Adjust Your Lens
Social media presents a new social opportunity.

A Look in the Mirror
Get over your old excuses. It’s time to change.

The unrequested detour of
Kevin Ramos

Red Door Stories
A series of real life stories from the women and children of Saint John’s.
“Saint John’s supports our families to learn how to think and behave differently, to make new choices, in order to rewrite their futures.”

MICHELE STEEB
It's time to change.

Welcome to the first issue of One80 Magazine.

It’s an incredibly exciting time for everybody involved with Saint John’s Program for Real Change. This new direction has been a long-time vision, shared by many, and therefore is extremely rewarding to see it finally come together, and come together so nicely.

Too often, however, when the naysayers see an effort such as this, they feel money is blindly wasted on the glossy pages. (Shame on you.) A magazine such as this does carry a cost, true, but it is an effort to share real change with a larger audience so we might all grasp the vision of Saint John’s and, together, help stem the tide. To that end, we could not produce this new magazine without the generosity of our advertisers and the many people who give freely of their time and talent to make it all happen.

In Sacramento alone, there are so many people struggling with major change in their lives. Some desperately want change but have yet to realize it, experiencing it as that elusive target that keeps moving. Others like Kevin Ramos, featured in this issue, have intense, life-altering change thrust suddenly upon them and must quickly learn how to live all over again.

These are the stories, the dramatically changing lives of real people in Sacramento; friends, family, neighbors, business associates and of course, the women and children of Saint John’s. We genuinely hope you enjoy these stories. Hopefully, they will provide a sense of courage and confidence that we too, can travel a similar road.

As Heraclitus once advised, “The only thing constant is change...” It that is true, and I think we would all agree it is, our new magazine should make a positive impact on your life. Certainly, that is our intent and we wish you safe and happy travels down that road of change.

David M. Flanagan
Editor-in-Chief
A LETTER FROM MICHELE

Open the door. Don't slam it shut.

This is the most difficult letter I have written in the 11 years I have served as the executive director of Saint John's. This year has included many highlights:

- In July, we unveiled a major expansion allowing us to serve an additional 450 women and children annually, raising our total annual capacity to 1,000;
- We are on track to have provided 29,500 safe and supportive days and nights of housing for our women and children;
- We will have provided ~170,000 hours of transformative services to support a family in becoming self-sustaining, in addition to ~79,000 hours of vocational training;
- We will have provided 160,000 meals, 30,000 diapers, and 26,000 miles of transportation;
- We will have provided a huge savings to our region's taxpayers. It costs Saint John's an average of $14,000 to support one woman to move from crisis to self-reliance. It costs the County $49,000, a savings of $35,000 per person annually!

However, we recently received some devastating news...

The Sacramento County staff recommended not renewing their contract with Saint John's, a contract that for 15+ years supported 57 mothers and children annually. The staff stated, in writing and via public testimony, that the beds this contract funded were not a "necessary part of the system."

This decision has left us stunned. At a time when our waitlist is at an all-time high - 500+ women and children daily - to say that beds for women and children experiencing homelessness are not necessary, and moreover, that women who are struggling with addiction and raising children do not need a safe and sober environment, is outrageous. This $730,000 annual contract expired on September 30, 2017.

Saint John's is the only program that ensures a clean and sober atmosphere where women and children can safely heal from lives embroiled in addiction and abuse. Ironically, it is both our safe, structured, sober environment and our sole focus on women and children that led the County staff to recommend discontinuation of funding. By holding our women accountable and requiring sobriety, the County staff views Saint John's as too "high-barrier" for those needing shelter. However, as our waitlist increases each day, we see first hand that the need and desire for our life-changing program not only exists, it is rapidly growing.

From a fiscal viewpoint, Saint John's Program makes incredible financial sense. From a humanitarian viewpoint, Saint John's rehabilitative approach for women and children makes even more sense. It's about a way to live, not just a place to live.

Saint John's is fortunate to have a robust and vibrant community of supporters who believe in the power of our mission and in the potential of our women to become the primary providers and positive role models for their families. In our time of deepest need, please show your support for our clients who bravely choose to leave devastating circumstances, acting on faith that Saint John's can support them in transforming their lives.

From the bottom of our hearts, we are deeply appreciative of your support.

Michele Steeb
Executive Director
Saint John's Program for Real Change

Please help us change lives forever.

We provide real tools to help mothers stand on their own two feet, change their lives once and for all, and put an end to the cycle of poverty that plagues so many today.

Now, we need your help more than ever. Real change is possible. Please consider becoming an ongoing part of the Saint John's story by making a donation now.

You cannot imagine all the lives you will touch.

Please visit us at saintjohnsprogram.org.
At just 19 years of age, Sabrina found herself sleeping under a bridge, alone in the cold and pregnant. Born into a world filled with alcoholism, drug abuse, and violence, she had never known a life without utter chaos. And now, she too was bringing another new life into that same dark place.

As a child, she vividly remembers her father chasing her mother through the house, screaming at her, beating her, threatening to kill her... while Sabrina, her sister, and younger brother hid outside, huddled together in the recesses of an old dog house. “I can still smell the rotting wood,” she recalls, “and that horrible, sickening stench of wet dog hair.”

After witnessing her father’s death, a tragic hit and run accident; it is no wonder she, too, began abusing alcohol and drugs; despite that she was only 10. Her own mother watching, approving, even assisting. By the time she managed to survive to the age of 15, she had become a seasoned drug dealer, selling whatever she could just to eat and make ends meet.

This was her life. This was all she knew.

And then pregnancy. A baby. Born into a world of pain just like Sabrina’s, continuing a seemingly never-ending cycle of poverty and pain.

Trying her best to care for her newborn child, quitting drugs, a frustrating attempt to clean up her life, she couldn’t escape the people who kept dragging her back in. She became pregnant once again.

Despite somehow remaining clean and sober herself, a roof over her head from a weekly motel room, she was reported and identified by Child Protective Services as risking the ongoing safety of her children. She lost both of them at once.

Even if it is in the best interest of the children, it is hard to imagine the torment a mother experiences in losing her children. At the same time, the children endured their own confusion, never understanding what was happening. Struggling desperately to put her life together, in the mere blink of an eye, her two babies vanished. She didn’t know where they were or if she would ever see them again. They were just gone.

She drifted, rehab to shelters, lost, empty, like a fallen leaf, blowing in the wind... until she landed upon the threshold of the red door.

From the moment the red doors of Saint John’s opened, everything began to change. For the first time in her life, Sabrina was surrounded by people who loved her, helped her, and showed her how to stand on her own two feet. Education, therapy, parenting classes, job and life skills, sobriety... things she never knew existed.

“They gave me my life back,” she whispers, tears streaming down her cheeks. “And then, the biggest miracle of all... my children were brought back to me. My babies... we are together again.”

Sabrina graduated from Saint John’s in 2016. Passing her high school GED, she landed a full time job and found security in her very own apartment.

“I changed from this broken, incomplete, frightened little girl into a woman; sober, independent, confident, employed and blessed. For my children, I am the mother I never had. For the very first time, I am alive.”

When a child is separated from a mother, the whole world shatters.

In putting the pieces back together again, a miracle gently unfolds.

Visit SaintJohnsProgram.org and read more stories of real lives and real change.
Kevin almost died the other day.

One minute, relaxing in the comfort of his own living room, playing with a new puppy, allowing it to chomp on his fingers, and the next...fighting for his life.

Change, real change, is not always something desirable, a goal to be pursued, a prize to be won. Sometimes change is a dark, unfriendly shadow that just shows up on your doorstep and waltzes in to your house uninvited. It makes demands and gives you no choice. But your next move and how you end up dealing with those demands reveal what kind of person you are or, perhaps, shapes the kind of person you become. Most of us don’t like to think about the precarious nature of life, how much we take for granted, don’t appreciate, and how quickly it can all be ripped from us. But Kevin Ramos, in his face-to-face visit with death, is no longer one of them. He tossed death right back out the door and now takes his life and every minute of the day as a gift. One to treasure. One to share.

“It came on very fast,” Kevin recounted over a cup of coffee with me. Then he stopped, momentarily gathering his thoughts. “I don’t really do this a lot, looking back,” he said. “I prefer looking forward. But I guess it’s good, now and then, to revisit all this. Sort of brings me back to reality.”

This “reality” hit him like a rogue truck barreling down the freeway in
a fog bank. "Out of nowhere, these severe flu-like symptoms came on," he said. "90-degree temperature, intense aching, it knocked me down...just out of the blue." With a slightly sarcastic grin, he continued, "But I'm a man, right? I'm tough. So I went to bed."

The next morning, however, it was clear that he had something far more than just the flu. His doctor, unfortunately, could not see him immediately. So he and his wife, Kathleen, opted to make a mad dash to the local Urgent Care to be on the safe side. Smart decision, except that he was quickly diagnosed with the flu and sent back to square one. "Go home, drink plenty of water and get some rest. That'll be a hundred dollars, thank you very much. Next..."

Rest didn't help and Kevin's condition progressed steadily downhill. Straight off a sheer cliff is more like it. When the Tamiflu proved useless and he began to turn a lovely shade of purple, Kathleen dialed 911. His next visit was directly to the emergency room of Sutter Memorial Hospital. They were not so quick and cavalier in their diagnosis. Recognizing his symptoms for what they were, some sort of nasty infection, the ER crew took it a little more seriously and the game was on. The only questions were what kind of infection it was and...was it too late? By this time all of Kevin's internal systems had begun shutting down.

Then, boom, lights out. In the throes of severe septic shock, Kevin did not regain consciousness for four long weeks.

Four weeks. In that time, arm-wrestling non-stop with death, his family continually at his bedside, the medical team fought around the clock to save him. Two priests performed his last rites. And despite all of this, the chances of him surviving, well, let's just say, at an average of five percent...little, if any. Hope was not a subject discussed lightly. Tears replaced make-up. Imminent funeral plans were considered. Brought on by something as innocent as a nip on the finger from his puppy, nobody is really sure, even healthy people just don't seem to survive these types of infections.

Now 52 years old, Kevin steers the ship of the Buzz Oates Company, serving as their chief investment officer. Not exactly a part-time summer job, it has been his domain for the last 22 years. With an incredible family of four children and a devoted wife of 26 years, you could say that Kevin is a man who has carved out a very successful life. He serves on the board of directors for Saint John's, freely and abundantly giving his time, money and efforts to help others. By all accounts, he is a good man. Why then was this happening to him? What had he done to deserve such a painful tragedy? The answer is an equally painful...nothing. Nothing at all. This was simply a bad hand that life had dealt him. In every sense, fair or not, it appeared that it was his turn to go.

But Kevin, his family, friends, and the entire medical team vehemently disagreed. If it was his time to die, it certainly wasn't going to be without an all-out battle.

"It wasn't really all that difficult to decide," says Kevin. "Having come so far, there was no choice but to continue. Others had certainly traveled this road. I thought...I can get there. Plus, by this point, I completely trusted the medical team...so, yeah, let's do it."

(My opinion: That's referred to as courage.)

**But Kevin, his family, friends, and the entire medical team vehemently disagreed. If it was his time to die, it certainly wasn't going to be without an all-out battle.**

As a hiker and a downhill ski enthusiast his whole life, the thought of losing his legs was not something he had ever considered. But suddenly, there it was. Deal with it, son. So many of us, especially around the first of January each year, scribble down a short list of all the things we want to change about ourselves. Weight, career, relationships...they could use some improvements. Some of the more noble among us make deeper, even
“I really want to run again,” he confessed, as if he had still somehow failed. “And walk into the ocean like I used to. I really miss that. I want to get as much of my life back as I can, you know? Today can be pretty dark, but you never know what tomorrow might hold…”

Thinking about it, he smiled and offered, “Besides, if you can’t have fun with something like this…you’re missing out on a great opportunity.”

Um, what?

What was that? Have fun with it? What kind of a weird life-philosophy is that? A perfectly healthy man suddenly loses consciousness for a month, wakes up, comes home in a wheelchair, minus many body parts, and his response… “Have fun with it or you’re missing out on a great opportunity!” Incredible. I get depressed when my front lawn begins to turn brown. I don’t know what religion he has, but I want it.

Pressed further, Kevin talked more about his attitude. It’s shockingly positive. Is this what got you through all this, I asked?

“Yes, I guess,” he offered, as though he’d never really given it much thought. “In hindsight, as traumatic as it all was, I see it now as more of a blessing than anything. It’s made me better than I was.”

At this point in our conversation, I stepped scribbling in my notepad, my mouth just hanging open. Maybe Kevin wasn’t a human being afterall. Maybe he really was a robot.

“One big benefit that has come out of it all,” he continued, “is my mind. I still have my mind. And it’s calmer now. Mentally. I have this great life and tons of tons of support. In fact, it has been a groundswell of people who love me. My boys…Nicholas, Frank, Carlin…my daughter, Kristen. And my wife, Kathleen…I wouldn’t have made it without her. All my friends, co-workers…they all came together. I’m just so thankful. It’s really cool.”

Really cool. Yeah, I’d say so. And thankful. You had your legs literally taken out from underneath you and your response is…you’re thankful! I was not sure how to respond to such a statement. By this time in our conversation, I felt like asking him if he would consider starting a spiritual commune or a religious movement of some sort. I’d follow him.

“I really want to run again,” he confessed, as if he had still somehow fallen short. “And walk into the ocean like I used to. I really miss that.”

I want to get as much of my life back as I can, you know? Today can be pretty dark, but you never know what tomorrow might hold…”

We both sat in silence, allowing those powerful words to soak in. Unprepared for its impact, this had become one of the most inspirational conversations I have ever had. This very unusual man had faced the unfaceable and discovered some real answers to life. He was living them. And it showed.

“I do manage to hike a little still, although my endurance has declined, nine or ten miles at best,” he confided, ashamed of himself. “The steep terrain is somewhat of a challenge.”

Oh, please. Just stop!

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Saint John’s Program for Real Change fulfills a critical role in meeting the needs of homeless women with children and helping them to transform their lives. We’re proud to be a partner in this good work.

SIERRA HEALTH FOUNDATION

A BOLD PERSPECTIVE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD
SIERRAHEALTH.ORG
BY IAN B. CORNELL

A FRIEND OF MINE, JOHN, ROUTINELY POSTS A COLUMN TO SOCIAL MEDIA that he calls "10 Great Things that happened to Me Today." It is fun to read, especially when I or someone I know is mentioned (and I am betting this article will warrant one of those mentions). Sometimes the great things he lists are truly grand on just about any scale—such as "threw my mom and dad a surprise 50th anniversary party. They had no clue. What a blast." Others are more trivial—"Tahini made bacon-wrapped dates."

A few weeks back, he explained why he writes the posts and showed us an alternative list that also was accurate and could have been the way he experienced his day. For example, "charged the battery in my motorcycle. Started right up. Saved a bunch of money doing it myself!" was countered with "Woke up early to replace my battery. It took three times longer than I anticipated. Cut my hand when the wrench slipped." The point is, he has made it his intention to focus on the great things that are happening in his life. For John and those mentioned in his posts, it is public affirmation for positive actions. A simple "atta boy."

Can we choose to make that same change in our lives? It’s fairly easy to adjust the lens through which we view our days with or without full disclosure on social media.

Alas, social media is not always so enriching or affirming. In its relatively short existence, social media has devolved into a hive for not-too-anonymous attacks. On local chat pages, many of the posts are condescending and angry. For example, a recent post with a photo of naturally colored eggs from an urban chicken farmer was met with a bitter snap from a vegan who does not support the "exploitation of animals." Okay, I get it, but really? Using my friend, John’s, example, that retort could have been, "As a vegan, I do not eat eggs, but the chickens and their colorful eggs are beautiful." It’s the same information delivered in a more civil tone.

Perhaps worse is that, amid the relative anonymity of the computer screen, commenters lose sight of the fact that the target of their vitriol might be their neighbor, a friend of a friend, or the person next to them at the grocery store. People who likely would smile at each other at the coffee shop or wave when passing each other on the bike trail resort to fairly vicious bickering when given the relative anonymity of a social media post.

As an advertising and marketing communications guy, I live in that world. Part of my job is monitoring the reviews and posts that impact our clients. Amid that environment, I recently made a couple of very purposeful intentions. I want to experience more joy and more fun. And I want my first thought when I wake up to be, "Who can I bless today?" Don’t get me wrong, the stress of the day still gets in the way. Joy and fun can seem so remote as to be absent, but bubbling under the surface of the day is an attitude of wanting to make a positive difference while focusing less on myself and more on others. For my sake and for those who partake in the messages my company creates, I hope I succeed.

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People who likely would smile at each other at the coffee shop resort to fairly vicious bickering when given the relative anonymity of a social media post.
New Activities Spell Change for the City

It was a warm spring morning in May and history was about to be made. A polo match was on the books at Chamberlain Ranch and real change was the first chapter. An endless throng of guests arrived strolling over a massive, freshly cut lawn, lined beginning to end with bright table settings, alluring auction items and delectable hors d’oeuvres from Plates Café. Live music entertained as everyone meandered casually about, the air filled with laughter, animated conversation and the sounds of popping corks and flowing champagne.

And the hats! Big, wild, vibrant hats of all kinds were everywhere. Compliments and laughter echoed across the open field. The auction tent became packed as guests made their silent bids on an impressive selection of irresistible vacation packages, select wines, original art and an endless list of unique must-haves.

Then, a loud cheer signaled the polo match would soon begin. But first, Mother of the Year and Saint John’s alumna, Amber Reed, stood and humbly addressed the crowd, sharing her own personal story of hopelessness, addiction and real change. “I am honored and proud to attend this incredible event,” she said. “I now feel like my life has come full circle. Real change, it takes hard work, dedication and trust. I trusted Saint John’s and I am so proud now to be part of this family.”

Amber’s presentation launched an entire afternoon filled with exciting festivities including a hat contest, a more-than-impessive equine procession and, of course, the ceremonial champagne divot stomp.

As a somewhat unusual non-profit event, Polo For Change has started a whole new chapter for Saint John’s and Sacramento as well. Raising almost $250,000, everyone who attended enjoyed a thrilling new experience while doing their part in the ongoing effort to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty for women and children. Helping them stand on their own two feet, gaining independence, once and for all.

For information and sponsorship opportunities for Polo For Change 2018, visit www.saintjohnsprogram.org/poloforchange
A look in the mirror.

BY DAVID M. FLANAGAN

These are the negative, internal sentiments, dark patterns of thinking that often keep us entrenched in a deep rut that reinforces the very things in life we so desperately want to change, but can't.

Life is not fair. Why can't I ever seem to get a break? People are so unkind to me. Nobody cares about me...

If, however, we would muster the courage to stand naked in front of the mirror in an attempt to identify who is really to blame for our lot in life, we may begin to see, just a glimpse perhaps, of the long road to real change.

Let's make a friend out of that mirror. Let's use it as a powerful tool to help us see the things that are difficult to see. Let's use it, not as something to avoid, but as a powerful tool for change. What if we flipped all those negative statements on their heads? Instead, we admit that it is me who is not fair to life. Or it is me who never gives others a break. Perhaps it is me who is unkind to people. And it is me who does not really care about anybody.

Ouch. That stings just a bit. How is that motivating? It doesn't sound like your proverbial positive thinking. True, it might not be all that pleasant, but painful or not, like yanking an old bandage off a wound, it immediately provides a fresh sense of clarity that allows us to make a new kind of choice.

If indeed the world is unkind to me, then there is really little I can do about it. If, however, I am actually the one who is unkind to the world, well then... perhaps there is something I can do to change it.
You just have to look your fears square in the face. Press forward. Do the thing you fear. Then do it again. And again. And again. Problem solved.

“The co-worker who is careless and lazy but blames her poor evaluations on an exacting boss,” he states, “or colleagues who have it out for her. Few people are willing to accept that their own character traits and choices are the main determinants of the kind of life they lead. When is the last time you heard someone honestly and clearly state, ‘I got fired because I was doing a lousy job... In fact, a lot of bad things have happened in my life because I make so many impulsive bad choices?’

The answer...rarely, if ever. It is this ongoing, willing blindness to the truth that stands in the way of change. We cannot change what we do not identify.

“Real change begins with the recognition of the ways in which you have remained the same,” Burgo continues, “and made the same unfortunate choices, with the same destructive pattern your entire life.”

One of the biggest monsters that prevents us from looking into the mirror and, most certainly, obstructs real change is plain, old fear. Fear of the unknown, fear of change, fear of pain...all these can quietly haunt us, even without our knowledge, warning us, threatening us, and preventing us from taking the very steps we need. But, with awareness, when we can take a step back, look inside ourselves, gain a sense of clarity, and identify those fears for what they are and how they are standing in our way, we also can choose courage to fight through those fears and beat that growing beast.

My sister refuses to go downtown in Sacramento. She hates downtown. It terrifies her. This is a total head-scratcher to me. Of all the cities in the world, downtown Sacramento has to be one of the easiest to navigate, friendliest, safest places on the planet. In my opinion, anyway. Not my sister’s. It frightens her and, ultimately, prevents her from going and experiencing many of the things in life that she would genuinely enjoy.

To overcome such a fear, a clear obstacle to change, there is a strange scientific and clinical term referred to as “Progressive Desensitization” that promises, over time, the reduction, if not elimination entirely, of the issue. In layman’s terms, you just have to look your fears square in the face. Press forward. Do the thing you fear. Then do it again. And again. And again. Problem solved.

At sixteen, a newly licensed driver, I, too, suffered a similar fear as my sister. Not exactly a seasoned or confident driver at the time, I was deeply afraid of making my way through the strange and unfamiliar streets of San Francisco. The overwhelmingly congested financial districts with a million pedestrians crossing endlessly in front of me, taxis and trolleys banging all around me, one-way streets leading me far off course, and desperately trying to figure out the exact formula between brake and accelerator, up an downs the ominous hills. For a young and unfamiliar driver, San Francisco was nothing short of a nightmare.

Fast-forward 40 years and now, strangely enough, I adore San Francisco. I actually enjoy driving through the madly buzzing city. So what changed, exactly? Not the city, certainly, that’s for sure. Me...I’m the one who changed. And I changed simply because, time and again, I faced my fears. Head on, I drove those maniacal, screaming streets, over and over and over until, one day...it just wasn’t scary anymore.

As for downtown Sacramento, with my office across from the new stadium, down in the heart of it all, I practically live there. I cannot fathom my sister’s fear. The thought of it is nowhere in my mind. But that’s only because of progressive desensitization. I have it. She doesn’t.

Making matters more difficult, even when we are able to clearly identify our fears as well as our own contributions toward the issues, that’s when the real work begins. And, unfortunately, there is a lot of it.

Like an old and rotting sailing ship, real change takes an incredible amount of hard work to turn things around. Massive and stubborn, it doesn’t respond well to shifting course. Even as the winds blow, a waterlogged hull, crustless with decades of heavy barnacles, resists every desperate turn of the wheel. It is only with a raw clarity and undying persistence that any real change can take place. Which explains why so few of us can really grasp it and hold on.

This believe it or not, is a positive message. Not exactly sugar-coated, perhaps. Not the three-easy-steps-to-fame and fortune promised on television or a better life pushed in some seductive advertisement. A dose of reality, it is the blunt truth. The real message behind the message is that people do change. You can change.

When we stop for a moment and contemplate on that “thing” we know needs to change, the one that terrifies us, the one that always seems to elude us, the one we truly want, the one we have always failed to realize...let us go then, stand in front of that mirror, and quietly ask the person looking back at us what they are doing to get in the way.

In the mirror is the one person with whom we can be truly honest. This is the person who loves us the most. This is the person, the only person, who can show us the real door. And this is the person who can help us change...once and for all.

David Flanagan serves on the board of directors of Saint John’s. He is the co-owner of Misfit, a California–based brand/marketing agency offering Brand Development, Strategic Planning, Media and creative services across a variety of marketing disciplines. dfanagan@agencymisfit.com
the art of CHANGE

GRADUATION 2017

Imagine you’re in a buzzing room filled with the lively conversations of two hundred people, vibrant red balloons all around, live music, flashing cameras, and the never-ending, ear-to-ear grins of an exuberant group of very hopeful women...each graduating from a rigorous program that they claim, saved their lives.

It was another beautiful graduation night for the women of Saint John’s. A very special occasion, it was an evening that marked the very turning point in the lives of a handful of incredible women, each of whom has endured a life of hopelessness and pain. Many, once addicted to drugs, drowning in poverty, having lost their children and any hope of security were now bursting at the seams, filled with love and an unquenchable commitment to build the life they want.

Standing behind closed doors, nervously awaiting their names to be called, one by one, each walked across a large open stage, many for the first time. They looked out beneath flowing tears to see loved ones, close friends, supporters, teachers, city officials, and guests all overjoyed to stand, applaud and honor the pain, the struggles and the amazing accomplishment they had achieved.

Serving as valedictorian, Lucy shared her own story, clutching the crumpled pages of her speech close to her heart, barely glancing down at them. She didn’t need to. The words she knew all too well. Standing there, in front of a hushed audience, she spoke calmly, authoritatively, of the unbelievable changes that had taken place in her own life and in each of the women graduating alongside her.

“Over the past two years, we have been on a long journey to find ourselves,” she said, pausing. “One thing I realized is everything I do is an expression... of art. I found the art of cooking, the art of professionalism, the art of getting a job. I was taught the art of living. And most importantly, I was taught the art of friendship.”

From the crowd, Lucy suddenly looked up, hearing her son call out for her. Spotting him immediately, she gave a quick nod, a firm but loving affirmation, permission even, as he swiftly ran across the room to her open arms.

“The most important thing I have been taught here,” Lucy continued, “is the art of becoming myself. Learning to accept and embrace the change versus continuing to destroy everything and having to start all over again. In the journey of finding ourselves, each of us here, discovered we are our own masterpiece and the colors on our palette are our choices.”

Twenty-eight women stood tall there upon that stage. Twenty-eight bold, confident, grateful faces smiled, having finally conquered addiction, abuse, homelessness, and a lifelong battle for independence. Two hundred admirers smiled right back. The room erupted in heartfelt applause. These brave women had chosen to enter the red door of Saint John’s, each drawing a deep line in the sand. Each welcoming a new life. Months of tears, overcoming obstacles and fighting their fears, each of these incredible women committed to creating real and lasting change for themselves and their children.

“Pain into power. I walked through the red doors full of pain. I walked out with the tools to turn it into power. The power of change. The power of love. Today, I am the mother to my children that they deserve to have.”

- LUCY G., VALEDICTORIAN, CLASS OF 2017 -
Shaking it up with Chef Q

SOME CULINARY MASTERS must travel a long road before becoming educated, trained, and capable in the kitchen. A select few, however, are simply, “born a chef.” Despite more than 25 long years honing his art, Chef Q Bennett, the new star behind the scenes at Plates Café and Plates Midtown, has proved he rightfully belongs among the latter.

After serving ravenous crews of hungry sailors from the kitchens of the U.S. Navy and standing shoulder-to-shoulder with some of the more prominent chefs around the world, Chef Q recently planted his roots in the humble farm-to-fork capital of America. He now calls Sacramento home and is sharing not only some of the most incredibly delicious recipes with his customers, but also handing down his expertise to some very curious women, themselves destined to rule their kitchens.

Through the Employment Training Program at Saint John’s Program for Real Change, Chef Q is making a huge impact on this city. “I’ve enjoyed sharing my culinary talents with such an eager group of ready-to-learn ladies,” laughs Chef Q. “Seriously, I appreciate the opportunity to prepare chef’s for a life I so love... one that is both challenging and rewarding.”

Shaking up the Midtown lunch scene, he is introducing his incredible signature bowls at Plates Midtown and promises, “They’ll be the talk of the town.” Lunch guests will all share the opportunity to create their own masterpiece, choosing from a variety of fresh and vibrant seasonal ingredients.

“I really want to blow things up here, turn Midtown on its head and make Plates Café a total lunchtime destination. And I can do that,” he says matter-of-factly. “Stop by just once time, and you will be my next convert!”

No stranger to the plight of the women at Saint John’s, Chef Q grew up in a home of 12 boys all under the responsibility of a single mother. “I totally understand the incredible struggle a single mom faces, making ends meet, playing the role of both parents, somehow balancing time and love for her children,” he says. “I want to be able to teach the importance of making the right choices, in the kitchen and in life.”

Practicing what he preaches, he consciously spends time with his wife raising their four children. Currently writing and producing his first cookbook along with his very own new spice label, when it comes to shaking things up in the kitchen, in Midtown, and Sacramento overall...you could say Chef Q was born to the task.

CHEF Q’S BLACKENED SHRIMP PASTA

INGREDIENTS
- 1/2 lb. peeled and deveined shrimp
- 1/2 cup blackening spices
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 medium arm fresh tomato, diced
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 lb. pasta
- 2-3 green onions, sliced
- Handful fresh parsley
- 1 lemon

01 Rinse the shrimp under cool water, drain, and then pat dry with a paper towel. Sprinkle the blackening seasoning over the shrimp and toss to coat.

02 Bring a large pot of water to a boil for the pasta. Once boiling, add the pasta and cook until tender (10-15 minutes). Reserve about 1 cup of the starchy pasta water, then drain the pasta in a colander.

03 While the pasta is cooking, mince the garlic and add it to a large skillet with the butter. Heat the butter and garlic over a medium flame until the butter starts to foam and sizzle. Continue to sauté the garlic in the sizzling butter for about 1 minute. Add the shrimp and sauté until they are opaque and slightly firm (3-5 minutes), then remove them from the skillet.

04 Add the diced tomatoes and about 1/2 cup of the pasta water to the skillet. Stir and cook over medium heat, dissolving the browned bits from the bottom of the skillet. Let the sauce simmer for 5-10 minutes, or until thickened slightly. Taste the sauce and add salt.

05 Add the cooked and drained pasta to the skillet and toss with the sauce. Return the shrimp to the skillet and toss to combine. Once the green onions and chop the parsley leaves. Sprinkle both over top. Serve with sliced lemon to squeeze over top. For a spicier pasta, use 1/3 tsp chili flakes.
Learning to fish.

We’ve all heard the age-old proverb, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

Never have truer words been spoken. Only in this case, regarding the daily routine that drives Saint John’s Program for Real Change, it’s about teaching a woman to fish, so to speak, and feeding not just herself, but her children as well.

That’s what real job skills provide. And the result... a refreshingly confident woman, blossoming like a spring flower, able to stand on her own two feet, perhaps for the first time, and live a life of independence, contributing to society and ending the downward spiral of the next generation.

Sounds sort of miraculous. And it is. In no uncertain terms, despite the added time, energy, money and effort required, providing real job skills and new life skills are a few of the many answers that revive a broken system and help an individual to change, once and for all. This, in turn, stems the tide and begins to shift our entire society. It heals the individual, affects those in their immediate circle, those they come in contact with, and starts a new cycle of life.

It all boils down to results. Real results. Something the current system consistently fails to measure in its determination of value. It’s one thing to control a budget and hand out taxpayer dollars with so real long-term view or concern as to whether or not those dollars are actually doing anything toward change. When people’s lives are dramatically changed, however, it serves as living proof that there are answers out there. It isn’t a hopeless cause after all. There is a way out of homelessness, poverty, addiction and an endless reliance on a system that was never designed to be effective in the first place.

Saint John’s cannot, however, do a job of this scope and size alone. Fortunately, we have the incredible support of people and organizations who believe in the same spirit. Employment partners like BloodSource stand ready, their doors open wide, in an ongoing effort to help our women continue on their new path of success.

“Our life-saving missions are perfectly aligned,” says Joy Milam, manager of donor outreach for BloodSource. “As a result, everyone has benefited. It’s nice to work with a partner like Saint John’s who shares our viewpoints and understands the power of grace, love, and gratitude. It’s absolutely vital to the work we do.”

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Ending the cycle of poverty is no easy job. But, as a society, that is our ultimate responsibility. In the end, that’s why we all do what we do. If then, our efforts simply serve to continue a dark and vicious cycle, then we need the humility to come out of the shadows and admit it. We need to do what is right. We need to fix it. And even though there are still many who refuse to recognize that it is broken, fortunately there are many more stepping forward each day who will do whatever it takes, to right the wrong, to help the helpless, and to finally see real change.
Our needs.
Your help.

The items featured here are just a hint at all the necessities we need to help the families of Saint John's on their journey to real change. Please take just a few moments to see if there is anything here, or other items you or your organization might be able to provide. If ever a little went long way...it's here and now! THANK YOU.

VISIT WWW.SAINTJOHNSPROGRAM.ORG TO FIND OUT HOW TO HELP.

HOLIDAY NEEDS
- New toys
- Warm clothes: coats, sweaters, scarves, pants
- New socks & slippers
- New robes & pajamas for adults and children
- Wrapping paper & tape
- Gift cards for Walmart, Target, local grocery stores, etc.

HOUSEHOLD NEEDS
- Twin mattress covers
- Pillows
- New twin sheet sets (fitted & flat), comforters, & blankets
- New bath towel sets
- Plastic storage tubs with lids

BABIES & TODDLERS
- New/gently used clothing
- Baby formula
- Pull-ups, diapers, baby wipes
- Pacifiers, sippy cups, bottles, bibs
- New strollers, high chairs
- New underwear
- Play-Dough
- Finger paints
- Costumes/dress up clothes
- Legos

KIDS & TEENS
- New/gently used clothing
- New underwear
- Board games, art sets
- Dolls
- New school backpacks, school supplies
- Basketballs, footballs
- Bathing suits, pool towels
- New backpacks, school supplies

MOTHERS
- New/gently used clothing
- Tampons, maxi pads
- Toothpaste, dental floss
- New underwear, socks
- Bus/RT passes
- Body wash/soap
- Shampoos/conditioners
- Face cleansers
- Combs/brushes, hair ties/-clips
- Rubber flip flops

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING NEEDS
- Black pants, black non-slip shoes of all sizes
- USB drives for career training & education

Two at a time, Saint John's goes through more than 3,000 pairs of shoes a year.

Scarf, hats, gloves, and all things cozy to keep the winter cold away.

Education is a major priority when it comes to pointing a life in the right direction. We need back-packs and school supplies for all of our women and children.
JOIN US SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2018
for an elegant black tie soiree and an unforgettable evening helping homeless women and children transform their lives, and escape the cycle of poverty once and for all! Mark your calendars for the celebration of the season!

For more information
saintjohnsprogram.org/partyforchange
(916) 453-1482.

Thank you to our 2017 Party sponsors