



FSA
Family Service Agency
of San Francisco

Lives Transformed



*Help Felton
help others*

Please support us on **"Giving Tuesday"**
Tuesday, November 27, 2018

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SPOTLIGHT: Working for Felton Transformed Her Life



In our Spotlight, a member of Felton's staff shares her story in her own words.

To watch Felton's Giving Tuesday video, please [click here](#).

In the winter of 2009, my youngest son and I were living one of my greatest fears. We had become homeless in what was considered that year by

Business Insider the most dangerous city of the top 25 dangerous cities in America. We were financially insecure, inexperienced with city living, and vulnerable.

I was a single mother, with a small build, standing five feet flat-footed. My 16-year-old son stood five feet five and weighed about 140 pounds. To say that I was terrified for myself and for my precious son, homeless in a crime-ridden, dangerous city, is a gross understatement.

We had moved from our small hometown in 2009, hoping to rebuild our lives after a painful divorce in the summer of 2008. My son's dad and I had built our dream home two years before, in 2006. I had graduated from the university with a bachelor of arts in 2007. My oldest son, aged 21, was in his third year at the same university. When his brother and I moved, he chose wisely and remained in school to complete his bachelor's degree in computer sciences.

Before the divorce, my husband and I were a successful couple by all appearances, with a beautiful family and a home our friends lovingly called "The Castle" due to its expansive Mediterranean design, striking architectural elements and white limestone exterior complete with 1,154 square feet of porches. We had a beautiful home. To become homeless was devastating.

After my divorce, I made a job transfer. I had just over one week to secure housing, enroll my son in high school and report for my first day of work. In the new city, I had only one longtime friend. We had met years before in our town when our sons were cast in a play at the community children's theater during their elementary

school years. When she offered to let my son and me stay with her and her son during the first week or two after our arrival, we happily accepted. I thought I could find a house for rent in that short amount of time, but the search proved to be challenging. The cost of housing within the school district of our choice was more than two times my budget. While affordable housing could be found in the inner-city school district, we couldn't move there; the entire school district had lost accreditation, and there were safety issues and concerns.

On November 4, 2009, I returned home from working a 15-hour day, first at my day job, and then at my moonlighting job as a hostess for a fine dining restaurant. That night, my friend evicted us from her house, without notice. The time was after midnight-and we had no place to go.

I had \$45 in my bank account, and nothing in my wallet. Payday was at the end of the week. I convinced her to let us stay that night and promised to be gone the next morning.

The next night and for the next week, my son stayed with a friend from school. I slept in my car with our cat. One night, my oldest brother called to check on us. It was 10:30 p.m., and I was searching for a new, safe place to park my car for the night so I could sleep. Not knowing the city well, I had no idea what was safe and what was not. When I told my brother what had happened, he told me to find a motel and he would pay for us to stay. We lived at Red Roof Inn for the rest of November, where on our first morning there, we found shattered glass beneath the car next to mine-evidence of a car break-in.

We weren't what some may think of as typically homeless. I had a job and a car. My son attended school every day and also worked a part-time job. He was a banquet server at the restaurant where I worked. We were not sleeping on the streets. Fortunately, we had family who was willing to help us. We were homeless for only 30 days. We were fortunate in many ways. I will forever be grateful for my loving brothers and parents who helped us when we couldn't help ourselves.

My own lived experience has given me such compassion for impoverished people, especially those who are homeless. My heart breaks for everyone who is homeless or insecurely housed. In 2016, Forbes reported that 550,000 Americans were homeless that year with more than 7,000 homeless in San Francisco. My son went on to college and I worked a number of jobs, but in the spring of 2015, I was seeking a more stable career opportunity. A few months later, Felton Institute hired me. I was thrilled!

I was really impressed with the mental health and social services that Felton offers to people of all ages, races and ethnicity with a focus on low-income and at-risk populations, including the homeless. It is incredible that Felton provides wraparound services and partners with other community organizations and provides more than 50 programs in 11 languages.

Felton Institute's areas of service address many of the social issues about which I care deeply. When I was offered a job with Felton, I was ecstatic with joy. I have worked for Felton for more than three years, and I'm happy to say that I've been securely housed through many holiday seasons.

If I had access to the broad range of services Felton provides recipients of their programs, I would not have had to sleep in my car, wash myself in a gas station to prepare for work, or fear for my son's and my life while living in a dangerous city with no place to call home. I hope that as you consider investing during this holiday season, you will be inspired to give to Felton Institute, a nonprofit dedicated to transforming lives.

Felton's LEAD and FEST Teams at National Harm Reduction Conference



The 2018 National Harm Reduction Conference was held in New Orleans, Louisiana, last month, and members of Felton's San Francisco Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (SF-LEAD) and Felton Engagement Specialist Team (FEST) attended. Dr. Robin Ortiz, Alejandra Boyer, Randy Carter, Clarence Hardy, and Curtis Penn joined more than 500 people at the engaging biennial conference.

"The 2018 National Harm Reduction Conference comes at a time when harm reduction, health care, and drug policy reform have entered a dynamic and critical phase. The prescription opioid and heroin overdose epidemic has captured national attention, with renewed focus on transmission of HIV and viral hepatitis among people who use drugs. These trends are reshaping the policy and public health landscapes, making harm reduction more urgent and relevant than ever before," said Curtis Penn, Program Director of Felton's Justice-Related Programs.

SF-LEAD is a multi-agency collaborative partnership program designed to divert repeat, low level adult offenders at their earliest contact with law enforcement. Implementing a harm-reduction philosophy, staff provide clinical case management, behavioral health and wellness interventions to support clients in addressing their substance use and /or mental health needs. LEAD services are an alternative to jail and prosecution for those experiencing mental health, substance use and co-occurring disorders. The Felton LEAD team works with residents referred in the 16th Street/Mission neighborhood.

FEST is comprised of Engagement Specialists who are skilled case managers working in collaboration with the San Francisco Department of Public Health, Public Works, Homelessness and Supportive Housing and the San Francisco Police Department. The collaboration provides rapid response to San Franciscans who are insecurely housed or not housed at all.

The National Harm Reduction Conference attracts people from all over the world; it is the only conference of its kind in the United States.

Thank You, Bay Area Crisis Nursery and Half Price Books!

We are so grateful for the incredible support given in donation to Felton Institute's Holiday Giving Program so far this season!

Bay Area Crisis Nursery provided over 300 new educational toys, books, dolls, trains, and early childhood education cognitive development toys benefiting Felton's Children, Youth, and Family Division (CYF), as well as the children of our Justice-Related Programs Transitional Age Youth (TAY) parents!

Half Price Books has given Felton three boxes overflowing with books to be given to children and youth in our Children, Youth and Family and Transitional Age Youth Division and Justice-Related Services Programs. On behalf of CYF/TAY Division Director Dr. Kate Shadoan and Justice-Related Services Program Director Curtis Penn, our entire agency, and the families we have the pleasure of serving, thank you for thinking of us this year!



Felton and You



Caramel brown skin of an oven roasted turkey,
Melting butter on warm homemade bread,
The scent of cinnamon, gingerbread and stuffing,
Sugarplums dancing in our heads,
Lights flashing in store windows,
Black Friday and Cyber Monday shopping,
Giving Tuesday and the smell of pine,
These all signal that the holidays and the season of giving have begun.


Children in need of warm winter clothing,
People with no place to lay their weary heads,
Mothers with no food to feed their hungry families,

Senior citizens facing days with dread,
Young adults who hear voices,
A community in great need,
Young, old and in between,
These are the thousands Felton Institute serves,
Their race and ethnicity, all diverse.


On Giving Tuesday, you can help thousands too, with a gift, small or great.
Just text FELTON TO 41444 on your mobile device.
It's quick and easy as you will see.
Your contribution transforms the world that will be.


Your generous donations transform lives. Thank you!



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