

# Six-Part Blog Series: Breaking Down Barriers

By **N. Sein**,  
January 5, 2018 in **Partners**

One of our mottos here at Aunt Bertha is a quote by Margaret Mead:

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

In that spirit and in honor of the New Year, we’re highlighting six of our direct service providers’ powerful missions and showcasing how they were there for their communities in 2017. These are the people whose work fuels ours, and we hope their stories inspire you as we begin 2018 with this special series.

BOSS believes that people affected by crisis have invaluable knowledge and insight about what works to change lives, so we hire from our target population; at least 40% of BOSS staff have personal experience with homelessness, disabilities, substance abuse or criminal justice systems.” —Sonja Fitz, Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (Berkeley, CA)

Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS)'s mission is to help those who are mentally ill, struggling with substance abuse, formerly incarcerated, or otherwise homeless achieve health and self-sufficiency, and to fight against the root causes of poverty and homelessness.

“We serve the very poor — people with one or more barriers to self-sufficiency, such as former incarceration, mental illness, substance abuse issues, inter-generational poverty, or lack of job skills and/or literacy. There are more people on the streets, more homeless encampments, and little-to-no housing that is affordable on very low incomes. Also, there are hundreds of formerly incarcerated individuals being released to communities in California due to AB 109 and they need help finding jobs and connecting with positive social supports quickly, before they can recidivate,” said Fitz.

One of the ways BOSS tackled these issues in 2017 was by expanding their workforce development program (the Career Training and Employment Center) and partnering with employers who were willing to take a risk on job seekers who needed a second chance. In October, the organization celebrated 50 graduates, all employed full-time.

## How You Can Help

**Contact your elected officials** (especially if you live in California) and tell them that affordable housing for everyone matters to you.

Support efforts with **a financial donation**.

*By Emily Storozuk, Community Engagement Manager*

**Tags**    **AB 109**    **affordable housing**    **incarceration**    **recidivism**  
**workforce development**