

## A Home of His Own for Local Artist

When you ask Benny Sorrells if he feels good, you might witness him get down on the floor and start doing push-ups. He answers your question with a resounding “yes!” The spritely 78-year-old is a prolific artist and has been a resident at our Garden Terrace community for the last few years.

Benny found Garden Terrace with the assistance of a Travis County mental health public defender. He has struggled with mental illness all of his life and, as a result, spent nearly thirty years homeless. When he came to Texas over a decade ago, Benny didn’t have a place of his own and lacked a steady income. He cycled in and out of the criminal justice system. Now that he lives with us, he has achieved greater stability.

As a resident, Benny has access to our on-site support staff who can help him with whatever he might need. He said he likes living at Garden Terrace and credits art for giving him a sense of purpose.

**“If it wasn’t for art, I wouldn’t be alive,”** Benny said.

He is an avid painter, sculptor, and pottery-maker. He mostly uses found materials – bricks, discarded metals, and old magazines – to make his art, given that art supplies tend to be expensive. His studio at Garden Terrace is filled with his work and his latest project is usually resting on the easel in the center of the room.

Benny grew up in California and his father died when he was very young. He lived with his mother but was often alone as a teenager. He quit high school and did

whatever he could to survive. He studied and taught art. It was in his mid-twenties during a run-in with the police that he ended up in a mental health institution. Benny said he heard voices, something he still struggles with today.



Despite his mental health challenges, Benny has thrived as an artist in the local community. Since the early 2000s, he has participated in Art From The Streets, a program that provides homeless individuals with materials and a free studio space to create art. In 2007, his work was selected for “The People’s Art of Austin Exhibit” at City Hall. Benny works under his artist name “Mjumbé” and sells his work at Art From The Streets’ annual exhibit.

Last year, our staff also organized an art show for Benny at Garden Terrace. His work was displayed, celebrated, and sold to residents and neighbors. Steph Gajewski is one of our Supportive Services Program Managers and has known Benny for over ten years. She was first drawn to him because of his art and, over the years, the two have developed a deep friendship.

“I’ve gained so much wisdom from Benny’s example of moving through the world in an authentic, meaningful, and carefree manner,” Steph said. “He can find a use for anything and will take the time to create something beautiful with an item that other people would consider trash. Looking at his artwork can reveal a deep knowing of how he experiences the world — he bravely shows his soul.”

## Local Musician Helps Others Enroll in Health Insurance

Joel Weinstein retired from his career as a tax professional and became a full-time musician twelve years ago. At his gigs, he often spreads the word about our Insure Central Texas program, which helps people enroll in affordable health insurance through the federal Marketplace. Joel is a dedicated Insure Central Texas volunteer and is particularly invested in making sure Austin’s musicians know they have health insurance options.



**“I go home every night after volunteering and feel better,”** Joel said.  
**“It’s the most rewarding experience.”**

Joel is proud of our partnership with the Health Alliance for Austin Musicians (HAAM) and is looking forward to serving in the next enrollment period from November 1 - December 15.

*You, too, can help your neighbors enroll in affordable health insurance and find peace of mind for the future!*

**To learn more about volunteering for Insure Central Texas, contact [Eliana.Brant@foundcom.org](mailto:Eliana.Brant@foundcom.org) or call 512-610-7375.**

## Finding peace through Yoga

Sandi Rodriguez hasn’t missed a yoga class at our Skyline Terrace community since they began a few years ago. The free classes are offered right on-site, courtesy of Pure Action Yoga, and they are currently available at five of our affordable housing communities.

Sandi was familiar with yoga before she started attending the classes at Skyline, but she had no idea how much developing a regular practice would change her life.

**“It’s good for your whole well-being,”** Sandi said.  
**“It’s really good medicine and it’ll help your brain.”**

Sandi struggles with depression and said yoga helps her relax and puts her in a better mood.

In addition to yoga, Sandi also participates in our nutrition classes and helps Austin Clubhouse prepare meals for fellow residents twice a week. She feels at home and healthy at Skyline. “Everyone here is very caring,” Sandi said.



*To learn more about our health initiatives, please visit [foundcom.org/health-programs](http://foundcom.org/health-programs)*



3036 South First Street  
Austin, TX 78704  
512.447.2026  
FoundCom.org



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Foundation Communities provides attractive, affordable homes and free on-site support services for thousands of working families with kids, as well as veterans, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. We offer an innovative, proven model that empowers our residents and neighbors to achieve educational success, financial stability, and healthier lifestyles. We own and operate 22 properties in Austin and North Texas.

**INSURE CENTRAL TEXAS**

**Open Enrollment: November 1 – December 15, 2017**

We can help you enroll in affordable health insurance! Visit [InsureCentralTX.org](http://InsureCentralTX.org) for hours, locations, and what to bring.

## FOUNDATION COMMUNITIES UPDATES

### Spotlight on Service Award Winners ▶

One of our favorite annual traditions is recognizing volunteers who go above and beyond with an outstanding service award. This year, we honored 83 dedicated volunteers for giving 100-500+ hours of their time to serve our residents and fellow community members. Our volunteers have rich backgrounds and experiences, and we're incredibly grateful to them for sharing their time, energy, and passion with us to help make our programs come to life.

### Announcing The Jordan at Mueller

Did you hear the news? We recently won funding to build a new affordable family community in the Mueller neighborhood in East Austin! We'll break ground next year, and 132 families will move into The Jordan in late 2019. They'll have access to great schools, job opportunities, and green spaces, as well as our on-site support services. We've dreamed of building in Mueller for many years and want to thank the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs and the City of Austin for their financial investment in this future community. We're also grateful to the Mueller Neighborhood Association for supporting us and Austin voters for approving the 2013 affordable housing bonds.



### Thank you Madroño Foundation!

In June we were awarded \$80,000 from the Madroño Foundation to help fund the on-site education, financial stability, and health programs that give our residents and neighbors the tools they need to transform their lives. The Colorado-based foundation values inclusivity, diversity, collaboration, and creativity, which perfectly aligns with our mission to create housing where all families can succeed. We want to express our deepest gratitude to the Madroño Foundation for believing in our work and allowing us to serve more people in Austin.

