



# SARANAM

*Transforming the Lives of Homeless Families*

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“Saranam”  
Means  
Refuge

### Mission

To empower families to end their homelessness and poverty through housing, education and supportive communities.

### 6 Steps to Self Sufficiency

- Step 1: Intake/Orientation
- Step 2: Educational/Personal Development
- Step 3: Vocational Development
- Step 4: Job Placement/Employee Support
- Step 5: Independent Living
- Step 6: Independence

### Saranam Staff

Kelly Brooks  
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## Faces Along My Journey

*Written by Christie McMahon, resident of Saranam*

Although I am fairly young in years, I have experienced many avenues of life. Along the way, I’ve seen many faces. I am a daughter, a friend, a lover, a woman, a student, and most importantly, a mother. During this journey I found myself living in a homeless shelter with my five-month old son until I *discovered one of the hidden gardens of my life – a program named Saranam.* At the time I believed this discovery a lucky accident, but now I realize I was directed here as part of my path.

In August of 2007, when I entered Saranam, I felt excitement at the new situation and opportunity for education. It didn’t take long for me to critique and judge things about the program. I made my voice heard quite frequently by stampeding into the Saranam office prepared to wage a crusade in defense of whatever cause I’d become immersed in at the time. I became a little rebel, constantly questioning, testing, and verbally sparring with anyone in administration. But Saranam and I always managed to retain a mutual respect and friendly rapport as we worked through our disagreements and differences. And there were many occasions in which we all laughed, shared stories and made jokes. I was delighted to find they understood my sarcastic sense of humor.

Once I started going to CNM full-time I felt I had more control over my direction. My relationship and role in Saranam changed quite drastically. I have learned how to pick my battles, prioritize my needs and compromise. I understand that Saranam is not out to hurt me and they know I am not going to manipulate or take advantage of them. Together we have grown and developed trust with each other. I was serious about getting my life on track.

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## Philanthropizza was a Success!



On January 20, 2009 we all ate pizza. Some of us had it for lunch and dinner. California Pizza Kitchen joined Saranam for our first ever "Philanthropizza" event. Co-workers, friends, members from at least six different churches and Girl Scout Troop 1544 enjoyed good food and good company for a worthwhile event. With 20% of the proceeds going to Saranam, and after learning about the program itself, CPK manager said it was their best fundraiser yet and wants to continue to work with Saranam! Thank you to everyone who participated in this community event.

Girl Scouts from Troop 1544 enjoy good food and have fun while supporting Saranam



## Mentoring Program Begins Again!

Mentoring is essential to personal growth. We all have mentors in our lives, formally or informally as illustrated in Marian Wright Edelman's inspirational book, *Lanterns: A Memoir of Mentors*. The author pays tribute to all those who helped light the way for her throughout her life.

Saranam is blessed to have volunteers to come forward to do this important work. Beginning last month, Saranam's mentoring Program was kicked off with a tea and introductions of mentors with mothers in the program.

While discussing the start of a mentoring program with our Saranam participants we posed the question, "Who is your balcony person?" *Balcony People* by Joyce Landorf Heathereley explores the concept of a gift of affirmation. Balcony People are those in our lives that continually affirm us. Once we explained this idea, all the participants had someone to designate.

We are excited to begin a mentoring program again and look forward to the developing relationships it will bring to our community!

## Voices of Saranam



Who is your "Balcony Person?"

- ....My family and friends because they don't let me stop.
- ....My Saranam community and myself. I keep myself going. My kids.
- ....Myself and my son—he is a huge "Mom you can do it!" supporter of me
- ....I have a lot and they are all different. They are there when I need them.
- ....My sister and granny. They've helped me through everything.

## Games with the Kids



Parents and children alike enjoy a good game. Whether it is a card game for two or many or a board game that takes hours or a few minutes it is always great fun for all ages. We enjoyed hot chocolate and graham crackers while playing and learning various games. We discussed inexpensive games that can be played multiple ways and how just playing a board/card game can break up the doldrums of a 'snow day'.



A day in class with the children learning about healthy snacks



### Christie's Story continued...

When the new participants were to be interviewed last summer, I eagerly volunteered to help. Shockingly, my reason for this was because *I felt protective over Saranam*. I didn't want them being used or manipulated. What a difference a year made!

Presently, I am in my third full time semester at CNM and loving it! I am not without my stresses or hardships but overall am happy and content. I am enjoying college and looking forward to the possibilities that education will deliver me. My home is familiar, comfortable and cozy. My son, Carter, is two, beautiful and sweet. He provides the brightest light in my life and is the blessing I am most thankful for.

I am grateful to Saranam. Because of this program my son and I were able to stabilize after an anguishing time of uncertainty. I have discovered a lot about myself, my strength and my independence. I am especially grateful for the opportunity to go back to school because two years ago it was an unattainable fantasy. The gift of education is truly priceless and this knowledge is something that can never be taken away from me.

This has been such an amazing journey and interesting experience for me and my son. I'm very happy with where I'm at in life right now. My future looks promising and I am excited about what lies ahead for my son and I. As I watch Carter grow and learn about the world around him I recognize that I, too, am growing, learning and discovering. I am so grateful and now I feel like a stronger, happier woman. The faces of Saranam are ones I am sure to always remember.

Find out More about Saranam at [www.saranamabq.org](http://www.saranamabq.org)

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