

Care Through Touch Institute

Touch that Transforms Body, Mind, Heart, and Spirit

Summer 2022

NEW BEGINNINGS

Since June 2021, after nearly two years of hibernation, we have been steadily returning to our beloved hands-on-work. At first it was in a very limited capacity at just a couple of sites and required maintaining lots of safety protocols. Then in February 2022 we began providing seated massage as part of street outreach at three additional sites alongside our friends from The Harm Reduction Therapy Center. In April we were welcomed back to Hospitality House, our long-time sister organization that provides a multitude of services (including care through touch) to support people struggling to rebuild their lives.



“Returning to work post-Covid has been deeply transformative for my life,” says CTI Massage Therapist Andy Maag. “My heart and spirit have been stretched in unexpected ways.”



CTI Massage Therapist Pamela Magers writes:

“My first day back at 6th St. was a great “welcome back” experience. I massaged a man with a broken leg (as a result of one of the many car-pedestrian accidents in the TL); and a very talkative woman who spent most of her time undressing and redressing in front of a mirror in the room. She sat still for about a minute of massage and then was off...still talking and giggling. It was such a privilege to be back with the folks at 6th St. and the realities of their lives.”



CTI Practitioner Eileen Johnson exclaimed:

“Wow! I didn't realize how much I missed being in the Tenderloin until I got off BART and started down Market Street toward Hospitality House on 6th Street. What a wonderful feeling to be doing massage again. I was happy and thrilled to be back!”

Lisa Whitney is a CTI Practitioner who works at Hospitality House Tenderloin Self-Help Center.





Their struggles are imprinted in our hands, their suffering in our hearts; our souls listen to their hopes, and our faith empowers them to believe in themselves.

Mary Ann Finch, CTI Founder

NOTES FROM OUR CLIENTS:

An elderly homeless gentleman after receiving his first-ever massage said, "I'm 86 years old and I've never experienced anything so beautiful in my life."

And another elderly recipient impacted by the absence of community and lack of physical contact due to the pandemic said, "It just feels so amazing to be touched after not being touched at all for months and months. You just can't imagine what it's like." The Sufi poet Rumi best describes our sacred work of caring through touch. *"I have come to bring out the beauty you never knew you had and lift you like a prayer to the sky."*

THE TENDERLOIN

The pandemic not only affected our work and presence in the community, it changed the face and climate of the Tenderloin. Crime and drug abuse tripled during the first two years of COVID-19, fracturing an already troubled neighborhood. In January 2022, the City's mayor declared a 'state of emergency' in the TL, the area having become the epicenter of drug dealing that resulted in massive numbers of over-dose deaths, especially among our unhoused neighbors.

The proliferation of substance abuse fueled by mental instability also caused an increase of violence on the streets around our office location at 240 Golden Gate Ave. The Tom Waddell Urban Health Clinic, our next-door neighbor, had a bullet fired through one of their windows. The Service Employees' Union Building (our home for 25 years) was burglarized three times. CTI's office was broken into once with a failed attempt a second time. Ever since, the doors to the building have been gated and locked, providing very limited access.

"It's been really tough on us this past year," said Olga Miranda, president of Local 87, referencing the disruption in access to the building, "but the most important thing is keeping our members safe."

Safety was a major concern for CTI staff as well. We needed to relocate yet still remain a healing presence in the Tenderloin neighborhood. In discerning this move we agreed it would be to our advantage to share space



Photo by John Verner

with a like-minded organization that would provide us with opportunities to continue as well as expand our services to the City's most-at-need populations. We believe we've found such a community in The Harm Reduction Therapy Center (HRTC), a San Francisco non-profit organization that provides therapeutic medical and social support to people with mental health and substance abuse issues.

THE HARM REDUCTION THERAPY CENTER

21 Merlin St.

San Francisco, CA 94107

<https://harmreductiontherapy.org>

HRTC is a natural 'fit' for Care Through Touch. For several years we've been providing massage therapy at their weekly pop-up street therapy locations in low-income neighborhoods throughout San Francisco



including the Tenderloin and the SoMa (South of Market). It was a dozen or more years ago that Jeannie Little, co-founder of HRTC, and Mary Ann talked about our organizations working more closely together by sharing a common space. It seems as though that time has come!

Both of our organizations prioritize nurturing loving relationships with clients while we CARE for their physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs. "Just be nice to people," comments Maurice Byrd, one of HRTC's psychotherapists, "Show them you care about them." This certainly rings true to CTI's original mandate: "Touch them, show them you care," Mother Theresa said to Mary Ann when she left India 30 years ago.



CTI's office home for 25 years

CTI Office Moving Team Selfie: Andy Maag and Renee Kolb



Renee Kolb is one of the CTI Massage Therapists who participates in the HRTC's street outreach program.

OUR MISSION

When we take the time to touch with CARE, we leave a wondrous and lasting heart-print behind that says, "I honor you and I care." -maf

With this move, we begin a new chapter in CTI's story. We remain faithful to our mission: **to be present and to care through touch** (trauma-informed seated massage therapy) individuals and communities traumatized by poverty, abuse, addiction, illness, and of course, homelessness. As massage therapists we are on the frontlines of homelessness every day and caring through touch is a radical expression of justice grounded in respect, hope, love and compassion.

In massaging arms, shoulders, backs, hands, and feet, we repair more than sore muscles and align more than bones. "Massage realigns my body and gives me a lift spiritually and emotionally," reflects one client. Through



HRTC's new center where we have been invited to open our new CTI Office

touch we make connections and enter into supportive relationships with people that open the door to new possibilities. "Because of the **care** in the touch, I felt hopeful; I found myself; I found joy," a client said. And an elderly woman suffering for years with chronic pain who receives a weekly massage from one of our therapists said, "For the first time in three years I had no pain for a week." Possibilities!!! Care through touch is all about showing-up, loving unconditionally, imagining possibilities and being agents of hope! When Desmond Tutu was asked how he could remain so positive and joyful in the midst of immense suffering, he replied, "I'm a prisoner of hope." We would be proud to be his cellmates!

PLEASE JOIN US IN OUR MISSION!

DONATE: We are grateful for the many ways you have supported us in the past. We wouldn't be here today, poised to begin a new chapter in the life of Care Through Touch, without your consistent support. This year we're asking you to be as generous as possible as we work towards stabilizing the organization following the disruptions caused by the first two years of COVID. Our staff/volunteer therapists, characterized by tender love and respect for everyone they meet, are a presence in health-care clinics, drop-in-centers, SROs and pop-up street therapy locations five days a week. At the moment we are averaging approximately 230 individual 15-30 minute seated massage therapy sessions a month in the Tenderloin and SoMA neighborhoods. Your donations will support our therapists who do this work rather than working in salons or having private practices and will help us continue to respond to the ever-growing need for CARE within these communities.

DONOR ALERT! CTI is setting up a new donation platform with **GIVEDIRECT**. We encourage all our donors to use this platform (or direct mail) for your recurring or one-time donations. Just go to our website (www.carethroughtouch.org) and click the DONATE button to make your donation; you will receive an immediate confirmation.

For those who donate through Stripe or Patreon, we will be cancelling those services by the end of July 2022. If you are currently donating through these services, please notify our bookkeeper, Beth Wright, at paperclips59@gmail.com that you will be setting up your donation through CTI's website, and she will help you cancel your current recurring donation

Everyone can do something to help people experiencing homelessness!

JOIN US: As part of CTI's commitment to making the social issue of homelessness the core of our work, we are inviting you to join us in educating yourself and your circle of friends about the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual toll of homelessness. We all have a responsibility to know about the effects of this growing crisis and ways to shift attitudes. Some suggestions:

INVISIBLE PEOPLE: Changing the Story of Homelessness info@invisiblepeople.tv. Invisible People is the only non-profit newsroom focused solely on the topic of homelessness. Their well-written, carefully researched stories, essays and videos lead to transformation and policy change. Subscribe to their newsletter!

50 BLOCKS: Stories from SF's Tenderloin Neighborhood (available online) A powerful new documentary which starkly reveals the suffering of homelessness, mental illness, and addiction. Watch it!

GET INVOLVED: Find ways to get involved in your community through homeless outreach programs. A first-hand experience with a social issue can challenge and transform ideas, attitudes, and perceptions.

Refer massage therapists to the CTI website (www.carethroughtouch.org) to learn more about our work and trainings. Encourage a massage therapist you might know who's motivated by compassion and justice to volunteer his/her services through an appropriate local agency.

CTI's NEW MAILING ADDRESS:

**Care Through Touch Institute
P.O. Box 720204
San Francisco, CA 94172**



**Care Through Touch Institute
P.O. Box 720204
San Francisco, CA 94172
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www.carethroughtouch.org**

Save Trees!

Send us your email if you would like to receive digital copies of our newsletter.

Touch that transforms body, mind, heart and spirit.....