

The HOME Team's Radical Teamwork Ignites the Extraordinary

By Mary G. Veleta, LCSW



Subtle forces interacted and synchronized, bringing profound change in the life of Joy, a 58 year old woman sleeping on concrete near a bus stop on Figueroa Street and 41st Avenue.

The liberation began when Dr. Moira Taylor, a Psychologist and spiritual leader, befriended Joy. Both slowly built a relationship based on authentic interest which brought Joy much comfort. This act of candor and much needed assistance, turned out to be the prescription and success factor for Joy's accessing safe housing and eventually returning to her family.

Dr. Taylor met Joy and tended to her needs over a period of four months. It all started when Dr. Taylor gave her some food, which ignited a wonderful human-to-human relationship. Through that bond, Dr. Taylor found out that Joy thought of herself as an

FBI agent during the day, and a CIA agent at night, commissioned by the White House on a secret mission.

Joy's delusions and hallucinations did not dissuade Dr. Taylor from being that authentic presence. Overtime, Joy could tell that Dr. Taylor's compassion was from the heart and was soul-driven, as Dr. Taylor is a woman of great faith.

One day, Joy was found standing in the rain, completely soaked holding a broken umbrella. Dr. Taylor came back with dry clothes and found her under an awning trying to stay dry. All Joy wanted to know was, "did you buy my radio", which she had been asking for, during the past few weeks. Joy loves music and she likes to sing. Dr.



Taylor explained that she would buy her a radio if she came off the streets and stayed at the winter shelter, but Joy refused to leave her cart.

One Friday at 2:00 am, Dr. Taylor found Joy covered in fecal matter and having seizures. With no access to medical care, Dr. Taylor unrelentingly turned her attention to Joy and was persistent in nurturing her, giving her water and food until Joy felt better and was able to stand and walk to a nearby

bus stop. Dr. Taylor stayed with Joy all night watching her sleep through the noise and exhaust fumes from the buses. The light brought Joy a sense of safety and she found her regular sleeping place on the concrete.

On that pivotal Friday morning, Dr. Taylor was tired, worried and albeit determined to seek mental health services and safe housing for Joy. She called several DMH offices and was referred to Armando Iraldo, Housing Navigator for Service Area 6. He then referred the case to the HOME unit and Joy's case was assigned to Mary G. Veleta, who along with her co-worker Ran Mullins, canvassed the area, and located Joy through telephone guidance from Dr. Taylor.



On that same remarkable Friday, Mary and Ran introduced themselves to Joy, but as soon as she saw their badges, Joy began to run away. Ran quickly explained that services are completely voluntary. Mary and Ran knew that on



this first visit, it was important to articulate their genuine interest in her wellbeing, and to build the foundation for a relationship.

Through the art of listening, greetings and building trust, Mary and other HOME staff worked with Joy helping her build the inner resources to say YES! The staff assembled rapport through connection and empathy.

Mary joined forces with Dr. Taylor through text, meetings and telephone calls. Mary did a quick assessment and recognized the risks, the protective factors and needs of her client. It was clear that Joy was so overwhelmed

with psychiatric and medical needs, that she refused services. Mary had no idea whether Joy would accept the Temporary Shelter Program, but she began to explore options anyway.

Dr. Taylor finally made contact with Joy's daughter, Cassie, who with tears, confirmed through a picture and a telephone conversation, that Joy is her mother. Joy's immediate family had been grieving her, not knowing if she was dead or alive. She had been missing for over six years. Later we learned that Joy left several psychiatric residential programs and fulfilled her dream of coming to Hollywood. In the past, her husband helped her retain treatment for the mental health issues. She had worked and maintained her home beautifully, until her husband died, at which time she became very unstable, and ultimately homeless.

The following Monday morning, Mary and Adriane made the second visit to the client and Mary informed her that she had been looking for a very nice place for her to stay with clean sheets, a shower, warm meals, a bathroom and a roommate to share the room with. Somehow the staff projected that the client was valued, respected, and that she belonged to a community and was not alone. When Mary asked her if she was interested in staying in a very nice temporary home, she gave a thoughtful "yes", as if she was saying yes to something very sacred.

Mary and Adriane returned to the office and located a Temporary Shelter bed with the help of Armando Iraldo, whose awesome work moves at the speed of light, and he often has a “yes” in his repertoire of resources. Mary and Anthony Jimenez, of the HOME Team, visited the Temporary Shelter and found it had all the qualities Mary had described to Joy.

On Tuesday morning, Mary and Adriane visited the client and Dr. Taylor to report the good news about the Temporary Shelter available. Joy was pleased and was exhibiting signs of hopefulness. During that visit, Dr. Taylor bought a radio for Joy who was very happy when she saw the radio, but was not allowed to keep it due to safety concerns. The radio served as a reward for the client to enjoy.

Dr. Taylor graciously agreed to take the client for a TB test and a basic medical evaluation. Many good things happened on that Tuesday afternoon: Joy had a shower, which she had declined in the past; she agreed to see the doctor, whom she had refused previously, she had a manicure and she shopped for new clothes with Dr. Taylor. She also agreed to go into a winter shelter for two nights until the TB /medical clearance was provided.

Joy’s sisters arrived in Los Angeles and surprised her Friday morning with hugs, tears and much love and happiness for having her back in their lives. They all had breakfast celebrating their amazing reunion. It was a total miracle for the HOME team to receive the referral on a Friday and a week later to have the client housed, reunited with her family and receiving medical and mental health services.





Joy's family is forever grateful to Dr. Taylor and the HOME team for their life-saving interventions, for their profound understanding, for the obliteration of barriers and for the love expressed to Joy. These extraordinary results were made possible by the HOME Team and by the commitment and perseverance of Dr. Taylor, a private citizen who cares deeply and used conscious oversight to make a difference in someone's life, thank you Dr. Taylor, so much!