

ONE YEAR IN:

BUILDING HOPE, NAVIGATING CHALLENGES, AND LOOKING AHEAD



WRITTEN BY:

APRIL LUDWIG, LMFT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

As I reflect on my first year as CEO of Hope Cooperative, I'm both humbled and amazed by the journey. Every day has brought new opportunities, challenges, lessons, and growth. There are moments in any new endeavor that you simply can't prepare for, even when you're leading an organization. I'd like to share some of the key lessons I've learned this year and what excites me moving forward.

Some experiences in this role are beyond what any amount of planning or training can prepare you for. One such moment came in my first month when three adult deaths occurred in quick succession. Having spent most of my career working with children and families, death, while inevitable, was a rare occurrence. To suddenly face multiple losses so close together was a sobering shift in the scope of my responsibilities. It was an emotional time—not only for those we serve but also for our dedicated staff. Navigating their grief and helping them manage the turmoil was a challenge I hadn't anticipated. I quickly realized how deeply the emotional well-being of our team is intertwined with the work we do, and that supporting them through tough times is just as critical as the services we offer to our community.

I'm also incredibly grateful to the board of directors and former CEO for creating a transition period, which allowed me to settle in and learn before flying solo. However, what I couldn't have anticipated was how much of my time would be spent meeting with people over coffee, lunch, or dinner—whether it was with business partners, elected officials, community providers, or community members seeking support. These connections have turned out to be absolutely essential. They've proven to be the foundation of so many important partnerships and collaborations. Engaging with these individuals and groups has deepened my understanding of the issues facing our community and strengthened Hope Cooperative's role in addressing them. It's these relationships that allow us to move forward, together, with shared goals and a unified



2024 Board of Directors with former CEO, Erin Johansen and current CEO, April Ludwig

approach to solving some of our region's most complex challenges.

The housing development work has proven to be a far greater and more complex challenge than I initially envisioned. What I hadn't fully grasped was the extent to which we would take on the role of housing developers within a mental health agency—building not just structures, but opportunities to transform lives. I remember sitting in early meetings, googling terms like 'zoning' and 'land use,' and while I remain ready to google terms as needed, it's the lasting impact of our work that matters most. Each project is a chance to change the trajectory of individuals' lives and provide the foundation for healing. Though I'm still learning, the real impact of these housing projects is unfolding in ways I couldn't have imagined, and I'm excited for the continued ripple effect on both individuals and the community.



Hope team members with family and friends at the 2024 NAMI Walk

Hearing the anger and frustration expressed by community members about the perceived impact of our services on their neighborhoods—particularly regarding individuals experiencing homelessness or facing mental health challenges—has been tough. I understand what "impact" means and how it feels. As business owners, homeowners, and simply as community members who want a safe environment, it's easy to feel overwhelmed when it seems like nothing is being done or solved. As I often say, two things can be true at the same time: while we're working

hard to help those in need, we must also respect the concerns of our neighbors. It's not always easy to reconcile these differing perspectives, but it's important to acknowledge them as we continue to move forward in our mission.

Looking ahead, I'm filled with optimism and excitement. There's still so much work to do, but there are also many victories to celebrate. In 2025, we will continue to be a driving force for change in our community, particularly through our housing initiatives. With over 600 units slated for development in the Sacramento region, we are not only addressing immediate needs but also creating sustainable, long-term solutions for those in need.

This year, we will remain a steady and reliable resource for those in need, with a continued focus on providing community outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness and offering respite services through overnight shelter support. We are committed to welcoming any adult into our three CORE programs and providing comprehensive support through outpatient treatment services via our behavioral health programs. Additionally, we will continue offering both group and individual programs designed to assist in recovery. For those facing immediate mental health challenges, we provide crisis respite services, ensuring individuals have a safe and supportive place to turn. These services, alongside our housing initiatives, are part of our ongoing mission to serve and uplift our community.

Our goal this year is to deepen and strengthen our community collaborations and partnerships, recognizing that collective action is essential to creating lasting change. By joining forces with organizations, businesses, and leaders who share our commitment to addressing homelessness, mental health, and community well-being, we can amplify our impact and drive real transformation in the Sacramento region.



Hope Cooperative Leadership and Community Partners at CORE X Street

We are committed to embracing projects that not only align with our core values but also push the boundaries of what's possible, ensuring that Hope Cooperative will continue to be a catalyst for positive change and a cornerstone of this community for the next 50+ years.

At this point, you're probably thinking, 'How can I help?' So glad you asked! As we continue to expand our reach, I know we can't do it alone. We need you—our community members, neighbors, donors, sponsors, and partners—to help make a difference. We are actively seeking passionate Board Members who can guide our advocacy efforts. If you have a passion for social justice, advocacy, or simply want to make an impactful change, here's your chance. If you've felt frustrated by the homeless crisis and don't know how you can help, this is your opportunity to get involved. If you believe in the work we're doing and want to be part of a solution, we'd love to have you on board. Whether through volunteering, donating, or sharing your expertise, your support is crucial to advancing our mission. Together, we can create a meaningful and lasting impact. Join us in building a future where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

We invite you to support our efforts. Help us kick off the month of May by giving to Hope Cooperative on The Big Day of Giving, Thursday, May 1st, 2025. Your donation will help



April Ludwig speaking at Hope's annual Stand Up Sacramento event in October 2024

create vibrant communities where we are all growing, developing, and working together as one big community. We also invite you to join us at our annual fundraising event, Stand Up Sacramento, on Friday, October 3, 2025, at The Sofia. It will be a night filled with celebration, comedy, and camaraderie. This annual event highlights the incredible work of Hope Cooperative, our partners, and the community members whose

lives are being changed every day. Let's all Stand Up for our Sacramento Region.

This has been a year of learning, growth, and building a sustainable foundation, and as we move forward into 2025 and beyond, we are excited to continue advancing our mission with your support. We look forward to doing it together, in partnership with you, as we create lasting change in our community.

With gratitude and hope for the future,



April Ludwig, LMFT
Chief Executive Officer



2024 Board of Directors with April Ludwig at Hope's annual Stand Up Sacramento event this past October.

**Save the date for Hope Cooperative's 13th annual Stand Up Sacramento fundraiser!
Friday, October 3rd, 2025**