

Moms on a Mission are back on the road together again after the COVID hiatus. On Monday, June 28, 2021, we drove into the beautiful Napa Valley together to attend an Open House for Gray Haven, a residential treatment facility for families like ours. As we traveled from Contra Costa County into Napa, we saw some stark reminders of why the Bay Area needs a system of Housing That Heals for families like ours. We headed towards Napa County on Highway 29 and immediately noticed the tent city that had been built in the burrows of the freeway overpass. Scattered garbage heaps were evidence of scattered lives and the forgotten population, many of who would likely thrive in a place like Gray Haven.

We decided to detour past Napa State Hospital, the place where Teresa's Danny had been placed on a civil commitment before being criminalized there and arrested as a patient. That landed him in the Napa County jail where he was deemed Incompetent to Stand (IST). This would be the first time for Teresa to be back in Napa County since luck and heroics got Danny transferred to California Psychiatric Transitions, a Housing That Heals facility in Merced County. It was traumatic for Teresa to be back in a place that carried the memories of so much pain and lost time for her son.

We turned into the NSH grounds only to be stopped at a new gate with a guard telling us to turn around. We clicked a picture of one of the many bungalows that we believe are empty while people are living in cages or the corners of our communities. People have wondered why the state and counties don't partner to innovate and renovate the empty buildings located on these state hospital grounds to create capacity for an onsite continuum of care and ease the human log jam up and down our state. But, instead, we are remodeling jails all over the state while hospital beds and residential treatment beds sit empty.

Next, we headed to our destination. Since we were the first to arrive a little early, we lingered outside of the beautifully restored mansion taking in the grandeur of the grounds. We headed in to reunite with a friend and colleague, [Roberta Chambers](https://www.indigoproject.net/about-us) of the Indigo Project, <https://www.indigoproject.net/about-us>. Roberta has been an early champion of our Housing That Heal's mission and was the first person we trusted with our draft paper. She had been telling us about her work with Gray Haven for many months and was excited to show us the results. We were excited to see it too!

As you step up onto the porch and walk through the front doors, you know you are entering a special place. We were graciously welcomed and quickly introduced to all of the special people who were responsible for tucking healing and hospitality into every detail of every room and their health and wellness program. We met Dr. Patricia Gray, Luis, Miriam, Christy, and many other amazing staff. We immediately started sharing our stories with each other and learning about the Gray Haven vision while being served incredible hors d'oeuvres prepared onsite by the chefs.

Before touring the upper floors, a separate health and wellness clinic, apartments, pool, and game room, we were joined by Mary Francis Walsh, the Executive Director of NAMI

Sonoma County, and her husband. We are so grateful for all of the NAMI connections we have made during the Housing That Heals journey. We are all entwined by a synergistic passion to stop the suffering of so many. The tour bonded us all in the promise and purpose for housing vulnerable populations with dignity and providing a real chance for healing, health, and home.

The Gray Haven program has opened with 6 beds which is the maximum that can be housed without a use permit. But because of bureaucracy and barriers, those beds are now empty even though they are being offered PRO BONO. Lauren and I are determined to help remove those barriers and fill those beds. We are already making suggested referrals.

Before we left the open house, Teresa shared a story recently told by Dr. Ralph Aquila, the former Medical Director of Fountain House in NY. He had recently told a panel assembled by the Greenburger Center about the new clients who were coming to their program from Rikers Island. He said that the look on their faces when they entered Fountain House after being at Rikers was a look of awe at their new surroundings. Teresa shared that she knows that the same look of awe will be present when the residents walk through the front door and every other door on the Gray Haven property.

To say that we were impressed with Gray Haven is an understatement. But, while our hearts were filled with hope and joy after this tour, they were also broken because of the "Stop Gray Haven" signs that lined the neighborhood streets as we drove away. There are future plans for expansion that would add additional beds and programs to build a big campus of greatness for families like ours. We see a "Moms On a Mission" campaign to Save Gray Haven in our future.

It should not have to so hard to help desperate people who live heroically with no-fault brain illnesses. We must all continuously focus on educating our communities about how and why our loved ones are diverted to, not from, jails, street corners, and institutions because of systemic discrimination.

We can and must build an understanding of the dire need for safe, secure, dignified, therapeutic housing that heals. We have seen it happen. We know it is possible.

Housing That Heals = Gray Haven

Please see @ <https://grayhavennapa.org/> for more information.