

# Spring 2022 Quarterly Report

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# Announcements

## Expanding into Los Angeles!

This spring, we welcomed Jenni as our LA General Manager, and John as our Outreach Specialist. They will be working with local partners to grow our Miracle Friends phone buddy program in LA!

## National Coalition for the Homeless

We have partnered with the National Coalition for the Homeless where they will redirect screened hotline calls and email inquiries to the Miracle Messages' website or hotline!

## Urban Vision Alliance (UVA)

We joined UVA as a partner organization! We're excited to offer our reunion services and phone buddy program through their partner sites.

## Welcome Spring 2022 Interns

We had 15 amazing interns joining us this Spring. They have helped us with a variety of projects including storytelling, marketing, fundraising, and reporting. If you would like to intern with us or know a student that would make a great intern, [find out more and apply here.](#)

**Miracle Messages helps people experiencing homelessness rebuild their social support systems and financial security.**

## Spring 2022 Interns

Julia Ip  
Merisa Rovcanin  
Ilma Rovcanin  
Helena Batey  
Kaitlin Ip  
Denisse Castillo  
Angelo Florio  
Lei Nguyen  
Melissa Bowden  
Summer Kim  
Veronica Garrick  
Taylor Thomas  
Akhilesh Eloore  
Taylor Levine  
Tara Huang



## Announcements Continued...

### Street Outreach

We are excited to share that we have resumed street outreach! During the first two street outreach events, we distributed over 40 meals donated from A Meal With Dignity and had volunteers from the Bay Area join us. These events will be held on the second Sunday of

each month moving forward. Register here for any of our upcoming events:

<https://www.miraclemessages.org/events>

Mike, a volunteer for the event, said, "it was a very eye-opening and humbling experience".





# Reunions

## Program Updates

We are grateful for our on-the-ground team and volunteers who start conversations with our unhoused friends to help them find their loved ones. This spring, we had 187 case intakes across the US. We are also grateful for our Case Solving volunteers that pick up these cases and work to make reunions happen. We had a total of 57 messages delivered and 26 that led to reunions this quarter.

One of the most heartfelt aspects of this work is the feeling it gives those experiencing homelessness beyond the numbers. Madeline, our Director of Operations, shares that a hotline caller told her “even if you guys can’t help me, I’m grateful to know you guys exist”.

**187**

cases

•

**57**

delivered

•

**26**

reunited



## Program Updates Continued...

### South Florida

Our General Manager, Gabby, has been working for Miracle Messages in Florida for two and a half years, and is making a real difference. Day to day, Gabby visits partner sites, offers our reunion services, hands out socks and 1-800-MISS-YOU hotline cards, and shares updates on cases with our volunteers, to help reunite more of our unhoused friends.

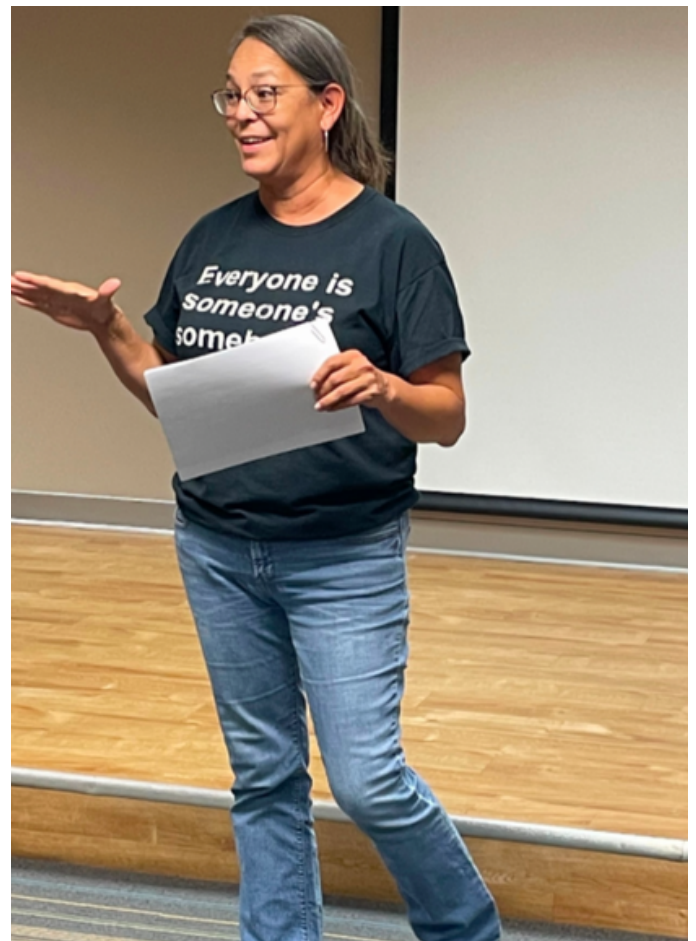
### San Francisco

Since January we have hosted four volunteer outreach events in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco. Our SF General Manager, Nelly, and Outreach Specialist, Lindsay, have done an amazing job training and prepping volunteers, then guiding them to write down their first case. It is a rewarding experience that volunteers say restores their faith in humanity and makes them appreciate their loved ones. These events are held on the second Sunday of each month and you can register here for any of our upcoming events: <https://www.miraclemessages.org/events>

*Gabby presenting to The Broward Sheriff's Office (BSO)  
Multi-Agency Homeless Taskforce (MAHT) program*

### Texas

Our partners at Sunrise Navigation Center and Community First! Village have continued to welcome and support our outreach volunteers. As we get closer to the one-year mark of our first outreach in Texas, we invite anyone in the Austin area to join our volunteer community. Please email Sai at [vannem@utexas.edu](mailto:vannem@utexas.edu) if interested.



## Reunion Story: Ernest and Dr. James

Ernest was born on January 15, 1942, and struggled with homelessness for the last 50 years. On December 1st, 2021, one of our volunteers, Jessica, started his case to find relatives of his for possible reunification. The challenge of this case was that he had 16 siblings born as early as 1918 and Ernest was the youngest of his siblings at age 79.



Jessica was determined to find someone in his family and created a detailed family tree of his relatives. The breakthrough of this case was learning that two of his siblings were victims of the Jonestown Massacre in 1978. This heartbreaking detail led her to a website of victims with user forums. She learned that Ernest's brother, who was a victim of this tragedy, had children and Ernest had living nieces and nephews.

Jessica followed this lead and came across Dr. Coylette James, a woman who was also trying to find her biological relatives. Dr. James is Ernest's niece whom he never knew existed. Since she was also trying to reconnect with relatives and was able to meet Ernest over Facetime from across the country.

This reunion is beautiful because as Ernest was turning 80, and knowing all of his siblings had passed away after decades of no contact, Miracle Messages was able to gift this reunion to him. It's also beautiful because through this process Dr. James was also able to find a living relative. Jessica said, "There has been so much tragedy in their story and I'm so happy that there was at least some redemption for it, by giving Coylette and Ernest to each other"- both individuals were looking for family and Miracle Messages helped them find each other. That is the importance of Miracle Messages and our reunion services. Jessica agrees, saying "the real work of Miracle Message is that fragile time is [used] to bridge the gap of reunions, dreams, and hopes, by facilitating those hard conversations."





## Reunion Story: Willie and his mother

After 30 years of not talking to his mother, Willie was able to reconnect over the phone with the help of Case Solving Volunteer Shelly's diligent work to find her. Willie had requested help to find his mother, Elizabeth. On December 20th, Shelly was asked to take on Willie's case.



**Shelly, a  
MM case  
solving  
volunteer**

After working on the case for six days with no response from his mother, Shelly was able to speak with Willie's nephew who had heard about the work Shelly was doing to reconnect Willie with his mom. Finding a loved one does not always mean they are ready to reunite. Willie's nephew agreed to speak to his grandmother to persuade her to speak on the phone with Willie. On December 28th Shelly received a call from Elizabeth, Willie's mom, who asked "When can I talk to my son?" Shelly immediately reached out to Willie. When told the news, he was just as eager to speak to his mom.

Shelly facilitated the call and the three shared an honest conversation. Willie admitted he had made some poor choices in life, but was proud that he was able to stay clean and was doing his best to improve. When Willie's mom asked him why he never came home, Willie told her that he thought his family would be embarrassed by him. "You were wrong...you should have come home" Willie's mom replied. The conversation continued and the two made plans for Willie to speak with his sisters the next time they call. Shelly reflects on the conversation, "When I first initiated our three-way call, Willie referred to his mother by, "Hey Girl!!!". Then it morphed into Elizabeth, and a short time later into Liz. By the end of the phone call, he was calling her Mama"

# Miracle Friends

## Program Updates

Since the fall, we are excited to announce we have expanded our team and hired Jenni, our new LA General Manager, and John, our outreach specialist in Los Angeles, California. Jenni was hired specifically to expand our Miracle Friends Program with the goal of recruiting 300 Miracle Friends and volunteers by the end of the year. We are so excited to have both of them join our team!

Additionally, we had 64 referrals to Miracle Friends in the first quarter and 30 were matched with our existing pool of dedicated volunteers. We've had 46 new Miracle Friend volunteers attend orientation and they are ready to be paired with one of our unhoused friends.



**Meet Jenni, our new  
LA General Manager**







### **Miracle Friends Story: Tars and Marty**

In July 2021, Miracle Friends gained a new volunteer, Tars. During his time, he was matched with Marty, one of our San Francisco unhoused friends. Tars and Marty have a special friendship that extends beyond their weekly phone calls, and Tars will occasionally meet Marty downtown on his lunch break. Although meeting in person is not a requirement nor expected of our volunteers, they developed this friendship over time and always meet safely in public.

Their friendship brings comfort to both of them. Marty said that the best part of Miracle Friends is “talking to a friend, he checks up on me and asks me how I’m doing, it’s great knowing someone is there for me” and when asked how Tars would describe their relationship, he said “I feel like he’s glad to know that someone cares about him. Not that it makes me special but it makes his life less painful, knowing that there are people who can look up to him and reach out to him like everyone else involved in the Miracle Friends project. Sometimes we don’t receive love but knowing that love without interest exists is already a great relief for the reality we live in.” No one should experience homelessness alone, and Tars is a great volunteer and friend that believes wholeheartedly in this mission statement.

Tars and Marty are a perfect example of compassion, respect, and trust. A beautiful and kind relationship that can exist because of our Miracle Friends Program.

## Miracle Friends Story: Angelo and Joe

After a few weeks without a match, Angelo finally connected with his new friend, Joe. Angelo approached their initial conversations by getting to know the basics about Joe, to try and find commonality between the two of them, just as he would with making friends with anyone in his day-to-day life. They would talk about movies, social life, conspiracy theories, and religion. Angelo wanted to make these conversations “as pleasant as possible” to build a trusting friendship.

Angelo and Joe talk every week, sometimes by text messaging and other times by phone calls. His commitment to their friendship allowed Joe to open up more about his situation and personal life, including his love for his son. Angelo believes that “these [conversations] are helpful for Joe because he needs someone to share these experiences with and because of our organization, I feel that Joe can be vulnerable with me and I hope that he’ll be receptive toward me and continue to be a close friend once more.”

Angelo developed a friendship with Joe, but he believes he can learn so much from his new friend, “There’s an experience from this, to learn to survive when all odds are against you.” After two months of talking every week, Angelo’s biggest insight into the Miracle Friends Program is “treat people like people, and not in a negative way.” Miracle Friends is more than a volunteering experience, it’s a learning experience filled with compassion, friendship, and most importantly, humanity, for Angelo.



**Angelo, one of our  
MM Interns!**



## In their own words

What our MF Volunteers and Friends had to say

"We did have a moment in our conversation when she said "I just need sober supportive friends. Thanks. I was able to vent a little." I found it encouraging to know that I am helping a little and that slowly we are developing some trust between us. I ended our conversation that day by telling her to hang in there and reminded her that I'm there for her and that she can vent with me anytime, and that I'm always happy to listen."


"She offered to be an auntie to my daughter since they have a lot in common. I was really touched. "

"I was so happy that she knew who I was and was expecting my call and was excited to share her good news. "

Homelessness is synonymous with loneliness, isolation, and lack of social support. Once a person or family finds themselves without permanent housing, it can be difficult or even impossible to get reconnected with a social network.

We want to help change that.

By volunteering with our Miracle Friends program, you can help our unhoused neighbors stay connected and feel less alone, as part of our work to end relational poverty on the streets.




# Miracle Money

The first-ever Miracle Money pilot was completed last year and our 2021 program evaluation is now available! Take a look at our Miracle Money Proof of Concept evaluation [here](#). We are currently in the process of working with researchers at the University of Texas to conduct a six-month follow-up study to determine the program's longer-term impact.



Meet Elizabeth

## Elizabeth & Her Speaking Engagements



Elizabeth first got involved with Miracle Messages back in 2019. After becoming a Miracle Friend, she was nominated to be a Miracle Money recipient and quickly secured permanent housing. Shortly after, she was interviewed by the San Francisco Chronicle, as they were doing a series on homelessness, and was nominated for an award during Miracle Messages' Good Neighbor Award ceremony, which is where Kevin heard her share her story. Kevin was impressed with her ability to articulate her experiences, and once they officially met, they became instant friends.

After the initial interview, different news outlets began to pick up her story. Elizabeth was frequently interviewed and was able to spread awareness of homelessness and communicate the difficulties of being unhoused. Kevin admired Elizabeth and knew she had an inspiring story to share, so when a Miracle Messages fundraiser was being planned in April of 2021, Elizabeth was asked to partner with the organization. She was able to participate in the promotional aspects of the campaign and speak at the event.



Elizabeth has been working closely with Miracle Messages ever since. Most recently, she and Kevin traveled to Baltimore to speak at a Jewish youth convention with thousands of attendees. They gave a presentation and Elizabeth felt so inspired by the younger generation. She felt that they were so mature and had such big dreams to make the world a better place. Many of the attendees came up to her afterward, sharing their own experiences and how they would like to help. She was honored that she and Kevin could create such a safe and welcoming environment that the kids felt comfortable sharing their own thoughts.

In addition to her speaking engagements, Elizabeth was contacted by the United States Census Bureau. This agency's goal is to reach all people of the United States. They aim to receive feedback from all communities and recently, their goal has been to create campaigns to reach marginalized communities. However, the unhoused community was frequently ignored and neglected, oftentimes because lots of misinformation is spread regarding this community. And so, she became an advocate for the unhoused. She wanted to provide real and informed feedback on the campaigns they wanted to create in order to include the unhoused population.

In the coming months, Elizabeth hopes to be involved in more speaking engagements and interviews to share her experiences and spread awareness of homelessness. She has been featured in many news articles and is excited to work with Miracle Messages in participating in many more events. Feel free to check out some of her interviews down below!

[Chronicle #1](#) | [Chronicle #2](#) | [CNET](#)





## Expansion in Los Angeles

We have officially hired a General Manager and Outreach Specialist in Los Angeles!  
Jenni and John are both very excited to join the Miracle Messages team!

### Jenni

Jenni moved from Chicago to Los Angeles, and immediately upon seeing the numerous unhoused neighbors around the city, she knew she would have to work to find a solution to help these individuals. With a background in working with nonprofit organizations, Jenni is excited to work for an organization dedicated to helping the unhoused community. She feels that even if these individuals get housed, they lack personal relationships and relational support, and she believes that Miracle Friends is a unique approach to finding a solution for this relational poverty.

Through recruiting volunteers online and in person, Jenni is focusing on reaching out to various LA-based organizations. She is exploring many avenues to find volunteers for the summer, as Miracle Friends is looking to gain about 300 volunteers in the next few months.



### John

John came to Miracle Messages as a basic income advocate getting to know his unhoused neighbors through hot meal and supply distribution, and volunteering at his local mobile shower pop-up. He hated seeing how physically, mentally, and emotionally grueling it was to live outdoors with little to no cash, and he wanted to find a way to help tackle the root causes of homelessness (and cashlessness) in Los Angeles. When he found out Miracle Messages was coming to LA to create a Miracle Friends phone buddy program and Miracle Money basic income pilot, he knew he had to get involved!

Too many unhoused Angelenos are suffering through poverty in isolation, and too many housed Angelenos have no idea what that day-to-day is like or how they can help. He wants to use Miracle Friends to bring these groups together, and Miracle Money to demonstrate how the power of direct cash helps individuals and communities rise out of poverty. Right now, John and Jenni are the LA team bringing Miracle Friends to each of LA's transitional housing sites where folks are most isolated and most in need of the program. They are also helping finalize the basic income pilot and its accompanying study that they want policymakers and the public, in LA and beyond, to observe and adopt as a critical tool to close the material and narrative gaps propping up homelessness - and end the shortage of money and direct relationship going toward our unhoused neighbors.



Dan Price ✓  
@DanPriceSeattle



A group of homeless people in San Francisco got \$500 a month for 6 months, no strings attached.

Two-thirds of them got on their feet and secured stable long-term housing.

Amazing what happens when you treat poor people like human beings

6,353 Retweets   318 Quote Tweets   30.1K Likes

## In the News

### Stanford Social Innovation Review

The Stanford Social Innovation Review analyzed the Miracle Money program, explaining how the nonprofit is providing money to unhoused individuals with no strings attached.

### Spectrum News- Madeline

Madeline, our Director of Operations, was able to share her experience about working remotely and reconnecting our unhoused neighbors with their loved ones. She expresses her gratitude for being able to reconnect with families.

### Business Insider- Elizabeth

Elizabeth communicates her story from being diagnosed with colon cancer, to being evicted, to eventually becoming a Miracle Money recipient. She speaks on homeless shelters and the effectiveness of programs like Miracle Money.

### Feature in Fast Company

Fast company, a magazine on business and technology, highlights our Miracle Money pilot's success in helping houseless individuals secure stable housing in San Francisco.

### Dan Price mention

Dan Price, an entrepreneur, mentioned our Miracle Money program in one of his recent tweets and got over 30,000 likes. He highlighted the major results of our pilot program and stated that it is "amazing what happens when you treat poor people like human beings".



# Looking Forward

## Tech Revamp

We are committed to strengthening our tech infrastructure, so that we can better support our unhoused friends and volunteers through our programs. And so, we are in the process of a major systems overhaul, as we work to fully implement Salesforce by the end of this quarter. Stay tuned!

## Expanding the Team

We are currently in the process of hiring new team members to further expand our services, including the new full-time role of Community Manager! More to come soon.

*In order to be the most efficient with your contributions and maximize our efforts toward the mission, we do not print or mail our quarterly or annual reports. However, if you wish to receive a printed report, please email [colette@miraclemessages.org](mailto:colette@miraclemessages.org)*

## Want to Get Involved?



**Volunteer:** Join our global community of good-hearted people, committed to better connecting with their neighbors experiencing homelessness. We're always looking for more volunteers and interns! Fill out the [get involved form here](#).



**Donate:** Your support changes lives. Make a tax-deductible [donation here](#). EIN #82-4179328



**Street Outreach:** Join our General Manager for our monthly street outreach events in San Francisco! The next one is on September 11th at 2pm! Join [here](#).