



Miracle
Messages



2021

Annual Report

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Acknowledgements

This report was compiled, edited, and designed by Julia Ip, Ilma Rovcanin, Sophia Ahn, Allison Peart, and Lei Nguyen, under the guidance of Miracle Messages' leadership team.



Letter from our Founder & CEO

Dear Friends,

2021 was a watershed year for Miracle Messages.

We launched Miracle Money, the first basic income pilot for people experiencing homelessness in the US. 66% (!) of unhoused recipients were able to secure stable housing.

We nearly doubled the size of our team, and demonstrated that the amazing outcomes we've achieved in S. Florida through our GM-led model can be replicated elsewhere.

We formed new collaborations to expand our services, including with J-PAL, Full Circle Fund, The Impact Factory at UT Austin, The School of Social Work at USC, and others.

We received widespread media coverage, including a feature story on PBS NewsHour, a 30-minute doc

on France's Envoyé spécial, and a cover story in the Mercury News.

And more.

Amid all of this momentum, three relatively quiet moments stood out to me personally, encapsulating the work we do and why we do it.

When I told Ray he'd been selected for Miracle Money, he initially declined. "Isn't there anyone who needs it more? You've already given me so much. I have Jen [my Miracle Friend phone buddy]."

Elizabeth used a portion of her first \$500 deposit to make a donation to Miracle Messages. When I told her she didn't need to do that, she said, "I didn't do it for you. I did it for myself. So I can once again feel the dignity of being able to support the causes that I believe in."

In 2015, Johnny was the second person to reunite with loved ones through Miracle Messages. We lost touch after that, but in 2021, I found out that Johnny had a MF phone buddy. We met up for a few hours. He said he got clean after reuniting with his family: "you saved my life."

These stories remind me why this work matters, for our unhoused neighbors and for the rest of us. As we expand our programs in 2022, I hope we'll all have the chance to experience quiet moments like these, to further expand our own hearts and minds through this work, as mine have surely been.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin F. Adler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kevin F. Adler
Founder & CEO

About Us

Miracle Messages is an award-winning 501(c)3 nonprofit organization on a mission to end relational poverty on the streets, and in the process, inspire people to embrace their unhoused neighbors not as problems to be solved, but as people to be loved. We help people experiencing homelessness rebuild their social support systems and financial security through our three programs:



Photo: Kevin (left), Ray (middle), and Jordyn Taylor (right)



Reunion Services

Reconnecting unhoused individuals with their loved ones.



Miracle Friends

Connecting volunteers with unhoused neighbors, through a phone-based buddy system.



Miracle Money

A direct cash transfer program for select individuals in our Miracle Friends program.

Core Value: Meet people where they are.

100% Opt-in

If an unhoused neighbor does not want to reconnect with their loved ones or participate in a buddy system, that's fine.

Zero Expectations

If an unhoused client just wants to say, "I love you," "I'm sorry," or "I want you back in my life," but does not want to go and live with that person, that's fine.

100% Respect

We don't commit to anything we can't deliver. But we do vow to treat each case with the same respect we'd want for our own loved ones.

Executive Summary

2021 was a year of resilience and new beginnings. Despite an ongoing pandemic, we reached amazing milestones, completing our first basic income pilot in the Bay Area and expanding our team. This is thanks to our strong community of volunteers, partners, and donors. We are extremely grateful for your ongoing support.

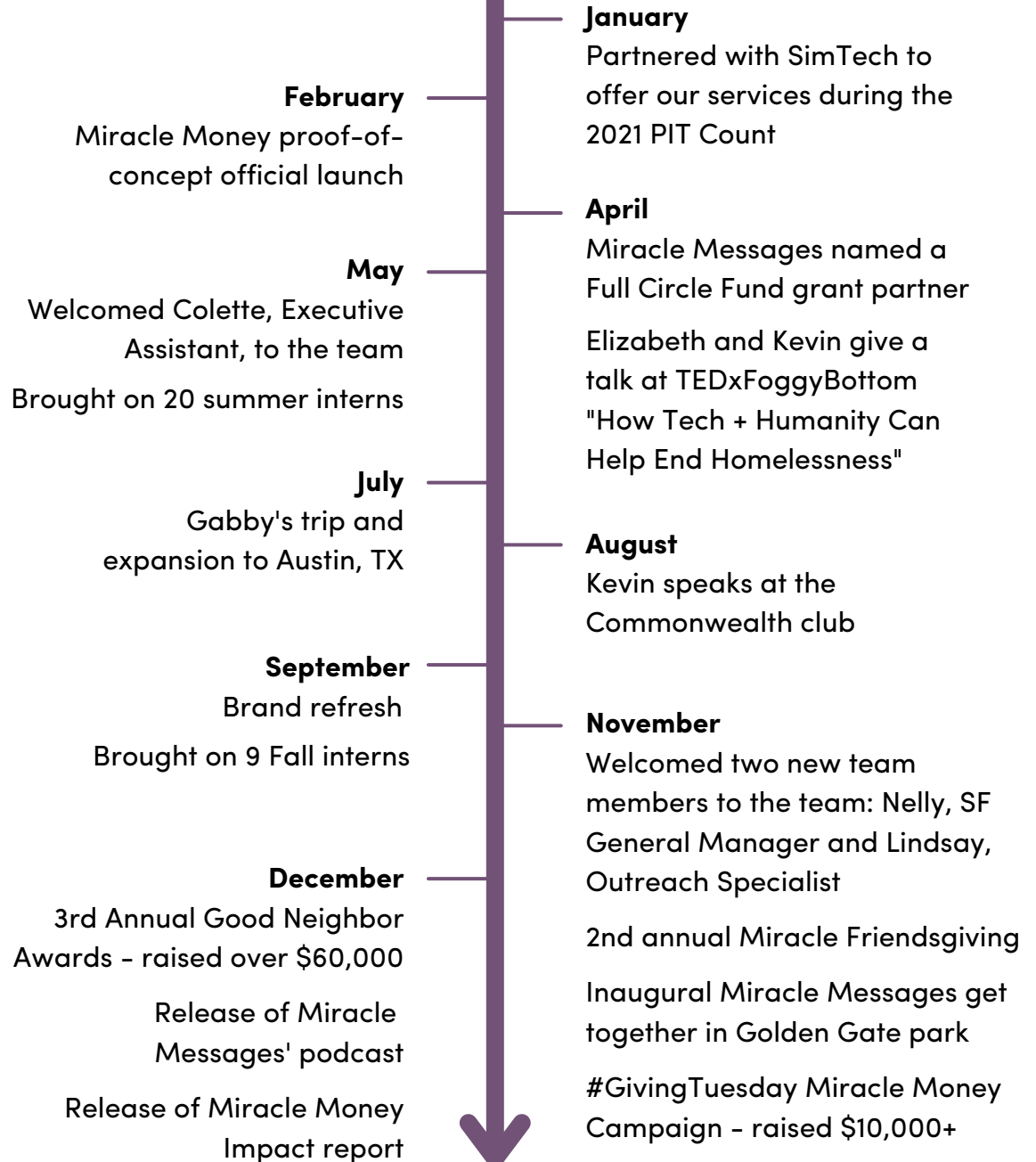
To date, we've facilitated:

 **500+** Total reunions
(101 this year)

 **180+** Total MF matches
(58 this year)

 **\$50,000+**

Funds distributed to 14 inaugural
Miracle Money recipients



Programs

Reunion Services
Miracle Friends
Miracle Money



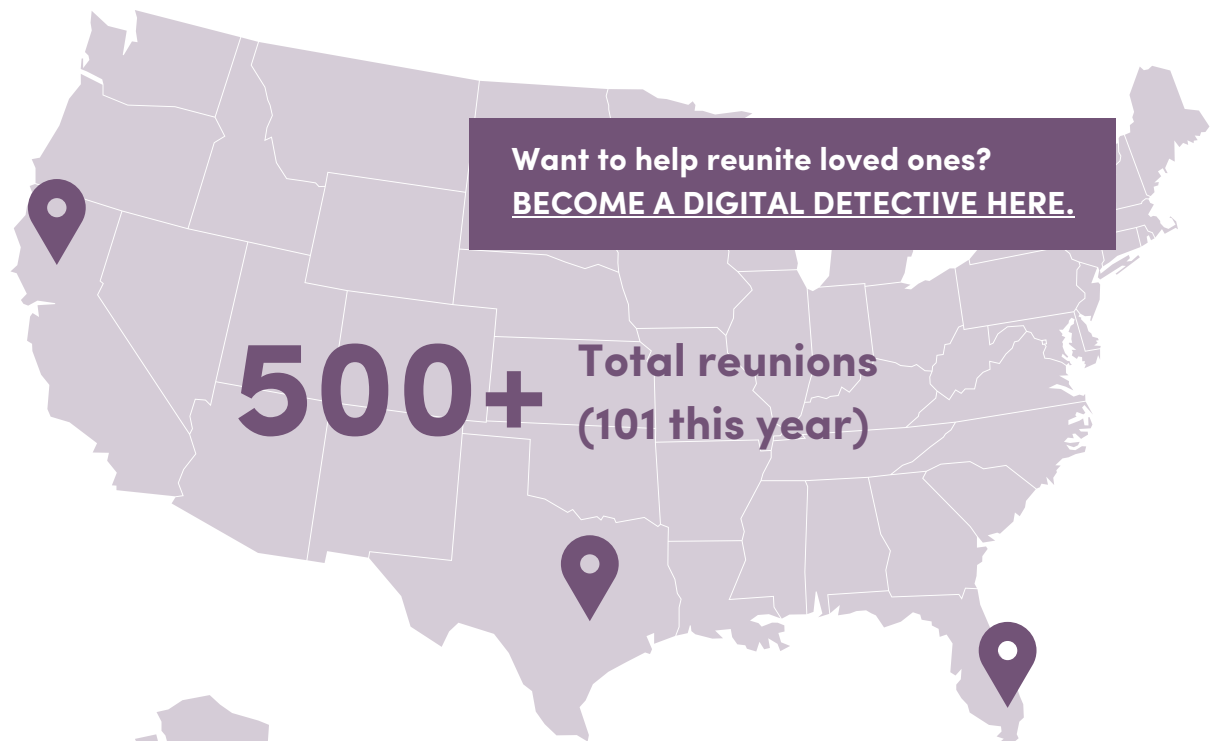
Reunion Services

Expanding Our Reach

This year, we set out to strengthen the impact of our services nationwide. In July, we completed our successful two-year South Florida pilot, funded by the Kenan Charitable Trust. Gabby, our GM in South Florida, and her team have recorded 348 messages, and reunited 103 families, with 27 participants getting off the streets!

We've also been working on expanding our services to Austin, Texas as part of the University of Texas' Impact Factory accelerator program. Since Gabby's week-long trip to Austin, we now have an established volunteer base, headed by Sai. If you're in Austin and want to help out, contact Sai at vannem@utexas.edu.

We look forward to the continued growth of our programs in the Bay Area with two new additions to the team: Nelly, our SF General Manager, and Lindsay, our SF Outreach Specialist.



Educating the Next Generation of Changemakers

We've been working with several university professors to provide real-world experiences to students studying homelessness:

- We teamed up with Professor Charles Drehmer of DePaul University this past fall to give students in his Sales for Social Impact class the opportunity to apply marketing and sales techniques to help advance our work at Miracle Messages
- Professor Bonnie Ervin from the ASU Watts College of Public Service & Community Solutions got approval for her "Ending Homelessness" course
- Professors Emily Artiano and Ben Pack at USC are getting their students involved as digital detectives as part of course work



Photo: Reuben (left) and Gabby, South Florida GM (right)

Feature: Reuben

We met Reuben at the Jubilee Center in early June. Ever since his wife passed away he had left his family back in Hope, Arkansas and was just wandering around; he didn't even remember why he ever came to Florida. He gave us the information he had and we quickly

went to work. Reuben was just so sad, almost in tears as he repeated "I just miss my family, I feel so alone." A couple of days later we made contact with Reuben's sister, Charlotte. She was overjoyed. We facilitated a phone call between Reuben and his sister Charlotte, she

then looped in other siblings and they had a joyous reunion! The family welcomed him back and has even asked him to help care for a brother who has become disabled since Reuben last saw him. They are in the process of bringing him back home.

Miracle Friends

Now in its second year, Miracle Friends provided lots of extra support in 2021, as our unhoused friends grappled with increased isolation and uncertainty through the many waves of the Covid-19 pandemic. We have seen a significant increase in self-referrals from unhoused individuals, as word has spread about this program. To support the increased number of participants, we welcomed two new MF mentors, Jen and Josh.

We need more volunteers!

As part of the Miracle Money Los Angeles pilot, we're expanding our Miracle Friends program to LA County in 2022. We anticipate needing ~250 more volunteers.

[SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER HERE](#)

Feel free to send around the link to others too!

180+ Total matches
(58 this year)



Photo: Caridad (right) and her Miracle Friend, Kim (left)

Feature: Angela & Debórah

Before Angela joined the Miracle Friends program, her children were forcefully taken from her, leaving her reeling with loneliness. Though Angela deeply misses her family, especially during the holiday season, she appreciates how much she's grown:

"I've come pretty damn far, and it feels great. And I have to say, without the support from Miracle Messages and Miracle Friends and Debórah, I don't know where I would be."

Through all Angela's struggles, Angela's Miracle Friend Debórah provided a safe space for Angela to open up. "She's like the mom I never had," said Angela, who affectionately calls Debórah her "fairy godmother." In October, Angela and Debórah were able to meet in person for the first time and in December, Angela got housed! The pictures speak for themselves — after everything Angela has been through, it is so wonderful to see her beaming in these photos.



Miracle Money

We completed our six-month Miracle Money proof-of-concept in the Bay Area this year! Miracle Money is one of the first basic income pilots for unhoused people in the United States. The program is aimed at providing stability and the opportunity to plan for the future to unhoused friends who are active in the Miracle Friends phone buddy program. 14 recipients received \$500 a month, 13 of whom were able to complete the program. The results, as you will read, were outstanding.

[See all our recipients' stories here.](#)

[The full report can be found here.](#)

“This program brought me out of my shell and I became more confident in myself. I had lost that confidence and speaking to someone validated that I can do this”

- Miracle Money Recipient

We need your help to expand Miracle Money to LA!

We raised over \$750,000 in 2021 for our Miracle Money pilot in Los Angeles, but we still need to raise up to \$500K more. We plan to run a randomized control trial, in partnership with USC, that will include up to 250 unhoused participants.

Help us invest in our unhoused friends: [DONATE HERE!](#)



Housing

66%

of those who were unhoused at the start of the pilot secured independent housing by the end (6/9 unhoused recipients).



Social Connection

85%

of recipients cited improved social connections with their family, community, and/or Miracle Friends volunteer.



Mental Health

77%

of recipients had lower levels of psychological distress.



Financial Wellbeing

100%

of recipients stated that Miracle Money helped them feel more financially secure

Feature: Elizabeth

Elizabeth is a college graduate, journalist, teacher, founder of an educational nonprofit organization, and mother of three grown children. A few years ago, Elizabeth received an unexpected medical diagnosis: advanced colon cancer. While undergoing intense chemotherapy treatments, she was unable to continue her work as a teacher because it would compromise her immune system. This led to the loss of her income, followed by the loss of her home of 14 years in 2019.

In March 2020 because of the pandemic, Elizabeth found temporary housing in a shelter-in-place hotel in Pacifica, and began participating in the Miracle Friends program. When Elizabeth learned she would become a Miracle Money recipient, she was overjoyed. After six months of receiving funds from the Miracle Money program, Elizabeth described the remarkable improvement in her mental and physical state, as she said she worried less and could plan ahead to cover certain expenses. "People do have plans, they are just unable to execute them" - Elizabeth



Photo: Elizabeth looking out at her backyard view

Storytelling

Storytelling helps us shatter the stigma around homelessness, build empathy around our unhoused neighbors, and communicate our vision with the world. Our team had some great opportunities in 2021 for this: from being the feature of a French short documentary on a major TV program to features in many news outlets.

Brand Refresh

Miracle Messages underwent a brand refresh in the fall! The new Miracle Messages' brand colors are inspired by the power of the color purple, which indicates strength, compassion, abundance, and relationship. With this new color in mind, we hope to evoke warmth and empathy subtly while primarily focusing on the words and photographs of the people we support on a daily basis.

December 19th - we were featured on PBS NewsHour!



March 4th - Envoyé Spécial
30-minute documentary



November 17 - Spectrum News
Austin program video feature

Miracle Money in the News

08-06-21

Here's what happened when a San Francisco nonprofit gave unhoused people \$500 a month

Miracle Messages supports unhoused people with weekly calls and texts. Then it started giving them cash—and saw a massive impact.



August 6th - Fast Company
Miracle Money feature

PERSONAL FINANCE

How one universal basic income experiment is helping the homeless get off the streets

PUBLISHED SAT, AUG 21 2021 10:06 AM EDT
UPDATED SAT, AUG 21 2021 10:07 AM EDT

Lorie Konish
@LORIEKONISH

WATCH LIVE

KEY POINTS

- The Covid-19 pandemic has put many people in a vulnerable spot when it comes to

August 21st - CNBC
Miracle Money feature

MIT Technology Review

Sign in Subscri

TECH POLICY

Universal basic income is here — it just looks different from what you expected

How the pandemic took the concept of universal basic income out of Silicon Valley's hands — and turned it into something far more radical.

By Eileen Guo
May 7, 2021

May 7th, MIT Technology Review
Featuring Miracle Money and Elizabeth's story

HOME > ECONOMY

A universal basic income pilot program is giving homeless people \$500 a month for 6 months

Ayelet Sheffey Aug 23, 2021, 6:43 PM

f e p

August 23rd - Business Insider
Miracle Money feature

Events & Fundraising

Want to give and support our cause? [DONATE HERE!](#)

3rd Annual Good Neighbor Awards

On December 8th, we held our 3rd Annual Good Neighbor Awards. Over 100 participants tuned in to listen and share countless stories and memories about what has been accomplished during the last year. Various awards were presented to very deserving individuals who have devoted so much time and energy to Miracle Messages. We felt immense support from our community that night - we were able to raise over \$60,000!

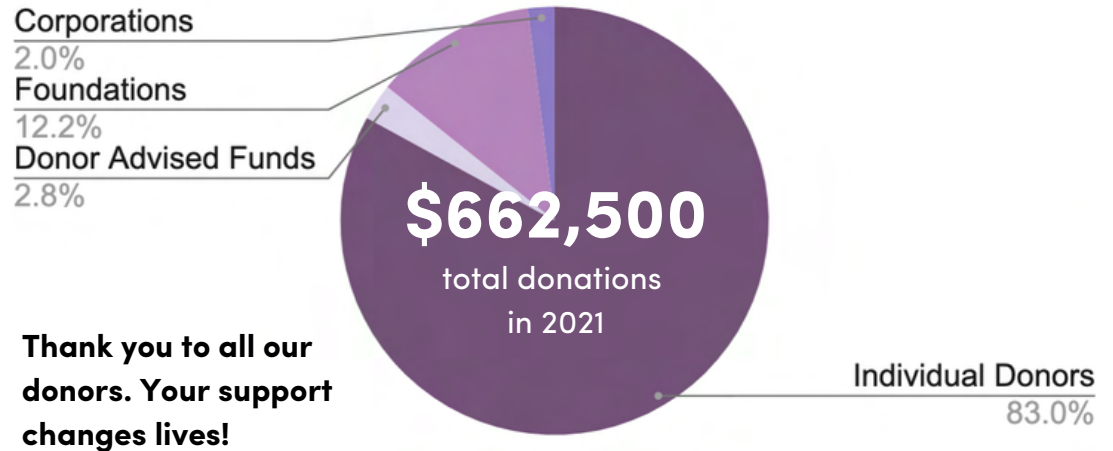


Photo: Screenshot from our GNA3 event



Feature: Johnny

In 2015, Johnny was the second person to be reunited with their family by the grassroots initiative that became Miracle Messages. After Kevin posted Johnny's video message to his family on social media, the public took notice, and one lead finally revealed to know Johnny through a friend, immediately putting Miracle Messages in contact with Johnny's family. Johnny's family shared that they never imagined being able to one day welcome Johnny home again. For Johnny, finding his family meant that after decades of living on the streets, he had people to love.

We recently discovered that Johnny has also been a participant in the Miracle Friends program, matched with Linda, a volunteer, whose weekly calls and texts keep him company and provide him with support. Johnny describes his friendship with Linda as a very positive experience, and emphasizes the impact she has made on his life. He also expressed fond gratitude to Kevin and the Miracle Messages, saying **"I probably would have been dead right now if it weren't for this guy. Thank you very much, brother."**

[Watch Johnny's full story here.](#)

Thank you to our community!

Partners
Donors



Photo: Linda reunited with her family

Thank you partners!

From nonprofit service providers to government agencies, and from universities to corporations, we are grateful for a variety of partners that make our work possible.

Referral Partners (for Miracle Friends & MM Reunion Services)

Amistad
Angie's Place
APS - Social Worker Referral
Aventura Hospital and Medical Center
Bay Area Community Services
Bay Area Rescue Mission
Bayview Hunters Point Foundation for Community Improvement
Bethesda Hospital East
Broward Medical Center
By the Bay Health
Calgary Drop-In & Rehabilitation Centre
Camillus House-Lazarus Project
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Santa Rosa
CCHS Public Health Clinic Services
Catholic Community Services Western Washington
Center for Harm Reduction Therapy
Choose Love Foundation
Church of Nazarene
City of Fremont Mobile Mental Health Program
City Team Ministries
CityHope

COAH Missions
Community Forward
Contra Costa
Core Homeless Outreach
County of Santa Cruz
Crisis at Christmas
Curry Senior Center
Degage Ministries
Divine Rescue
Dolores St. Community Services
Downtown Streets Team (DST)
East Bay Innovations
ECS
Embarcadero
Felton Institute
Five Keys
Francis House
Gerardo Fierro
Glide
Goodness Village
Goodwill NY
Grace at the Green Light
H.E.L.P
Hamilton Families
Haven for Hope
HELP USA
Homefirst SCC
Homeward Bound SF
HOPE Worldwide
Hospitality House
Illumination Foundation
Independent
InnVision

JCOC
Jesus London Centre
Jubilee Center
Kimochoi
LA Library
LAFH
LAHSA
Lava Mae
Lifemoves
Lighthouse center
Lutheran Social Services of Northern California
LVRM
Maple Ridge ICM
Medical Respite and Sobering Center
Metro Ministries
MIA CASA
Miami Street Medicine
Mission Navigation Center
Missionaries of Charity
Mother Teresa's Soup Kitchen
MSC-South
Mt Rubidoux SDA Church
Mt. Tabor
Navigation Center-Mission
New Beginnings Counseling Center Safe Parking Program
New Horizons
New York City Relief
Operation Homeless Connect
Operation Nightwatch
Our Father's House Soup Kitchen
PATH - San Diego
Path of Life Ministries

Thank you partners!

Referral Partners (continued)

People Assisting the Homeless (PATH)
Pillars, Inc
Pine Street Inn
Presbyterian Shelter
Project Homeless Connect
Providence
Queen of the Valley Hospital
Road Home
Ruth's Ministry Fort Lauderdale, FL
Sacramento Covered
Salvation Army
Samaritan House
San Francisco Department of Public Health
San Francisco General Hospital
San Francisco Homeless Outreach team
San Francisco Homeless and Supportive Housing
Sarasota HOT
Seattle Nightwatch
Sequoia Living
Shanti Project
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SIP Medical Team
Sisters of Charity
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The Lord's Gift House
The Other Ones Foundation
The People Concern
The Source (LA County Library)
Tiny Houses Austin
True Worth Place
UCSF(Clinical Case Management)
Union Gospel Mission
Union Women's Mission
Urban Alchemy
Victory in Praise Modesto Church
Waco Street Ministry
WeHOPE
Welcome Home
West County Health Centers
Westfield Regional Medical Center

Corporate Partners



University Partners



Thank you donors!

To date, your generosity has enabled us to reunite over 500 families, facilitate 150 life-changing friendships, and launch one of the first direct cash transfer pilots for unhoused adults in the US, resulting in 66% of originally unhoused recipients getting off the streets as a result. Thank you!

In 2021...

540 Individual Donors
29 Donor Advised Funds
16 Corporate Donors
11 Foundations

helped us raise...

\$662,500

Donor Advised Funds

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Full Circle Fund
Charities Aid Foundation of America (CAF)



Photo: Hilary (top) and her Friend Anna (bottom)

Feature: Hilary and Anna

After her first two Miracle Friends matches didn't work out, Hilary was unsure if she would ever be able to meaningfully connect with a friend through Miracle Friends. Then she met Anna.

Anna had struggled after parting ways with a previous volunteer and felt hesitant in matching with another friend. But Hilary, a trained crisis counselor for Crisis Text Line, was uniquely able to set Anna at ease and make her feel loved and safe. "I had no agenda," says Hilary. "My only purpose was to be kind and supportive."

Hilary's commitment to Anna allowed a strong relationship to bloom. "Anna has been absolutely lovely," shares Hilary, "I am in awe of her positive spirit." Anna faces daily struggles from being handicapped, suffering from chronic pain and being an unhoused senior citizen. Hilary shares that Anna continuously fights to see the good in life. "I see Anna relying on her faith and looking for things to be grateful for," says Hilary. Hilary is impressed with Anna's strength and perseverance, and continues to hope for a better situation for her friend.

Our Team



Kevin F. Adler, Founder & CEO

Born and raised in Livermore, CA, Kevin never learned the word “stranger”, and tries to live accordingly. Kevin started Miracle Messages to make a tangible impact in the lives of our unhoused neighbors, to build empathy through person-to-person interaction and storytelling, and to use technology for social good. Previously, Kevin co-founded three education technology startups, and wrote a book on social capital. Kevin has been honored as a Presidential Leadership Scholar, TED Resident, and a Rotary scholar, and has given talks at TED, the US Census Bureau, HUD, HHS, SXSW, Google, and Berkeley. Kevin's work has been featured in the New York Times, Washington Post, CNN, NPR, and in hundreds of other outlets, garnering well over 100 million views and 1 million shares.



Madeline Mazzocchi, Director of Operations

Madeline brings decades of experience in information technology, operations, and social service to the team. After graduating from college with a degree in Political Science and Computer Science, she spent her career as an information technology professional, retiring in 2019 as Director of Information Technology. She used her passion for helping others during her retirement by volunteering for several non-profit organizations, including Miracle Messages. While watching an interview with Kevin in the spring of 2019, she discovered she could use her IT skills and her desire to help our unhoused neighbors as a volunteer digital detective. Seeing the strong impact Miracle Messages and their volunteers had in every interaction convinced Madeline to come out of retirement to accept the position of Director of Operations.



Gabriela Cordell, South Florida General Manager

Gabby first came to Miracle Messages in early 2016 after seeing a sibling reunion highlighted on a local news show. She contacted Kevin and immediately started offering Miracle Messages to her unhoused friends in the community. Because of her personal experience in seeing the magic of Miracle Messages and how its unique reconnection service profoundly impacts those she was already serving, when Miracle Messages formally expanded to South Florida, Gabby was determined to make herself the chosen candidate. Gabby has been an active member of the homeless service provider community in South Florida through her work with the Choose Love Foundation for over 10 years and has helped us bring Miracle Messages deeper into the community by partnering with other service providers such as HOPE South Florida, Sisters of Charity, Jubilee Center of Hollywood, Showering Love, Our Father's House, The Lord's Gift House, and where it all began, Choose Love Foundation.



Mark Askins, Lead Digital Detective

Since December 2015, Mark has applied his abilities of 30+ years as a private investigator on over 100 cases. He actively works to find the loved ones of those experiencing homelessness and end relational poverty. Mark's journey of working to help those in his community began in high school where he worked in programs supporting special needs children. When Mark became a full time investigator, he perpetuated this giving mindset by involving himself in the Make a Wish foundation and made volunteering a full-time hobby. Mark has facilitated some of Miracle Messages most touching reunions and believes that, "Miracle Messages provides hope and perspective. We give people who are on the streets a chance to break the stigma of homelessness!"



Colette Lay, Executive Assistant

Colette brings a lifelong commitment to community service and volunteering to the Miracle Messages team. She earned a Master's degree in Psychology with a focus on behavioral genetics and has volunteered in some capacity since her first year of college. As a past club president and current Rotarian, she applies the "Service above Self" Rotary motto in all she does. After hearing Kevin give a presentation in 2018, she became an immediate fan of how well Miracle Messages fit her values and ensures that no one has to feel helpless on the issue of homelessness.



Nelly Stastny, San Francisco General Manager

Growing up in a small town in California, Nelly always knew a strong sense of community and the positive effects from it. This coupled with her passion to work with disenfranchised communities brought her to Miracle Messages. Nelly brings her years of case management expertise from working with people experiencing chronic homelessness in Sonoma County where she first learned of the Miracles Messages' mission while utilizing it for her clients. Immediately, she knew it was something she wanted to be a part of. Doing outreach on the streets of San Francisco, Nelly is not only sharing the programs of Miracle Messages and Miracle Friends, but also smiles and conversations with our unhoused neighbors.



Lindsay Pfeiffer, Outreach Specialist

Lindsay has collaborated with local businesses and private donors to supply thousands of essential items and meals to the houseless population in San Francisco. In the past, she has managed the U.S. outpost of an award-winning, U.K. based non-profit (CRACK + CIDER). The success of the U.S. outpost created an average donation spend of over \$130 per person. Beyond launching the US outpost, she led the organization in outreach, PR, supply, and distribution. As a part of Miracle Messages now, Lindsay is assisting in the launch of a new homeless outreach initiative in the Union Square area. She will be helping homeless individuals rebuild social support systems and distributing essential services and directing people to San Francisco based services.

Miracle Friends Mentors

Bill Boehner
Emily Artiano
Ben Pack
Benissa Salem
Jen Roy
Joan Scott
Josh Reiman
Kim Richardson
Madeline Mazzocchi
Maryann Philbrook
Paul Swanson
Tammy Vinson

Case Solving Community

Aashi Tailor
Abou Kourouma
Adeline Narula
Ashley Dukellis
Ben Pack
Berlin McKeague
Brynn Bussanmas
Burabari Yoroka
Caroline Silva
Charlie Drehmer
Christopher Baker
Donny Wilhelm
Emily Artiano
Fereshteh Zahedi
Gabby Cordell
Helen Cattaneo
Jessica Minhas
John Kissane

Jorge Gonzalez
Josh Ong
Joyce Lam
Karen Kendzierski
Kevin F. Adler
Kimberly Yuen
Larry Lipparelli
Lauren McLernon
Lauren Wehn
Lindsay Pfeiffer
Lissa Doty
Liz Breuilly
Madeline Mazzocchi
Marco Ramirez
Mark Askins
Nelly Stastny
Noelle Garza

Finance & Legal

Beth Atteberry, CPA,
Partner at The Henry Levy
Group

Brandon Salesberry
Founder & Principal
Salesberry Group, LLC

Mark Donig Covington &
Burling LLP

Interns

Allison Peart
Andrijana Bilbija
Angelo Florio
Anjuli Perubhatla
Ashley Nakagawa
Ashley Shafer
Ava Ciosek
Becca Graybeal
Daniel Kirtman
Denisse Castillo
Emily Reynolds

Eric Jiang
Gabiella Tummolo
Helena Batey
Ilma Rovcanin
Jazz Henry
Julia Ip
Kaitlin Ip
Lei Nguyen
Maria José Urbina
Maya Gite
Mellie Calderon

Merisa Rovcanin
Nina Moore
Raquel Abifadel
Reena Ye
Ritika Byali
Sai Annem
Sarah Attia
Sophia Ahn
Sophia Wenzel
Sreya Gandra
Tristen Tu

Compassion Crew

Compassion Crew members review emotionally challenging cases and determine best practices for meeting the needs of clients, families and volunteers.

Leadership:

Madeline Mazzoocchi
Mark Askins
Robin McMillan
Gabby Cordell
Mary Anne Cook



In Memoriam

We would like to honor our unhoused friends who passed away this year. While they are no longer physically with us, they will always be in our hearts and memories.

Patricia Sieber

Kelvin Lamonde Smith

David Lampron

Marco Antonio Eysele

Miguel Angel Biacchi

Alton "Coach" McSween



Miracle
Messages

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