

# RESOLVE

Real People. Real Impact.

## WE HOPE this finds you safe and well, as we write this in Spring 2022!

The new year usually brings excitement for new experiences and hope, but the start of this year was tempered with the continuing pandemic and the biggest surge to date. It was a tough January.

While our new, safer normal is not quite here, we continue to adapt and provide care for our community, and are proud of Ritter Center's role in providing over 40,000 COVID vaccines and tests to people from underserved communities.

We are humbled and inspired by the generosity of supporters and the strength of our staff who work passionately and tirelessly to help our community in need.

On that note, one of our main points of focus at Ritter Center this past year has been to increase the staff capacity to address the significant demands of the pandemic upon our team. To that end, **I am delighted to announce that we have hired a Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Saima Firdoos.** Dr. Firdoos will help to light the way as we continue to make exceptional progress as an organization dedicated to providing high quality medical and mental health care that helps to heal the whole person. You'll have a chance to read about her fascinating path to Ritter Center as well as some additional staff and board news.

Read on to learn about our new Planned Giving society, **Casa Azul**, designed for those wanting to leave a legacy gift, and make sure to mark your calendars for our second annual **Under The Stars Sleepout on Saturday, May 21, 2022.** With more fundraising incentives and some exciting speakers already confirmed, we can't wait to experience another sleepless night with you to help end homelessness in Marin.

And finally, check out the Hope for the Holidays year end fundraising campaign summary to learn about the impact of your support. We had a huge goal of raising \$450,000 for our programs and services and it took us until the end of January to process the full amount but in short, we made it, thanks to you, our unbelievably kind and supportive community! Wow.

I am tremendously grateful for your contribution to Ritter Center and delighted to share our latest RESOLVE newsletter with you.

In unity,



Mark Shotwell  
Executive Director



## Board of Directors

David Neagle, President | Tim Biddle, Treasurer | Carol Farrer, Secretary | Margaret Trezevant, President Emeritus | Carol Angel | Toni Doyle | Bettye Kray | Dan Masterson | Sean McConnell | Bob McCaskill | Mike Ralston | Lucia Martel-Dow

## Meet Dr. Firdoos



**WE ARE DELIGHTED to announce that Dr. Saima Firdoos is our new Chief Medical Officer.**

Dr. Firdoos was an Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine at Tufts University School of Medicine at Portsmouth Regional Hospital in New Hampshire. She is a Post Doc Fellow in Hepatology from BIDMC Harvard Medical School and was a Resident in Internal Medicine at St. Elizabeth Medical Tufts University in Boston, where she also did her internship in Psychiatry. Her research includes Hepatitis-C & non-alcoholic fatty liver disease during her Postdoctoral Training at Harvard Medical School.

When Dr. Firdoos first came into contact with Ritter Center, she didn't even know she was looking for a job. She was conducting research and brainstorming the types of health center she wanted to open herself. But, as she started talking to Ritter Center,

Dr. Firdoos realized that the intersection between what she wanted to create and where she might go to learn more about holistic health to ignite social change would be taking on the role of Chief Medical Officer.

Born in a Pakistan village, Dr. Firdoos was the sixth child and the 5th girl born into her family. "My mother had to go through tremendous opposition for sending her first born daughter to school which required one to walk several villages to even get there. My uncles would burn her books to discourage her, resulting in my other two sisters not going to school at all. My very brave mother left the village, sold her property and jewelry and made sure that my oldest sister continued her education. The local principal spotted me at age 3 and said I could come to school for free. In my community, the choice was either teacher or doctor. These were the only two choices my family would respect. The cultural pressure was tremendous. I chose doctor, of course!"

**Read the rest of Dr. Firdoos's amazing life story on the Ritter Center blog: [RitterCenter.org/blog](https://RitterCenter.org/blog)**

## Unifying Our Services

**OUR WHOLE Person Care and Safe Harbor programs are now part of the Case Management department, unified to enhance and streamline our housing and integrated care services.**

Tammy Whiteduck, who has been our Program Director for Whole Person Care and Safe Harbor for the last two and a half years, has accepted a new position as the Senior Director of Housing Services and Case Management heading up this new department.

Tammy has a background as a registered nurse. Before coming to Ritter Center, she provided leadership to field-based home health nursing teams working with medically complex patients. She has become a respected leader in the Housing First movement here in Marin County and leads her team with compassion, creativity and care. Congratulations, Tammy!

**Read about Tammy's insights and perspectives on woman in leadership on the Ritter Center blog: [RitterCenter.org/blog](https://RitterCenter.org/blog)**



## New Board President: David Neagle



**DAVID NEAGLE is the new President of Ritter Center's Board of Directors.**

The change in leadership is especially timely given the constraints of Ritter's current space and the need for a permanent new home.

David's lifelong career in banking makes him an excellent fit for Ritter's drive to move to a new building that can properly house its staff, serve its clients and fulfill its mission. A resident of San Rafael for more than 25 years, David was thrilled to work in his hometown of San Rafael for the last 10 years of his career. Ritter Center was a client of the bank and his colleague was leaving the Ritter Center Board. David had long wanted to understand the very complex issues surrounding homelessness, and felt this was the right time to join the Board.

"Studies have shown that living on the streets shortens your life expectancy significantly. I've learned that the majority of those experiencing homelessness in San Rafael and Marin are from right here.

Any preconceived notions I had about those experiencing homelessness have shifted; the scope is larger than I initially thought in terms of population and challenges. I understand that when your primary focus is figuring out where your next meal is coming from, or where you will spend the night, **it is all about how to survive,**" said David.

Today, David is recently retired, and after serving 7 years on Ritter's board under the amazing leadership of Margaret Trezevant, it seemed again like the right time to make a move – this time as Board President.

**Read David's story and more on Ritter Center's blog:**  
[RitterCenter.org/blog](https://RitterCenter.org/blog)



## THANK YOU for giving Hope for the Holidays



Photo credit: Gabrielle Lurie, San Francisco Chronicle/Polaris

**OUR ANNUAL Hope for the Holidays campaign again brought many wonderful gifts to Ritter Center, helping us surpass our \$450,000 goal. These funds provided:**

- Thanksgiving Meal kits to over 160 families
- A holiday meal to 100+ people experiencing homelessness
- Over \$36,000 in gift cards distributed to families and individuals through our Family-to-Family Holiday Gift Card program
- Vital funds for our healthcare, housing support, and food pantry services

We continue to be humbled and so grateful to all of our donors. Thank you to our sponsors.



# The Casa Azul Society Launches

**OVER THE YEARS,** Central and South American immigrants making their way to San Rafael were advised to go to “the blue house,” or Casa Azul, when they arrived in the Bay Area with no place to stay and few personal belongings. Ritter Center would help them with food, clothing and other support as they began their new lives.

Although our casa is now amarillo (yellow), Casa Azul is still synonymous with Ritter Center and the perfect name for our legacy society -- the group of people who have designated Ritter Center a beneficiary of their estate or planned gift.

## What is a planned gift?

Forward-thinking donors often name Ritter Center as a beneficiary of their will, a trust or charitable gift annuity, life insurance policies, or real property. While planned gifts often do not happen during their lifetime, donors give this way because they want to ensure their support for Ritter Center’s programs continues far into the future.

When you notify us that you’ve named Ritter Center as a beneficiary of your estate or another type of planned gift, you automatically become a member of the **Casa Azul** Society. Beginning in 2023, the group will receive special communications, invitations to annual private events with special guests, and recognition in perpetuity as an eternal member. We celebrate our planned giving donors for their heartfelt, meaningful gifts.



To learn more about planned giving or notify us that you’ve named Ritter Center in your planned gift, please contact **Interim Director of Development Jessica Hansen** at (415) 457-8182 x 129, or [jhansen@rittercenter.org](mailto:jhansen@rittercenter.org).  
[RitterCenter.org/planned-giving](https://RitterCenter.org/planned-giving)

## “Is My Child Alive?”



**SAN RAFAEL Police Department Mental Health Liaison** licensed marriage and family therapist Lynn Murphy plays a critical role in our community.

“When I talk to families, they want to know if their child is alive. They haven’t heard from their son or daughter in two months. I get calls every week like this. **Imagine if we could talk about mental health to shatter the stigma**, eliminate the shame and get rid of the fear,” says San Rafael Police Department Mental Health Liaison licensed marriage and family therapist Lynn Murphy. “There is a power in sharing your story. You are not alone.”

Lynn was hired in 2013 to be a point of connection for people experiencing homelessness and/or mental health issues. Lynn got to know people, listened to their stories, and developed relationships with people on the street. Over time, these relationships included service providers like Ritter Center, too. From that, she grew an even stronger network of connections with the District Attorney’s office, the court system, and the Public Defender’s office. She has continued the work started by Dr. Joel Fay, a former officer with SRPD, to connect people to needed services as opposed to traditional criminal justice interventions.

**Read Lynn’s story and more on Ritter Center’s blog:**  
[RitterCenter.org/blog](https://RitterCenter.org/blog)



 **SAVE THE DATE**

# UNDER THE STARS

**MAY 21, 2022**

**JOIN US on Saturday, May 21, 2022, for Ritter Center's  
2nd annual Under the Stars: A Sleepout to End Homelessness in Marin!**



Gather a team and choose a safe space to sleep (your backyard, a garden, campsite, or even the living room floor) and help **raise \$175,000** for our programs that provide housing support, health care, and other social services for people living in poverty and experiencing homelessness.

It's a great way to get the whole family involved in the community.

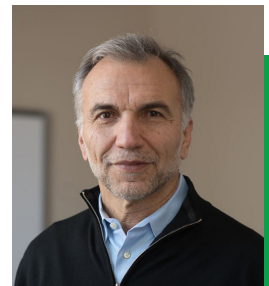
**REGISTER YOUR TEAM TODAY**

**[Sleepout.Rittercenter.org](https://Sleepout.Rittercenter.org)**

**ONCE YOU** set up your sleepout, make sure you tune in to our live virtual webinar **6:00pm - 7:30pm** and hear from guest speakers including **Sam Tsemberis PhD**, who founded **Pathways to Housing** and developed the **Housing First** program, **public officials**, and our very own **Dr. Saima Firdoos**. There will also be our top fundraising awards, sound bath meditative yoga, a bedtime story, and more!

Registration is \$25 per person for ages 6 and up and ages 5 and under are **FREE**. Each paid registrant gets a free limited edition event t-shirt and extra t-shirts can be bought in our online store!

Register at [Sleepout.Rittercenter.org](https://Sleepout.Rittercenter.org)



## Become an Under the Stars Sponsor!

**OVER 40 BUSINESSES** sponsored our first Sleepout and we're now signing up this year's sponsors! When you become a Sleepout sponsor, you'll receive recognition like logo placements in newspapers, magazines, newsletters, and postcards. Sponsors also receive free corporate teams.

To learn more and find out how a Sleepout sponsorship can meet your brand, community impact, and employee engagement goals, contact **Interim Director of Development Jessica Hansen** at (415) 457-8182 x 129, or [jhansen@rittercenter.org](mailto:jhansen@rittercenter.org).

**Thank you to our early sponsors.**



**Spring 2022**

## Become a monthly donor

Your recurring online donation is a simple way to provide ongoing, increased support for our clients and patients throughout the year.

Learn more and become a monthly donor:  
[RitterCenter.org/ways-to-give](https://RitterCenter.org/ways-to-give)



Address Panel  
PO Box 3517  
San Rafael, CA 94912



## We Need Volunteers!

As a Food Pantry volunteer you'll help people in need access everyday essentials. Call Jorge Garcia, our Client Services Manager at 415-457-8182 x109 or complete our contact form and a team member will reach out to you.

[RitterCenter.org/contact-us](https://RitterCenter.org/contact-us)

