



SIERRA
Community
HOUSE

**Meet the Local Nonprofit Taking Steps to Create an
Inclusive, Safe, & Healthy North Tahoe/Truckee**



A BOLD EXPERIMENT

that's Helping Thousands in North Lake Tahoe/Truckee

A CONVERSATION WITH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PAUL BANCROFT



Paul Bancroft

If you ask Paul Bancroft what makes the Tahoe-Truckee region special, he won't start with the lake or the ski runs. "It's the people," he says. "Neighbors helping neighbors. That's what keeps this place alive."

Bancroft is a North Lake Tahoe native and now leads Sierra Community House, the nonprofit born from one of the region's boldest experiments in collaboration: the 2019 merger of four long-standing local agencies. The goal was simple but radical: to stop making struggling families navigate four different doors for help.

WHY THE MERGER MATTERED

"People were oftentimes telling their stories over and over — once for food, once for housing, once for legal aid," Bancroft says. "We knew we could do better."

The decision to merge was more than an administrative move; it was a shift toward dignity and efficiency. The new model honors the reality that hardship rarely comes one issue at a time.

Today, Sierra Community House offers a single entry point to a connected network of services: crisis intervention, hunger relief, legal aid, family support, and community education. One conversation can open access to help that changes lives.

"Someone might come in for food and reveal they're also facing eviction or domestic violence," Bancroft explains. "We built a system that sees the whole person, not just the problem."

That model has proven indispensable. In the past year alone, Sierra Community House delivered nearly 12,000 services to more than 8,000 people — from parents attending family-strengthening workshops to survivors finding safety and legal protection.

A GEOGRAPHY THAT TESTS INGENUITY

Serving Tahoe-Truckee means tackling challenges most urban nonprofits never face. The region crosses two states, three counties, and a patchwork of school and health districts. "It's

a geographical puzzle," Bancroft says with a grin. "Someone might live in California, work in Nevada, and send their kids to school in a different county. When you're in crisis, that web of rules can make getting help nearly impossible."

Add in long winters, seasonal jobs, and limited public transit, and access becomes its own emergency. Sierra Community House fills that gap with mobile food distributions, bilingual advocates, and community navigators who meet people where they are — literally.

"The terrain forces us to be creative," Bancroft says. "We've learned that collaboration isn't optional here; it's survival."

MEETING THE MOMENT

Across the board, need is rising. In just two recent months, over 180 individuals sought victim support services

resulting in 45 restraining orders, which is a reflection of growing financial and housing stress. In the last year, the organization assisted more than 500 community members with civil legal issues and helped provide thousands of community members and families with supplemental food assistance. They are seeing the real world impact of Inflation, workforce shortages, and economic stressors.

When Sierra Community House spotted those trends, it didn't wait. The team launched a new client-choice food pantry in Truckee, expanded legal services for families navigating eviction, immigration and custody.

"We're not just reacting, we're anticipating," Bancroft says. "That's what it takes to protect community stability up here."

LOCAL POWER IN LOCAL HANDS

For Bancroft, supporting Sierra Community House is one of the most direct ways to strengthen Tahoe-Truckee's social fabric. "There's a lot we can't control in the world," he says. "But we can decide how we care for each other right here at home."

Every dollar raised stays in the basin, circulating as groceries, legal guidance, safe housing, or a second chance for a neighbor in crisis.

In a time when the distance between people feels wide, Sierra Community House is proving that local connection still matters now more than ever.

"One story at a time, one neighbor at a time," Bancroft says. "That's how we build the kind of community where everyone can stand on solid ground."

"The terrain forces us to be creative," Bancroft says. "We've learned that collaboration isn't optional here; it's survival."

A Story of SURVIVAL

“I was married to my husband for ten years before I realized how deeply I was caught in the cycle of abuse. My doctor at Tahoe Forest Hospital noticed the signs and referred me to Sierra Community House. I still describe that first meeting as the moment that changed everything.

Living in a small town can make it hard to ask for help. Everyone is connected, and I was worried about being seen or judged. But from the very first conversation, my

Sierra Community House advocate made me feel safe and respected. I was able to talk honestly about what was happening at home and what I wanted for myself and my two kids.

She helped me understand the patterns of abuse and walked me through my options without pressure. We created a safety plan that eventually led me to stay at the Sierra Community House safe house while I got back on my feet and began planning my next chapter. Their legal team

also helped me understand my rights and the process for divorce and custody, which gave me clarity and confidence to move forward.

Leaving wasn't easy. Starting over never is. But I had a team that cared deeply and made sure I had both emotional support and practical help. Today, I'm divorced, my children and I are healing, and we're learning what peace at home really feels like. I'll always be grateful to Sierra Community House for helping me break the cycle of violence for my family.”



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BY THE NUMBERS

In the last year, Sierra Community House helped keep our community safer, healthier, and more connected by providing services to more than 8,000 community members. Additionally, the nonprofit:



Received **547** calls to their **24/7** Community Helpline.



Assisted **505** community members with **2,123** legal services, including Immigration Law, Family Law, Landlord Tenant Law, Employment-Wage Law, and other civil legal issues.



Provided Violence Prevention and Healthy Relationships Education to **5,800** youth and adults via school based presentations, youth empowerment groups and workshops.



Provided **371,787** meals, feeding thousands of community members. *Rescued 69,095 pounds of food from grocery stores that would have otherwise gone to waste.*



Helped **357** community members access domestic and sexual violence services, including: Advocacy Services + Peer support groups, counseling, emergency shelter services, legal and basic needs including food, clothing and transportation.



Assisted hundreds of community members with rental, workforce housing, and utility assistance, awarding **\$613,151** in direct payment for housing costs. Provided **2,164** Family Support services including assisting with benefit applications, rental and utility assistance home visitation services.



Elizabeth Balmin



A LIFELINE FOR LOCALS IN CRISIS

At 2 a.m., a call comes in. A parent is unsure how to protect their children from a threatening situation. Across town, a local advocate at Sierra Community House's 24/7 Community Helpline picks up the phone, ready to listen, guide, and connect the family to resources.

Leading the Victim Support, Legal Assistance, & Family Support team, Elizabeth Balmin oversees this work every day. "Every call, every case is personal," she says. "Our team is here to help people find their way, whether it's through the legal system, securing safe housing, or connecting to resources that stabilize their families."

Last year, that helpline handled more than 500 calls from locals in crisis, each reflecting someone reaching out for guidance. From that first connection, Elizabeth and her team walk alongside residents through legal assistance, victim support, and family advocacy, ensuring that everyone has access to knowledgeable and compassionate support.

VICTIM SERVICES

Sierra Community House is the region's trusted responder for domestic violence and sexual assault. Often, Sierra Community House is the first call made by law enforcement or the hospital when someone is in crisis. The team supports victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual assault, harassment, child abuse, sex trafficking, stalking, and dating violence.

Balmin's team also operates a local Safe House, a confidential and secure refuge where survivors of violence can begin to regain control of their lives. It's more than a place to sleep, it's a space where trained advocates can help survivors navigate the next steps toward healing and independence. Education is just as central. Advocates teach that abuse isn't always physical: control, intimidation, and emotional manipulation are also forms of harm. Using tools like the Domestic Violence Power

and Control Wheel, the team helps clients recognize patterns, regain agency, and rebuild lives.

"Abuse takes many forms, and help is available," Balmin says. "Our goal is creating safety, not just responding to crisis."

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Most people know public defenders handle criminal cases, but for civil matters like family law, immigration, or landlord-tenant disputes, no public representation system exists. Sierra Community House fills this critical gap, providing guidance, education, and representation in family law, restraining orders, immigration, employment, landlord-tenant conflicts, small claims, and other civil matters.

Last year, the legal assistance program helped more than 500 hundred locals navigate systems that would otherwise feel impossible. Two dedicated teams handle these matters: a

three-person immigration law team—including a Department of Justice-accredited representative—and a civil legal team specializing in family, housing, and employment law.

Conflict resolution is central to the approach. Beyond litigation, the team promotes mediation and communication to reduce stress and foster coexistence. "In a small town like ours, you're bound to see the person you're in conflict with at the grocery store or school," Balmin explains. "We help people resolve issues respectfully so they can continue to coexist."

FAMILY ADVOCACY AND HOUSING SUPPORT

Housing insecurity is one of the region's most pressing challenges. High rents, seasonal work cycles, and unexpected bills can quickly destabilize families. Last year, the Family Advocacy team provided approximately 800 community members with rental assistance and utility support, helping North Tahoe/Truckee residents stay in their homes. The team helped hundreds of locals connect to social services, assisting with benefit applications. Advocates work with clients to identify the root causes of crises, providing guidance that fosters long-term stability and resilience, not just temporary fixes.

"Our goal is not just to solve the immediate problem," Balmin explains. "We want to help families build stability that lasts."

A COMMUNITY OF CARE

At the heart of everything, what the Family Support team does is human connection. Every client gets paired with an advocate who walks alongside them, offering guidance, support, and a steady hand when life gets overwhelming.

From helpline calls to courtroom meetings, Elizabeth and her team are quietly changing lives every day—one family at a time.

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FEEDING North Tahoe/Truckee

LEARN HOW THIS DEDICATED TEAM HAS DIALED IN THEIR LOGISTICS, LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS, AND A FLEET OF VOLUNTEERS TO MAKE SURE LOCALS HAVE ACCESS TO FOOD DURING TIMES OF NEED



Patrick Kratzer

A CONVERSATION WITH PATRICK KRATZER, DIRECTOR OF HUNGER RELIEF OPERATIONS

On a brisk Truckee morning, the Sierra Community House warehouse hums with motion. Volunteers lift boxes of produce while staff check delivery schedules and coordinate with grocers from Truckee to Tahoe City to Incline Village. “By 9 a.m., we’ve typically sorted deliveries from local farms and started to prep for our distribution that afternoon,” says Patrick Kratzer, Director of Hunger Relief. “It takes an incredible amount of coordination. Our trucks, volunteers, grocers, and local partners like Tahoe Food Hub are all moving together to make sure food gets where it needs to go.”

That level of teamwork has turned Sierra Community House’s Hunger Relief Program into one of the region’s most vital safety nets. In North Tahoe–Truckee, isolation, high costs, and seasonal jobs make food insecurity a persistent challenge. Founded in 1991 as Project MANA and now part of Sierra Community House, the food pantry has evolved into a community-powered network that rescued nearly 70,000 pounds of food from local grocers last year and provided hundreds of thousands of meals to local residents and families.

DIGNITY IN EVERY GROCERY BAG

Each week, the team runs three major food distributions — Tuesdays in Truckee, Wednesdays in Kings Beach, and Thursdays in Incline Village — serving roughly 600 households, plus another 100 through home deliveries for seniors, homebound residents, and people in crisis.

Distributions feel more like a pop-up grocery store than a food line. Families shop for fresh produce, grains, and proteins arranged market-style. This model gives clients dignity and choice. “It’s about respect,” Kratzer says. “Families and individuals know what their families need. We just make sure they can get it.”

FROM FOOD RESCUE TO NUTRITION ACCESS

Sierra Community House is the sole food recovery organization for North Lake Tahoe and Truckee, rescuing thousands of pounds of edible food every week from nearly every local grocer. “Under California’s new food recovery laws, stores need partners they can trust,” Kratzer explains. “We’ve become that partner.”

The operation runs like clockwork: trucks collect donations, rotating among stores to minimize spoilage. Donations follow strict quality guidelines and freshness is the priority.



“It’s not just calories; it’s nourishment,” Kratzer says. “Every distribution includes fruits, vegetables, dairy, grains, and proteins guided by USDA’s MyPlate standards.”

To ensure they’re meeting increasing need in the community, the team partners with the Food Bank of Northern Nevada and Food Bank of Nevada County and receives regular shipments of non-perishable goods. A USDA grant that purchases produce from the Tahoe Food Hub connects small regional farms with families who otherwise couldn’t afford their produce — a win for both.

ADAPTING TO LOCAL REALITY

In a region where rent rivals big cities and gas prices can top \$6 a gallon, even steady jobs can leave families food insecure. Demand spikes



during Tahoe’s “shoulder seasons,” when tourism slows and paychecks shrink. “We see folks who work full-time and still can’t cover rent, child care, and groceries,” Kratzer says. “Unfortunately, that is the reality of mountain living.”

To bridge those gaps, the team created specialized supports: Cooking Compromised bags (12 pounds of ready-to-eat meals for people without full kitchens) and Emergency Food Boxes stocked at Sierra Community House offices and county offices.



NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

Despite the scale, the operation runs lean. A handful of staff powered by a rotating crew of volunteers and community partners. It’s a model of efficiency that reflects the Tahoe way: local, collaborative, and hands-on.

Ultimately, Kratzer says, it’s about more than food. “It’s about letting people live fuller, more rewarding lives,” he reflects. “When a family doesn’t have to worry about the next meal, everything else like school, work, health gets a little easier. That’s the real impact for the wider community.”

INSIDE THE TEAM:

Building a More Connected Tahoe



Anibal Cordoba-Sosa

From living room conversations to classroom lessons, Sierra Community House is building connection and preventing violence one conversation at a time.

If you've lived in North Tahoe/Truckee long enough, chances are you've met someone from Anibal Cordoba-Sosa's team. Most likely at a school assembly, a parenting workshop, or maybe at a local meeting about community housing resources. "It's never the same day twice," says Cordoba-Sosa, who leads Sierra Community House's Community Engagement and Violence Prevention Education programs. "Our team is out and about meeting people where they already are."

That's exactly the point. These are the people who keep the conversations flowing across North Tahoe and Truckee. As Director of Community Engagement and Violence Prevention Education at Sierra Community House, Cordoba-Sosa leads the programs that connect the dots between

people and the services that can change their lives.

PROMOTORAS: THE HEARTBEAT OF THE COMMUNITY

Most locals probably know a member of the Promotora team. These trusted community leaders are the bridge between Spanish-speaking families and vital local resources. "They're the compass for our community," Cordoba-Sosa says. "They help people navigate systems, find resources, and stay oriented when life feels overwhelming."

From health and mental wellness to immigrant rights and family support, Promotoras deliver information in living rooms, schools, at large community events and even intimate support groups. They do more than share resources though. They dissolve fear, stigma, and isolation with their knowledge and empathy.

"They're not outsiders coming in to help,"

Cordoba-Sosa explains. "The Promotoras are part of the community itself and that's what makes the model work."

Their impact is unmistakable: Promotoras have become beloved local figures, the kind of people everyone waves to at the grocery store.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION: TEACHING RESPECT EARLY

In classrooms across North Tahoe and Truckee, Sierra Community House educators are starting conversations that many adults wish they'd had as kids. In elementary schools, that might look like a puppet show about kindness and boundaries; in high school, it's a frank talk about consent, power, and respect.

"Prevention is about planting seeds," Cordoba-Sosa says. "If a young person learns that healthy relationships are built on trust and communication, they carry that into adulthood and that changes everything."

Sierra Community House has deep and long-standing partnerships with the local schools. Each year, their team reaches hundreds of students and community members through presentations, workshops, and partnerships with teachers and youth groups. The goal: to stop cycles of violence before they begin.

PEER SUPPORT AND FAMILY CONNECTION

The Community Engagement team's work doesn't stop in classrooms. Every week, this team meets one-on-one with residents navigating life's challenges, offering a listening ear and linking them to counseling or other resources. These meetings are free, confidential, and grounded in shared experience.

"It's often the first time someone's felt heard in a long while," Cordoba-Sosa says. The program creates an entry point to mental health care for those who might otherwise never seek it.

Meanwhile, parents and caregivers gather at the beloved and long-running Family Room in Truckee or Kings Beach. Additionally, groups look like "Parents and Me" workshops and breastfeeding support groups. Many of these gatherings are often co-hosted with local nurses to share advice, swap stories, and simply feel less alone.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

What ties it all together is the belief that lasting change begins with relationships. Through education, outreach, and peer connection, Sierra Community House isn't just helping individuals, it's reshaping the culture of the region toward empathy and inclusion.

"In the end," Cordoba-Sosa says, "we're not just connecting people to resources. We're connecting people to each other and that's what makes a community strong."



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WHY I SUPPORT SIERRA COMMUNITY HOUSE



“When we get called to a situation involving family domestic dispute or violence, Sierra Community House is often the next call we make. They bring resources, compassion, and follow-through that truly change outcomes for people. Having them as a partner makes a huge difference for our department and for our community.”

Danny Renfrow
Chief of Police, Truckee
Police Department



“Sierra Community House is an indispensable partner in supporting the whole child. We see every day how their programs—from building foundational skills in the bilingual Family Room to providing vital prevention education in our schools—give students the tools to communicate, handle conflict, and understand healthy relationships. It's the kind of essential support that extends far beyond the classroom, creating a safer community where our students can thrive.”

Kerstin Kramer
Superintendent,
Tahoe Truckee Unified
School District



“Each month, I have the opportunity to work alongside the Sierra Community House promotoras and team at their food distribution events, providing blood pressure and blood glucose screenings for community members. The director and staff lead with exceptional professionalism and heart, fostering a spirit of service that motivates everyone around them.”

Reyna Sanchez Correa
Community Health
Advocate, Tahoe Forest
Health System



“I love volunteering for Sierra Community House. Their mission, for me, is the “heart” of the region. Their focus on “working together towards a society where all people are safe, able to meet their basic needs, and treated with dignity and consideration aligns with our family's passion and values.”

Pam Hobday
Volunteer



“From putting food on the table to legal support to helping families navigate through a crisis, Sierra Community House is there for people when they need it most. Because of their compassion and dedication, our community is stronger, more connected, and full of hope.”

Lindsay Romack
Truckee Town
Council Member



“Sierra Community House is one of our most indispensable partners. From supporting local survivors of sexual assault and violence to hosting vaccine clinics and health workshops, their team brings compassion and advocacy into every corner of our region. Their staff understand the local challenges in our region, and I can say confidently that our community is healthier because of Sierra Community House's dedication to their mission.”

Louis Ward
COO, Tahoe Forest Hospital



“We’ve always believed that the most meaningful way to give is to start close to home. Sierra Community House is deeply embedded into our community, helping our neighbors through some of the toughest moments of their lives.

Over the years, we’ve supported Sierra Community House not just financially, but with our time. Volunteering alongside their staff has given us a firsthand look at the difference they make. Whether it’s connecting someone to safe housing, offering counseling and advocacy to survivors of violence, or providing a bag of groceries to a family in need. Their team shows up with compassion, skill, and a deep understanding of what this community needs most.

That’s why we keep giving, in every way we can. Because when Sierra Community House is strong, our whole community is stronger — and we’re proud to be part of that.”

— Paul and Lynn Hawill

GET INVOLVED

Ways To Give

There are many ways to support the crucial programs offered by Sierra Community House. Your generosity helps us assist families and individuals in need of our support and services.

- One Time Donations
- Monthly Recurring Donations
- Donor Advised Funds
- Virtual Food Drives
- Gifts of Stock and Securities
- Volunteer with Us

Sierra Community House is incorporated as Crisis Intervention Services. Federal Tax ID: 94-2985554 – Sierra Community House is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.



Visit sierracommunityhouse.org
or scan QR Code to learn more.



For inquiries, contact our Development Director, Allison Edwards:
aedwards@sierracommunityhouse.org

CONTACT US

OFFICE LOCATIONS

Kings Beach, CA
265 Bear St., Kings Beach, CA 96143
Monday - Friday, 9am-5pm

Incline Village, NV
948 Incline Way, Incline Village, NV 89451
Monday - Thursday, 9am-5pm

Truckee, CA
11890 Donner Pass Rd. Suite 1, Truckee, CA 96161
Monday - Thursday, 9am-5pm

11695 Donner Pass Rd (next to KidZone Museum),
Truckee, CA 96161
Monday - Thursday, 9am-5pm

Sierra Community House Warehouse
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PHONE NUMBERS

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