

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Part 2: GRANNIES FOR GRANNIES *Second-Unit solution to Sinking Section 8 Sector* **By Wanda Sue Parrott**

FACING homelessness or already being without a permanent place to consider home forces every woman without adequate shelter to ask, *Where do I go from here?*

If she is a single senior woman age 50 and older, aka a Granny, she may be forced to be transient by circumstance rather than choice, unless she is lucky like Toni, a 70-something resident of Pacific Grove who recently received a 90-day notice to vacate the apartment she had rented under Section 8 for twelve years.

When Government Vouchers Worth Money Are Worthless . . .

According to Wikipedia, “Section 8 of the [Housing Act of 1937](#) (42 U.S.C. § 1437f), often called Section 8, as repeatedly amended, authorizes the payment of rental housing assistance to private landlords... in the United States.”

Toni has no car, so she traveled on foot and by bus in search of an affordable apartment. She found no landlords willing to accept her Section 8 voucher as payment for the portion of rent she could not afford on her monthly fixed income. So, the government vouchers worth good money were worthless to Toni.

Countless women cannot afford the high cost of affordable housing on the Monterey Peninsula. Of the 413 homeless women in the greater Monterey Peninsula area, a yet-to-be-determined percentage is comprised of Grannies like Toni, a refined, soft-spoken sensitive responsible woman who, at retirement age, lives on limited funds.

“The largest part of the section is the Housing Choice Voucher program which pays a large portion of the rents and utilities of about 2.1 million households,” the Wikipedia description continues. “The [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) manages the Section 8 programs.”

. . . Where Can Granny Turn?

Fortunately, Toni picked up a copy of Cedar *Street Times*, read this column, and called us to ask where to turn. She was invited to Friends of Homeless Women, held the last Wednesday of each month at St. Mary’s by the Sea Episcopal Church in Pacific Grove. It is open to the public and no reservations are required! Contact Kathy Whilden at wildini@aol.com.

There, Toni learned about the Fund for Homeless Women (a field fund of the Community Foundation of Monterey); the Gathering Place (which feeds and clothes around 80 homeless women on Tues., 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. at the Moose Lodge in Del Rey Oaks; Golden Connections, founded by local businesswoman Doris Beckman; and more service providers, mostly non-profit organizations that serve women in need.

Conversely, Golden Connections is a private enterprise that has no slow-moving bureaucratic red tape or regulations to cut through. It swiftly matches women in need of housing with homeowners/landlords with rooms or apartments listed to rent. A modest fee enables Doris Beckman to cover operating charges.

By making such private arrangements, Toni averted becoming homeless.

For information about Golden Connections, including listing your room for rent, contact Doris Beckman at goldenconnections1@gmail.com and www.mygoldenconnections.com.

How To Help Without Losing A Cent Of Rent!

If you are a realtor, homeowner or landlord interested in Granny getting shelter, reconsider reluctance about Section 8 vouchers. The rent you will get is the same as that paid by a person with means to cover the full amount, or a woman like Toni, who needs help. You'll benefit by getting your full price while helping save a woman's life without losing a cent of rent.

As Wikipedia points out: "The Housing Choice Voucher Program provides 'tenant-based' rental assistance, so a tenant can move from one unit of at least minimum housing quality to another. It also allows individuals to apply their monthly voucher towards the purchase of a home, with over \$17 billion going towards such purchases each year (from ncsa.org analysis). The maximum allowed voucher is \$2,200 a month."

Reprise The Granny Unit For Granny

Realtors at Sotheby's International and other local real estate agencies often list Granny Units as sales perks for buyers interested in renting out such living spaces as money-making guest cottages or short-term rooms for tourists.

According to Betsy Wilson, Director of Housing Development at MidPen Housing Corporation in Santa Cruz, these "second unit" living quarters are enjoying a second wave of popularity as affordable housing units for elder members of a family.

California passed its first Granny Unit Law in 1986. It basically refers to a second-unit residential dwelling that can be attached to a residence or a separate building. It requires a separate entrance, amenities for cooking and bathing, and at least one room for sleeping. It can be a separate guest-house addition to a costly home like this one in Pacific Grove, listed for \$1,250,000 at <http://www.hauteresidence.com/estate/pacific-grove-gem-with-granny-unit/> or modest prefabricated do-it-yourself backyard studio unit like those offered by California Pre-Cut Homes for \$19 to \$35 per sq. ft. at <http://caprecut.com/granny-units-secondary-dwellings/>. If viewing online, click the photos for links..

The Government Code Section 65852.2 Second Unit Law is designed to provide affordable housing in single-family-residential property in population-dense areas while easing rental housing deficits. The law originally allowed property owners to add living space for family members such as a parent, grandparent or other relative who could dwell in the unit at reasonable cost. Communities amended their ordinances over the years.

If building a Granny unit appeals to you, check your local building codes and ordinances. One city might allow the house with a granny unit to be rented as a duplex to two non-family members after the family moves out; another might require the granny unit to be disassembled when the family vacates the property.

Every California municipality can adopt an ordinance to build second-unit housing in a single-family house. They may set certain standards regarding such things as restricted parking, unit size and architectural

preferences. Localities have the discretion to consider such things as traffic flow and water and sewer services; however, localities must maintain the intent of second-unit state law, without undue provisions and requirements

Depending on local community ordinances, a Granny unit can increase the property tax base, and allow for additional income to homeowners.

If your city codes allow such units to be occupied by non-family members, consider making your Granny unit a Section 8 rental to a real-life Granny like Toni who, unfortunately, couldn't find affordable housing on her beloved Monterey Peninsula, so she is now living in Salinas.

For details about the Fund for Homeless Women contact:

<https://www.facebook.com/friendsofhomelesswomen>.

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