

Stronger Together

INSIDE

Support for moms

pg. 3

Keeping food on the table

pg. 5

Help with housing

pg. 9

Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency



DON'T GO THROUGH IT ALONE

The Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) offers a broad safety net of services that help area residents who are in need. Some of the services offered are:

Health and Nutrition Services

There are a variety of programs to help ensure that local families stay healthy and well, including Women, Infants and Children (WIC), a nutrition program for low-income families with young children, and CalFresh, which improves the health of low-income individuals and families by providing supplemental benefits for nutritious food.

Pages 4 & 5

Child Protective Services

Child Protective Services works with parents and the community to help build safe, healthy, happy children and strong families.

Page 6 & 7

CalWORKs

California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) gives short-term cash aid to help families with minor children move to self-sufficiency.

Page 8

Housing

The Nevada County Housing and Community Services Program helps low-income households with down payment assistance and housing rehabilitation loans and grants.

Page 9

Child Support Services

The Sierra Nevada Regional Department of Child Support Services provides free services to all single parents, regardless of their income. The department will help establish paternity, collect and distribute child support payments and enforce medical support and family support orders.

Page 10

Adult Services

Adult Services provides elderly and dependent adults with basic medical care, transportation to appointments, meal preparation and house cleaning.

Veterans Services Office

The Nevada County Veterans Services Office advocates for veterans, survivors and dependents. The County VSO will help connect the veteran to local, state and federal benefits for health, education, employment and home loans.

Eligibility Services

Curious what services you might qualify for? The team of skilled professionals at the eligibility intake unit are ready to help you identify benefits available to you.

Find out about the programs that may benefit you at:
www.mynevadacounty.com

Michael Heggarty, Director of Nevada County Health and Human Services.
PHOTO BY KIM PALAFERRI



A Stronger Community, One Family at a Time

Help is available to get through trying times

by Brittany Wesely

In Nevada County, more than 12 percent of residents are living below the poverty level, and one out of every four people is eligible for public assistance. Times are tough and many of us are struggling, but there's hope. Through Nevada County's Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), there are many programs available to offer a way out for people who are fighting through temporary difficult situations.

Michael Heggarty, Director of HHSA, says the agency improves conditions for people who are too poor, too sick or too isolated to access essential services themselves. But the services offered aren't limited to people in poverty or without jobs.

"HHSA is made up of many departments with a lot of programs. What the programs have in common is that they provide safety net services to people who have needs and no alternative ways to

have their needs met," Heggarty says. "We're often their last resort."

With the common goal of strengthening families and the community, HHSA programs help provide food and housing assistance, and allow families to become stable and self-sufficient through work training.

"We are protecting lives, promoting health and wellness, and providing support and services to help Nevada County residents meet their most basic needs," Heggarty says.

When you're facing life's most difficult trials, accepting help isn't admitting weakness, it's being smart. To give you a bit of encouragement, we've collected stories of people who live and work in your community and have improved their lives

through the support of social services offered at HHSA. We've also provided you with information about a variety of services that can help you become self-sufficient again. Because asking for help isn't easy, and you may be eligible for more than you think.

We are protecting lives, promoting health and wellness, and providing support and services to help Nevada County residents meet their most basic needs.

Michael Heggarty
Director of Nevada County's Health and Human Services Agency

Help

by Matthew Craggs

When They Needed It

Services help family achieve self-sufficiency

After being told by doctors that she couldn't have children, Carla Boone became pregnant at 37. The baby's father refused to acknowledge paternity and moved to Colorado. Without a traditional support structure — her parents died when she was 11 — Boone felt overwhelmed.

"I didn't have my mom and I was becoming a mom," Boone says. "I wanted to give my son the best life I could, and I didn't have parents or his father to help."

A psychology graduate of San Diego State University, Boone moved to Grass Valley to live closer to her extended family. However, when it came to her decision to seek help from Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), Boone's family offered only a bootstrap mentality that provided little real support.

"There was an attitude of 'Do what you need to do — mop floors pregnant, figure it out,'" she says.

Some friends and family feared that once she was on public assistance, Boone would never move beyond the services. Others suggested her education should preclude her from needing assistance.

"The more you hear it, it slips in a little bit," Boone says.

Yet Carla's commitment to her son never wavered.

"I said, 'Well, this is what needs to be done. Let's do it,'" Boone says.

At Nevada County Health and Human Services, Boone entered the CalWORKs program, where an integrated network of supports — such as gas reimbursement and assistance finding subsidized day care for her new baby boy — brought stability to her life so she could focus on finding a job and taking care of her son and herself.

"I was very skeptical of the Welfare-to-Work

program — I didn't know what they were going to make me do," Boone says.

Instead of the rote PowerPoint recitations and impersonal aid she feared, Boone found a tailored program that was organized and motivational. She enrolled in counseling and, in workshops, she began to combat the stigmas and obstacles of needing help.

"You build up ideas about yourself, looking at yourself from a different perspective," Boone says. "I realized I could move beyond past decisions that didn't really benefit me."

Through techniques such as visualization, setting goals and self-empowerment, Boone redefined what success meant to her and set two goals: to become a real estate agent and buy a new car.

While working toward those goals, Boone received assistance from HHSA proving paternity, collecting child support payments and landing a temporary job with 2-1-1 Nevada County, a position that became permanent after six months. Soon, Boone transitioned to working with In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS), and last April, she earned her real estate license. She had achieved her goal of self-sufficiency and challenged the stigma that receiving public assistance is a permanent position.

As a real estate agent, Boone saved the money from the sale of her first two homes to accomplish the goal she first set for herself in the CalWORKs program. In December, right before Christmas, she bought a new car.

Today, sitting in a coffee shop a few blocks from her real estate firm, Boone's face lights up when she talks about the car. For her, it's tangible proof of how her unwavering motivation and hard work turned a little help from HHSA into a lifetime of difference.

As a single mother, Carla Boone found stability through the Welfare-to-Work program. Today, she works as a real estate agent and recently purchased a new car.
PHOTO BY KIM PALAFERRI



I wanted to give my son the best life I could.

Carla Boone

HELPING EVERYONE IN NEED



The services offered by Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) provide a safety net to everyone in need. The people who receive services are your neighbors, colleagues, friends and family. More people in our community qualify for services than you might think.



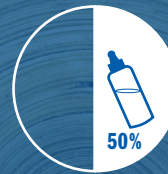
One

in every four people in the county is eligible for public assistance



12 percent

are living below the poverty level



50 percent

of all infants born in the county are enrolled in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program



One

in every four people is eligible for Medi-Cal



One

in every 10 people is eligible for CalFresh

Helping Moms Be Their Best

New mother
finds valuable
resource in
WIC program

by Lexi Brister

Mary Olender learned a lot
about becoming a new mother
by enrolling in the WIC program
with Nevada County Health and
Human Services Agency.
PHOTO BY KIM PALAFERRI



WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN

The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program is a nutrition program that helps infants and young children and their mothers, as well as pregnant women, eat well, be active and stay healthy.

What does WIC offer?

- Nutrition and health education
- Education and support for breast-feeding mothers
- Growth-monitoring services for infants and young children
- Help finding health care and other community services
- Vouchers to buy healthy foods, such as: milk, fruit and vegetables, eggs, beans, grains, infant formula, baby food and more

Who can participate in WIC?

Mothers and families with young children, including:

- Pregnant mothers
- Mothers who are breast-feeding a baby under 1 year old
- Families who had a baby within the past six months
- Households with children under 5 years old, including those cared for by a single father, grandparent, stepparent or guardian

Families must also meet income requirements. For example, a family of four earning less than \$44,123, or \$47,700 if receiving Medi-Cal, would qualify for WIC.

Children under age 5 who are in foster and kinship placements can qualify regardless of family income.

Parenting is hard, but you don't have to go through it alone. Get connected to free services that can help make your most important job a little easier.

Call the Nevada County WIC office at 530-265-1454 or visit: www.wicworks.ca.gov

Ten years ago, 33-year-old Mary Olender was a soon-to-be mom with limited resources and even less knowledge about how to feed and care for her unborn child.

Olender found the support she needed through the nutrition education courses offered by Nevada County's Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. Ten years and four healthy children later, Olender herself has taken up the banner of what she calls "mom-to-mom support," and is now becoming a nutrition counselor herself.

"I had just moved to the area and had no one to ask the things I didn't know," Olender says, explaining her first encounter with WIC. "I was physically uncomfortable and I felt isolated, and after the first time I called, they got me an initial appointment where I got so much information about the things I needed to be doing."

Olender says she had constant support through not only the enrollment process, but throughout her pregnancy and even after each of her children was born.

"There was always someone to talk to when I had questions, and that was invaluable," she says. "I went from miserable to happy and prepared."

Olender believes that were it not for the consistent communication and teaching she received from her WIC advisers, she would never have known what resources were available to her as a mom. In addition to education and a connection to health care and other community services, WIC offers checks

for buying healthy foods to families with qualifying income.

Program Coordinator Debra Wilson says what makes WIC so effective is the strong foundation of support and education, starting with prenatal nutrition and breast-feeding.

"Affordable health care begins with breast-feeding," Wilson says.

An emphasis on breast-feeding is of extreme importance to the program because it's the best way to build not only a healthy nutritional foundation, but also the connection between mom and baby.

"If a mom is able to build and strengthen that bond through nursing,

it's far more likely that she will continue to provide that quality of care to her child," Wilson says. "Breast-feeding support is the best way to keep mom comfortable and baby healthy."

Olender, who decided to become a breast-feeding peer counselor for WIC after nursing four children in five years, says it was one of the best decisions she's made.

"With my first [baby] I was frustrated and couldn't even get him to nurse," Olender says.

But Olender was determined. She took all the classes available and talked with her counselor until she finally found success. Olender says that her educational experiences were what inspired her to become a breast-feeding counselor herself.

"As a new mom, even if you have support, you feel incredibly alone and scared. My whole job is to make sure these women have someone to talk to," Olender says.

Once you get enrolled, which your counselor helps you with every step of the way, there are so many options, from nutrition and cooking classes to health classes for new parents.

"This really is a major resource," Olender says. "I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't gone to WIC."

**I don't know
what I would
have done if
I hadn't gone
to WIC.**

Mary Olender

Helping Families Eat Healthy

Single mother receives healthy food through CalFresh program

by Amanda Caraway

Amanda Caudill was able to get healthy food for herself and her daughter through the CalFresh program of Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency.
PHOTO BY KIM PALAFERRI



Amanda Caudill was a stay-at-home mom raising her young daughter, when her husband, the sole provider, left unexpectedly and stopped supporting the family. With no source of income and no college degree or experience to make her desirable to employers, she was left wondering how she would feed her child.

Caudill went to Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) to find out what programs she could qualify for. That's when she discovered CalFresh.

"At Nevada County, everyone is welcomed with open arms," Caudill says. "They told me not to feel embarrassed and gave me all of the resources that I needed. The system was very easy to navigate."

Caudill credits her case worker, who laid out a step-by-step path for her to follow and always returned her calls within hours, with helping her succeed in the program. Caudill also found the Electronic Benefit Card (EBT) — the card issued to each CalFresh participant — to be convenient and easy to use.

"It's really inconspicuous so the other people in line at the store don't know you're on the program," Caudill says. "It looks like a regular debit card."

Caudill says her case worker made it clear how much money she would receive each month to pay for food and provided tips to help her stay within the budget. She also guided Caudill to other resources that could help supplement her needs, such as local food banks.

"As long as participants want to succeed, they will," she says. "Nevada County gives you a detailed packet telling you where you can use the card and what you can buy, as well as a cookbook with a lot of recipe ideas."

Caudill was thrilled to learn that she could use the EBT card at local farmers markets, and took advantage of a \$25 farmers market bonus voucher that she received when she started the program.

She was able to stay within her spending limit and feed herself and her daughter with the amount placed on her EBT

card each month. "I knew what I needed to do each month and I planned ahead," she says. "It's worth putting in the work."

In addition to CalFresh, Caudill also received assistance from other Nevada County programs that helped her with day care, job training, mileage and obtaining her associate degree.

"If you really want to better yourself and you just need help getting back on your feet, these programs can help you do that," Caudill says.

Thanks to the invaluable support she received from HHSA, Caudill now has a good job and is able to provide for herself and her daughter.

Caudill continues to use the recipes in the CalFresh cookbook and the money-saving tips that she learned while in the program.

“

At Nevada County, everyone is welcomed with open arms. They told me not to feel embarrassed.

Amanda Caudill

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CALFRESH HELPS FEED THE COMMUNITY



CalFresh is a supplemental assistance program created to help nourish the community and offer support to those who have fallen on hard times. Formerly known as Food Stamps, CalFresh participants receive an Electronic Benefit Card (EBT) that can be used to purchase fresh foods and ingredients at groceries stores and food markets. In 2014, participants also received a voucher for \$25 in tokens to

spend at local farmers markets — over 1,100 participants redeemed their tokens.

Income is the biggest factor and household size helps dictate the benefit amount. With expanded benefits and new requirements, many who weren't eligible for CalFresh in the past could be eligible now. Things such as bank account balances and home ownership are often exempt and

not reasons for disqualification. Thousands of people receive assistance each month. In December 2014, 7,702 people received CalFresh benefits in Nevada County alone.

If you think you might qualify, dial 2-1-1 or visit <http://211NevadaCounty.org> for Nevada County's resource and information hub.

Back on Track

CPS intervention connects family with services to rebuild a happy home

by Mark Lore

It was the greatest challenge they ever faced together that led Doug Fleming and Marley Mueller to understand how strong their family could be. Just two years ago the couple's marriage was in jeopardy. They almost lost their home, and Marley was battling a longtime alcohol addiction. As a result, their son, then age 3, wasn't receiving the intensive support a young child needs. It took an intervention from Nevada County Child Protective Services after one very loud, but nonviolent, domestic dispute to help get the family back on a healthy path.

"Although we didn't know it at the time, CPS' intervention saved our marriage," Marley admits.

Of course, it wasn't easy — any time CPS gets involved it can be a bit nerve-racking for a family. Not only that, the experience also forced Doug and Marley to take a long look inward at issues they'd been dealing with for years. Marley says she'd been battling an addiction to alcohol most of her adult life. Both she and Doug say they are products of successful, career-oriented families, and admit they had to come to terms with the fact that they themselves needed help being parents.

"At first we were like, 'We don't need a parenting class,'" Doug says.

Now he sees things differently.

"Everyone needs a parenting class!" he says.

The couple were directed to Community Recovery Resources (CoRR), which specializes in treating substance abuse with an innovative family-based model. The campus allows parents to work with counselors while children are under care at the Child Development Center. Doug and Marley's son Max received additional

support services a few days a week while they worked through their issues in marriage and individual counseling. They learned how to better communicate with each other, especially in front of their child, a key component to a healthy family.

Being separated from one another was a challenging situation for Doug, Marley and Max, but they knew deep down that the key to having a happy, healthy child was to be healthy parents.

"It was an extraordinary gift to be able to take time out of our life to better ourselves," Doug says. "But it took a while to realize what an amazing opportunity for self-improvement and growth CPS was giving us."

They give CPS much of the credit, but it was also the couple's willingness to address their issues that led to a happy ending. When Doug and Marley were ready to close their case, they asked to keep it open in order to finish marriage counseling. They're also giving back to CoRR by volunteering their time where Marley is now employed as a grant writer. CPS helped them find a new place to live, and their family life is better and healthier than it's ever been. Today, Max is a well-adjusted, thriving 5-year-old who skis, runs and frolics in the Yuba River with his parents.

"We couldn't have done this without CPS," Doug says. "Marley and I wouldn't be together, and Max wouldn't be as happy and well-adjusted as he is. If you engage with CPS on some level — with respect — they're willing to help. And the services they have to offer are instrumental in creating a happy, healthy and engaged family unit."

Doug Fleming, Marley Mueller and their son, Max, got support through Nevada County Child Protective Services to work through a rough patch at home, and are now thriving as a family.
PHOTO BY KIM PALAFERRI



"We couldn't have done this without CPS."

Marley Mueller
Mother

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES



Nevada County Child Protective Services (CPS) partners with local organizations that provide programs to support families staying together and help keep children safe. The department's primary goal when interacting with families is to provide services and support to address any safety or care issues in the home, enabling families to reunify. The department uses a holistic approach,

allowing parents to treat more than just one aspect of caring for their children and find long-term support. Here are some of the programs Nevada County CPS works with in the community:

- Parenting classes tailored to each parent's needs
- In-home treatment and support for child behavioral issues

- Domestic violence and sexual assault counseling and art therapy
- Wraparound services, such as independent living skills classes and job training.

For more information on Nevada County Child Protective Services, visit: www.mynevadacounty.com/nc/hhsa/dss/cps/Pages/Home.aspx

Keeping Children Safe

Q & A with Child Protective Services Program Manager Nicholas Ready

by Mike Blount

Q

What is the ultimate goal of Nevada County Child Protective Services?

A

The ultimate goal is always to keep children safe in our community. We're continually seeking out best practices to find better ways to deal with domestic violence, behavioral health and mental health issues. But our first priority is to keep children safe and help families stay together.

Q

How is Nevada County CPS designed to help families and protect children?

A

We make every effort to ensure that children remain in their parents' home without jeopardizing their safety. An ideal case would be voluntary family maintenance. That's when the family is ready to work with Nevada County CPS and we bring in other family members or community members — they could be church members or close family friends — to create a safety blanket around the child. With all of them in place, children can usually remain at home without formal court intervention.

Q

How is voluntary family maintenance a safety net for children when parents are unable to care for them?

A

Because it's long-term support. Nevada County CPS is short-term support. We don't want to be involved if we don't need to be. By bringing in other family members or community members, we're creating a safety net for the future.

Q

When is a child removed from a home?

A

A lot of people believe that we are just here to take children away from homes, but there are two things that occur before a child is removed: an imminent safety concern or when there is an overall risk to the child's safety. An imminent risk would be physical or sexual abuse or extreme neglect. An overall risk would be a pattern of behavior — like the parents' repeated inability to care for the child — that puts the child in danger. There's the right now and there's the overall picture.

In either case, law enforcement actually removes the child from the home and places them in our custody. If a judge signs a protective custody warrant, we are then ordered by the court to care for the child. Parents are provided legal counsel from the court, so their legal rights are explained to them and so they understand the process and everything that is going on.

Q

How do you help families stay together during and after this process?

A

The key is relationship-building. We work with the parents and children to find resources in the community: substance abuse treatment, parenting classes, in-home treatment for children with significant behavioral issues, counseling for sexual and physical abuse and wraparound services, like job training and life skills classes. It's a holistic approach. You can't just treat part of it. You need to treat the whole.



Nicholas Ready is the Program Manager for Nevada County Child Protective Services. PHOTO BY KIM PALAFERRI

“We want to create a safety network beyond our department and bring in other community resources, so parents get the services they need and families stay together.”

Nicholas Ready
CPS Program Manager

Q

Why is this holistic approach the best way to keep children safe and keep families together?

A

Because it's treating more than just the symptoms. The parents may have substance abuse issues because of depression, but if we are only treating the substance abuse issues, we are only treating one aspect. We want to create a safety network beyond our department and bring in other community resources, so parents get the services they need and families stay together.

HELP A CHILD – BECOME A FOSTER PARENT!



Children who are in foster care were removed from their families due to abusive or neglectful situations, and through no fault of their own. They need and deserve safe, healthy, loving and stable homes in the community that they are familiar with.

“Far too many of our Nevada County children are being placed in homes outside

of the county,” says Gail Johnson Vaughn, executive director of the adoption advocacy nonprofit Families NOW. “They need to have local foster families so that they can stay close to home while their parents are doing the difficult work of repairing their lives, and so they can stay close to their friends, schools and churches.”

Johnson Vaughn says the county wants all children and youth in foster care to achieve permanent families through successful reunification with birth families, but when that is not possible, other forms of permanence are sought.

If you are interested in opening your home and your heart to a child in need, consider

becoming a foster or adoptive parent.

Nevada County Child Protective Services works directly with foster family agencies to find loving foster and adoptive homes for local children in need.

To find out more and to see a list of local agencies, visit: www.mynevadacounty.com/nc/hhsa/dss/cps/Pages/Home.aspx



James Harrison got help finding a new career through the CalWORKs program after he relocated to Nevada County. PHOTO BY KIM PALAFERRI

On Track for Career Success

Man receives help finding a new career so he can spend more time with his kids

by Evan Tuchinsky

CalWORKs



California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids — CalWORKs for short — is a state program administered by counties that's designed to help parents without jobs prepare to re-enter the workforce.

Some haven't received their high school diploma or GED certificate. Others have had to overcome personal struggles, such as substance abuse and physical violence. As a result, the assistance they need varies: education, training, mentorship, counseling, childcare, health care, housing ... the list goes on.

The Nevada County Department of Social Services works with community nonprofits to provide services that remove barriers to gainful employment.

"There's a huge range of skills that we can help these parents build so that they'll become better employees, more employable, and be better able to provide for their families," says Mali Dyck, Program Manager for CalWORKs.

To get started, a parent applies at the county's Social Services department, then attends an orientation session and meets one-on-one with an adviser to develop a plan that, Dyck says, "will send them on the track that's best for them." Even as other agencies join in, Social Services will stay involved "every step of the way."

To learn more, visit the Social Services office at the Eric Rood Administration Center, 950 Maidu Ave., Nevada City, CA 95959.

James Harrison had a good job in the petroleum industry when he decided supporting his family meant more than just drawing a paycheck.

Harrison worked 16-hour shifts as a radiographer, shooting X-rays to inspect oil pipelines for leaks. By age 21, he had a nice home in the Bay Area to raise his son and daughter. But after separating from their mother, he became concerned about spending more time with his kids.

"I was never home — I was always away, living out of a suitcase," Harrison says.

Harrison wanted to raise his kids in a small-town environment, so in 2006, the 34-year-old relocated to Nevada County, where his relatives live. He traded a home of his own for space in his mother's.

"I had no prospects of work," he says, "but I knew it was better for my family, because I knew I couldn't raise them working that many hours."

For the first year, he slept on the couch so his son and daughter — ages 16 and 13 — could have beds. Although they still live with his mother, Harrison says he will look for another place to live once he has steady work.

That's where CalWORKs comes in.

When he moved, Harrison knew he wanted a job with the Nevada Irrigation District. He attended workforce training from CalWORKs, a state employment program administered by Nevada County.

I knew what I wanted to do but I didn't know how to do it.

James Harrison

CalWORKs created a Welfare to Work plan that identified resources and training that would make Harrison ready for employment. He visited the Workforce Training Center, where he attended workshops and joined the Job Club — a weeklong class that helps job seekers identify goals, polish their résumés and work on interviewing skills. He worked on his education, earning his OSHA Safety Certificate and credential card, making him more desirable to employers in his field.

It was tough being a single dad and finding a job. His efforts were sidelined temporarily when his son had surgery and needed full-time care. But his training and networking eventually paid off. At a CalWORKs job fair he connected with an NID representative.

After submitting an application, Harrison got hired as a temporary worker. He mostly dug ditches and performed other chunks of manual labor, but he was happy for the work.

Harrison must have made a good impression, however, and in early March, NID hired him again for another temporary position — a six-month stint he hopes he can make permanent.

He credits CalWORKs for getting him on the path to a new job.

"I knew what I wanted to do but I didn't know how to do it," Harrison says. "I always thought of myself as second [to my children], but getting that career, it's not only important for your family, it's also important for yourself. You've got to be happy yourself."

David and Robyn Johnson and their family were able to move into their dream home with help from the Down Payment Assistance program of the Nevada County Department of Housing and Community Services. Photo by Kim Palaferri



Home Sweet Home

Family moves into dream house with assistance from Nevada County by Evan Tuchinsky

Robyn Johnson and her family love their home in Alta Sierra. It has a red front door, which Johnson says symbolizes a “lifetime of happiness in your home.” It has hardwood floors, vaulted ceilings and a fireplace, and it’s around 2,000 square feet with a yard — ample space for their 15-year-old son, 12-year-old daughter, two dogs and cat.

“It’s very homey,” Robyn says. “It’s us.”

But the family wouldn’t have been able to move into their dream home without the help of Nevada County Department of Housing and Community Services.

Several years ago, Robyn and her husband, David, had applied for the Down Payment Assistance Program, but didn’t qualify at the time. In 2014, their financial situation changed. Robyn, a college student working as a waitress, and David, a heavy-equipment operator for a construction company, had paid down their debt and become eligible for the County program.

The timing put them in the market at the same time as the house of their dreams.

But when the Johnsons decided to put in an offer on the house in Alta Sierra, they found themselves in a multiple-offer situation.

Robyn and her husband wrote the sellers a letter describing their family and articulating how much they wanted the house. Even though their offer wasn’t the highest, they prevailed. Turns out the owners had bought the property as their first

house — as the Johnsons hoped to do — and wanted a family to make memories in the home like they once did.

Robyn contacted Housing Administrative Services Associate Rob Choate and, true to her style, stayed “persistent” until her family got on the list of homebuyers approved for the program.

“He was so awesome,” she says of Choate.

“The only reason we got here has a lot to do with the Down Payment Assistance Program,” Robyn says. “This is the last thing on our bucket list — we have the kids, we have our life. We just needed a home that was ours, and they actually made it happen.”

The Johnsons moved into their home at the end of July. They’ve painted some of the inside walls several times, seeking just the right color for the “homey” feel.

The family has 30 years to pay off their loan from Nevada County. But they are thankful for the Down Payment Assistance Program because it allows families to purchase homes through a

low-interest loan, designed to help first-time homebuyers meet the down payment requirement for their mortgage.

“[Buying the house] was just the most crazy, emotional experience of my whole life,” Robyn says. “This is pretty exciting, because I know that my family has a home because of the Down Payment Assistance Program. Nevada County is amazing.”

This is pretty exciting because I know that my family has a home because of the Down Payment Assistance Program.

Robyn Johnson

HOUSING PROGRAMS



Nevada County offers a range of programs to meet residents’ housing needs, including loans, grants and education. All of the services are free, but loans will need to be repaid. Here are the main programs:

Down payment assistance loans:

The County lends qualified first-time homebuyers up to \$60,000 toward the down payment on a qualified home. The interest is low (currently 3 percent), and the first payment is not due for 30 years, provided they remain in the house.

Deposit assistance:

Qualified renters may receive a grant of up to \$1,000 to pay the deposit on an apartment or home in Nevada County, with repayment waived once they’ve stay in the property six months.

Home rehab grants:

The County disburses funds to qualified homeowners facing repairs related to health and safety issues. Examples include fixing roofs, replacing water heaters and installing wheelchair ramps.

Training classes:

County residents learn about finance topics such as credit scores, banking and fiscal planning.

For more information on housing programs in Nevada County, visit: www.mynevadacounty.com/nc/hhsa/housing/Pages/Home.aspx

The Tipping Point

Child Support Services help veteran get life back on track

by Mark Lore

Jason Rawson's return to civilian life after four years in the military wasn't easy — on him, or his family.

The 31-year-old veteran left the military in 2006 after a 15-month tour in Iraq and 18 months in Korea. Rawson's transition to civilian life was hard — he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, and over the course of the next few years, began drinking heavily and using prescription drugs.

"I never really planned on getting out of the military," Rawson explains. "I felt like a fish out of water."

Things got progressively worse. He wasn't taking advantage of his veterans benefits. His relationship with his girlfriend at the time had deteriorated. And he wasn't working or paying child support for his two children. He found himself living from couch to couch, and was even homeless at one point. In 2012, Rawson moved to Nevada City to make a fresh start.

"I got sick and tired of being sick and tired," he says. "One day I woke up and decided, this is what I'm going to do."

That's where he discovered Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA). It was through the agency's Child Support Services department that Rawson was able to get his life back on track. Rawson says a case worker helped get him caught up on his unpaid child support. The agency's Job Club program also helped him get a résumé together and prepared him for job interviews. He was also guided to veterans benefits that were available to him.

Today, things are going well for Rawson and his family. His oldest is now 12, and living with Rawson and his new girlfriend. His youngest, now 6, lives in Utah with Rawson's ex-girlfriend, and he's now able to pay child support and help take care of them.

"Our relationship is infinitely better," Rawson says. "Now, I'm everything a father should be. It's fulfilling, which makes it that much better. I probably overdo it!"

With a solid family life in place, Rawson decided to also work on himself. Seeking jobs made him realize that he wanted to go to school in order to pursue something he was passionate about — physical therapy. Re-enrolling at Sierra College this past spring was a big decision, and not an easy one.

"I was terrified, to be honest," says Rawson, who received all A's in his first semester. "But I adjusted quick. For someone who hated high school, I never thought I'd love college so much."

Rawson even finds time to hike with his family, and he says he's finally enjoying the life he never imagined. It's been a true partnership between Rawson and Child Support Services — one he doesn't take for granted.

"Child Support Services has been extremely helpful," Rawson says. "I wouldn't have been able to do it without them."



Jason Rawson was able to get his life back on track with the help of HHSA and is now a student at Sierra College.
PHOTO BY KIM PALAFERRI

"Child Support Services has been extremely helpful. I wouldn't have been able to do it without them."

Jason Rawson



CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

Child Support Services is currently helping more than 3,500 families in Nevada County through a variety of services — all of which are free to Nevada County residents, regardless of income. Some of the services available are:

- Genetic testing to determine paternity
- Assistance locating parents anywhere around the world
- Assistance collecting child support payments, including tracking balances, sending out billing notices and taking electronic payments
- Assistance with legal filings, including documents to establish paternity or child support orders
- Professional mediation between parents with representatives from Child Support Services
- Help creating child support agreements that are mutually beneficial to each parent, without going to court

For more information on Child Support Services, visit:
www.mynevadacounty.com/nc/hhsa/dcss/Pages/Home.aspx

GET THE HELP YOU NEED

How to navigate eligibility programs and benefits in Nevada County by Mike Blount

There are several ways to access and navigate eligibility programs and benefits in Nevada County. Follow this road map to see how the process works:

START



1

Find services

Visit <http://211NevadaCounty.org> to find available services.

2

Apply

You can apply three different ways:

Apply online

You can apply for many programs, including Medi-Cal, CalFresh, CalWORKs, General Assistance and Homeless Assistance at:

www.mynevadacounty.com/nc/hhsa/dss/Pages/Home.aspx

You can also apply at: www.c4yourself.com

3

After you apply

Whether you apply online, in person, on the phone or are signed up by an outreach worker, you will be assigned an eligibility worker who will process your application.

Your eligibility worker may request additional documentation, such as bank account statements, income verification, photo ID, residency verification, etc.

Apply in person

You can come in anytime without an appointment and apply at the following locations:

950 Maidu Ave.
Nevada City, CA 95959

10075 Levon Ave.
Truckee, CA 96161

Apply on the phone

2-1-1 Nevada County is a free, confidential phone service that features referral specialists who give personalized attention to each caller 24/7 and refer them to a variety of services that best meet their needs.

You can also call 530-265-1340 to get connected to services in Nevada County or 530-582-7803 if you live in the Truckee area.

4

Following up

You will receive a letter in the mail letting you know whether or not you were approved for the program(s) you applied for.

Some decisions, like eligibility for CalFresh, could be made instantly. Others, like eligibility for Medi-Cal, may take longer. The length of time before you receive a letter notifying you of eligibility depends on the service requested and your situation. Contact your eligibility worker to follow up on your application(s).

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For more information about applying for eligibility services in Nevada County, visit: www.mynevadacounty.com/nc/hhsa/dss/Pages/Home.aspx

Help Your Family Thrive

The struggles of life aren't meant to be conquered alone. Get the help you need so that you may prosper once again. With a wide array of programs and services to suit your needs, the Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) can help you and your family be healthy, be stable and thrive.



Nevada County
2-1-1
Get Connected. Get Answers.



CONNECT WITH US!

Get in touch with an eligibility worker on the phone or in person to find the services available to you. You can also apply online.



In Person

Come in anytime to the following Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency locations to apply:

- 950 Maidu Ave.
Nevada City, CA 95959
- 10075 Levon Ave.
Truckee, CA 96161



By Phone

Call 2-1-1 Nevada County. This free, confidential phone service features referral specialists who give personalized attention to each caller 24/7 and refer them to a variety of services that best meet their needs.

Or, connect directly with these Health and Human Services Agency departments and programs:

Eligibility Services | 530-265-1340
Child Support Services | 530-265-7097
Housing & Community Services | 530-265-1645
Women, Infants & Children (WIC) | 530-265-1454
Child Protective Services | 530-273-4291



Online

Visit www.mynevadacounty.com/nc/hhsa/dss/Pages/Home.aspx for more information about the Nevada County Health and Human Services Agency's programs and services.

Visit **2-1-1 Nevada County** online at <http://211NevadaCounty.org/> for a comprehensive, searchable list of services available.