



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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NEWS RELEASE



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FORMER GEMMA HOUSE TO BE RELAUNCHED UNDER JANUS

The County of Santa Cruz and Janus of Santa Cruz are proud to announce the relaunch of a transitional housing program for women reentering the community after incarceration.

Located at 522 Capitola Road Extension in a building formerly occupied by the New Life residential recovery center, the new facility can house up to eight women as they work to support each other while navigating reentry, family reunification and sobriety together. As directed by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, this transition transforms the program into a Medi-Cal billable model, ensuring both improved services for residents and financial sustainability, and saving local taxpayers \$331,000 in general fund dollars annually.

Formerly known as Gemma House, the program is being reimagined with input from women who have successfully graduated. The new name, L.I.T.E. House (Learning Independence Through Empowerment), was chosen by a panel of women's recovery and reentry program participants and staff. The transition was supported by \$150,000 in AB 109 funding allocated through the Community Corrections Partnership.

"This partnership demonstrates how Santa Cruz County is working to strengthen reentry services while being responsible stewards of public funds," Nicole Coburn, Assistant County Executive Officer, said. "This reimagining of Gemma House represents a sustainable path forward that honors our commitment to supporting residents when they most need our support."

"This program is not just a roof over someone's head—it's a place where women can stabilize, heal, and build new lives," said Amber Williams, CEO of Janus of Santa Cruz. "By centering the voices of women who have been through the program, we're making sure it reflects their real needs and aspirations."