Winter Shelter program. There is an opportunity to both restore the Winter Shelter program and make improvements.

Smart Solutions will be joining in the conversation and we welcome your involvement. Stay tuned for more info or contact Maria Romero!

For more than 20 years, Santa Cruz County has provided a 4 to 5 month emergency shelter program at the National Guard Armory during the coldest and wettest months of the year.

This Winter Shelter program has been staffed and managed by the Homeless Services Center. The Homeless Services Center announced earlier this year that they no longer have the capacity to operate the Winter Shelter at the Armory. It is unclear where the community will go in terms of operating a winter shelter.



The Armory program, while serving as a life-saving refuge for many individuals on cold nights, has always been fraught with challenges and has many weaknesses.

Among the weaknesses and challenges:

1. Participants are not offered much help beyond the day to day shelter.
2. The Armory facility is minimal, offering simply mats and blankets on a gymnasium floor.
3. It requires a very expensive transportation system to move scores of people to a remote and isolated location.

In general, it is not a smart solution and offers very little in



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