

CROSSROADS, INC.



A message from our
Executive Director,
Larissa Matzek



“As we head into the holiday season and end of the year, we want to express our gratitude to all of our supporters.”



For those of you who came to our 50th Anniversary we want to thank you again for your continued commitment to Crossroads. For all of our supporters we are also grateful for you! Many of you have donated money, your time and been cheerleaders for our women. We could not do this work without your support. Due to your generosity we continue to grow and are able to offer our women the best quality of care possible.

This Thanksgiving we are so thankful for you!

Sincerely,
Larissa Matzek, Executive Director

[Donate to Crossroads, Inc.](#)



December 20, 1933

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July 12, 2024

In Memoriam
of Crossroads,
Inc. Founder,
Carol
Bekendam



Dr. Carol Helen Bekendam was the co-founder of Crossroads. Carol and her husband Pete ran a dairy farm next to the California Institution for Women (CIW), a women's prison in Chino. They were very involved in their community and taught Sunday school, participated in several ministries, had prison visitation programs, and then founded Crossroads in 1974.

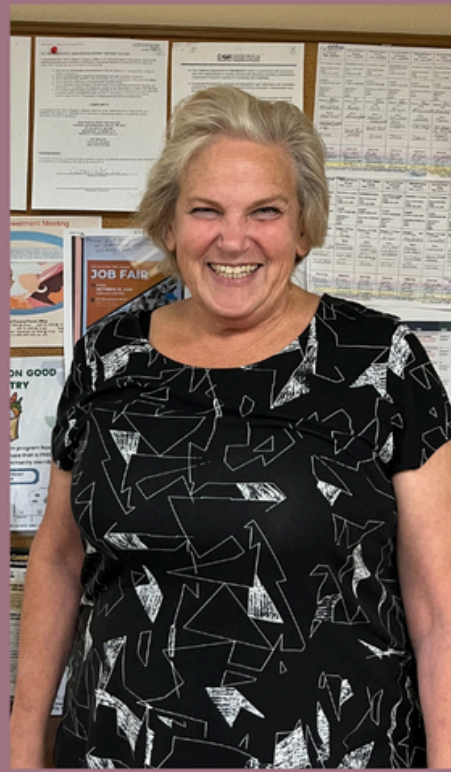
Unstoppable in her pursuit of ministry to others as well as her experience working with incarcerated women and persons with substance use disorder, Carol returned to school at the age of 40 and completed a master's degree in marriage and family therapy and began to work at what she would name The Creative Counseling Center at Pomona First Baptist Church (now Purpose Church).

We were honored to have Carol and her son, Randy Bekendam, at our 50th Anniversary celebration in June.

Meet Kristy!

Crossroads graduate

“——
| Crossroads
| cared
| about what
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| what I
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——”



An interview with Kristy Lewis, former resident and graduate of Crossroads, Inc.

I grew up in the City of Orange, California. My home life was what I consider a “normal” upbringing. My parents were loving and very present in my life. When I was 14, I started working with people with disabilities. I had training through the Girl Scouts. I was very involved as a Girl Scout doing backpacking, volunteering and working with children. I had some terrific mentors who directed me to consider working as a speech pathologist. I went to Cal State Long Beach and got my bachelor’s degree in communicative disorders and then I got my masters in speech and language pathology.

I had met my future husband while I was working on my bachelor's degree. We got married in 1987 after I finished my master's degree. I thought our marriage was great until I got pregnant and he started using drugs. He became very abusive and I suffered through his abuse for years even after we separated. There was an incident involving him and ultimately, I was charged with a felony conviction. I had a 25 to life sentence and I served 25 years. I never imagined that something like this would happen to me. Once I went to prison, I experienced other types of abuse. No one is safe from abuse in prison. There are no protections and after years of being there I realized anyone could do anything to me and I could survive. It is not a secret about the number of suicides in prison but I was determined to get through it no matter what. I focused on the people that I loved and that kept me going with the hope that I would be released at some point.

I had one parole hearing when I was at the 24-year mark but wasn't released until I had served the full 25 years. As a "lifer" you never know if you are going to be released or not. First you go to a hearing with two parole board members and they either approve you for parole or not. Next, the full board of parole reviews you and decides whether or not they will grant parole. Even if the full parole board approves you, the Governor also has to agree with your release. I was granted parole in October of 2023.

Before you are released you have to have letters from a minimum of three different residential facilities. The board chooses which one you can go to but I am grateful they chose Crossroads! I arrived at Crossroads on October 13, 2023. The first day I got here was really hard. I was very overwhelmed and the transition felt really difficult. I didn't even want to go to a convenience store to get coffee. To have all of these choices and have to make decisions after having no choices for so many years was very hard for me. Having other residents

who had gone through those early days of being released gave me hope. I could see the confidence they had and was comforted by that.

One time I was inside a store and I was just standing there because I didn't even know what to do next. Eventually the program director called me on my phone to see where I was! She ended up sending someone inside the store to get me. Thank god! Over time I started to recover from my long period of incarceration. I worked with staff on how to have healthy relationships, get a job, and learned how to use a phone and computer. I also learned that there were things I knew how to do before I was in prison and I could do those things again. I had a real life before I got to prison and I had to remember that. I also had to learn to take care of myself in prison and that gave me the strength to grow during this transition period! At Crossroads I spent so much time with Heather and Larissa and I felt like they really listened to me. I was lucky to work with the SERS-Jobs for Progress program to get a part time job helping Crossroads. One day Heather and I were trying to order some food from the grocery store and Heather (being the laid-back person that she is!) said lets just get in the car and go grab some things! I had a list and it was the first time I really shopped in a supermarket in over 25 years. I know the supermarket like the back of my hand these days and I am a real pro!

Crossroads cared about what I had to say and what I needed. They also wanted to see me learn to take care of myself and rebuild my life! Crossroads was here to catch me when I got out. I had nowhere to go and I would have been alone without any support. Even though a program can be hard it truly has been worth it. The individual attention and care that people receive at Crossroads really makes a difference. Some of the larger programs don't have that and I feel like I have been supported to grow while being here. I rarely think about

prison anymore- in fact I hadn't thought about it much recently until I was asked to tell my story. I have graduated from Crossroads after spending a year in the program and am working on becoming a house manager. It has meant everything to me. A real life is possible again even after being in prison for 25 years and I am so grateful for that!

**With Gratitude,
Kristy Lewis**

GI  ING TUESDAY

Giving Tuesday is on December 3rd!
Don't wait to donate - donate today!



Donate to Crossroads, Inc.

A news card graphic for the LA Times. The background is a grayscale image of the Los Angeles skyline with palm trees in the foreground. The card features several maroon-colored geometric shapes containing text. At the top right, a maroon arrow-shaped box points left and contains the text 'THE NEWS |'. Below this, a maroon trapezoidal box contains the text 'LA TIMES'. The main headline is in a large, white, sans-serif font. At the bottom, there are two horizontal maroon bars: the left one contains a calendar icon and the date 'November 5, 2024', and the right one contains the text 'LATIMES.COM' followed by a right-pointing arrow icon.

THE NEWS |

LA TIMES

California voters approve anti-crime ballot measure Prop. 36

 November 5, 2024

LATIMES.COM 

Prop. 36

The passage of Prop. 36 allows for felony charges for theft and possession of certain drugs as well as for repeat offenses. This is a devastating blow to those of us working to reduce incarceration in California. It will strip away funding for drug treatment, victim services, reentry programs and education. Instead of tackling the root causes of crime California is leaning back into failed

strategies from the war on drugs, criminalizing poverty and substance abuse and furthering mass incarceration.

Prop. 6

In a setback to California's historic reparations effort voters rejected a ballot measure that would have ended forced labor in prisons and jails. Prop. 6 was part of a national movement to end a racist legacy and abolish slavery. The measure would have amended the state's constitution to repeal language that allows involuntary servitude as a form of criminal punishment, making work assignments voluntary and allowing incarcerated people to prioritize their rehabilitation. California mandates tens of thousands of incarcerated people to work at jobs-many of which they do not choose — ranging from packaging nuts to doing dishes, to making license plates, sanitizer and furniture for less than 74 cents an hour. If a person does not complete their work regardless of illness or injury, they face punishments.

[**Donate to Crossroads, Inc.**](#)

In Memory

**La Donna
Robinson**



LaDonna Robinson was a treasured part of the Crossroads' community. She came to Crossroads as a resident and spent many years helping the women of Crossroads. After completing her CADDC coursework she eventually was hired as a case manager. LaDonna was kind, had a good sense of humor, and inspired Crossroads' women to work as hard as possible at their reentry planning, and recovery.

She will be greatly missed by staff, the board, alumni and residents.