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# What you need to know about Lava Mae

## OUR MISSION: TAKING RADICAL HOSPITALITY TO THE STREET

Lava Mae is a San Francisco-based nonprofit that is transforming the way Communities see and serve people moving through homelessness. By shining a light on our shared humanity, driving innovation in programming, and inspiring collaboration, we're catalyzing change.

We do this by bringing critical services — delivered with an unexpected level of care that we call radical hospitality — to the street through programs such as our mobile hygiene service and our new Pop-Up Care Villages.

Our work is rooted in three beliefs:

1. Opportunity unfolds when people are treated with dignity.
2. When it comes to dignity, society has different standards for those with resources vs those who lack them.
3. Delivering radical hospitality - an unexpected level of care - to people moving through homelessness restores dignity, rekindles optimism, and fuels a sense of opportunity.

## WHAT ARE LAVA MAE'S IMPACT GOALS?

1. To deliver access to critical services and restore dignity for 30,000 Californians experiencing homelessness.
2. To enable 1M new showers around the globe by the end of 2018.

## HOW SUCCESSFUL HAS LAVA MAE BEEN UP TO THIS POINT?

- Since launching our pilot in June 2014, we've touched the lives of more than 10,000 Californians who have taken 30,000+ showers on our mobile units.
- In response to repeated requests for help from the City & County of Los Angeles, we opened our LA branch in November of 2016.
- We've fielded over 1,600 requests for help replicating our service and inspired 12 mobile programs that include: Think Dignity (showers/San Diego), LIFT (showers/Honolulu), Pit Stop (toilets/SF), Orange (laundry/Australia), Love Beyond Walls (clothing & makeovers/Georgia), Il Bus Toilette (toilets/Milan).
- In July of this year, we launched our [buildIT](#) platform and released our first opensource toolkit, mobile hygiene. If 10% of the 1,600 communities interested in creating mobile hygiene launch, that's 1M showers Lava Mae will have made possible!
- After witnessing our guests struggle to access critical services, we created Pop-Up Care Villages to mobilize partners and bring services such as clothing, case management, healthcare, haircuts etc. to the street. To date we've hosted 14 in San Francisco, 1 in Los Angeles, and 1 in Austin, TX during SXSW. We've served 6,000 guests, engaged 70 partners that span the sectors and activated 700 volunteers.
- We've single-handedly raised awareness among the broader community about the lack of access to hygiene for people experiencing homelessness. As a result, we've engaged 1,000s of donors, volunteers, and advisors in our work.



## **POP-UP CARE VILLAGES**

What would happen if you blended Off the Grid's mobile model with Project Homeless Connect's one-stop-shop for services?

We believe that marrying the best of both worlds will radically increase access to services for the thousands of unsheltered San Franciscans by meeting them where they are – the street. To do this, Lava Mae is leveraging its ability to seed collaboration and inspire innovation to engage partners – nonprofits, social entrepreneurs and city agencies – and, thereby, catalyze collective impact, boost resilience, and pave the path out of homelessness for those we serve.

### **What will the villages look like?**

Imagine stumbling across a big, bright blue bus emblazoned with water droplets and icons of people – women, men, trans and handicapped individuals – all under showerheads. You think: What's that? What's going on?

Perhaps you'd read about Lava Mae but had never seen it; perhaps the entire scene takes you by surprise. You walk up; you see staff and volunteers welcoming people, calling them by name and really seeing and connecting with them. Alongside the bus, a row of hairstylists are providing fresh cuts; next to them, a pop-up clothing tent distributions donations. A mobile medical clinic is parked behind it. People are being fed while they wait for their appointments at cafe-style tables; books, chess set, and art therapy supplies are available as well. Chairs are pulled aside for talk therapy and skills-building workshops take place regularly. Resource tables connect individuals with housing workshops, case management, recovery support, and the tools to write home and reconnect with family. Live music, a proven tool for improving coping skills, lowering cortisol levels, and increasing resilience, wafts through the air and fosters connection and enhances a sense of calming stability.

### **Collective Impact**

We believe collective impact is the only way to ensure meaningful, permanent change. With a coalition of service providers and data scientists, we are working to create a centralized intake and appointment system. This platform will result in a shared information database that tracks the outcomes of referrals and work being done among participating providers. Ultimately, the data will tell us whether or not Pop-Up Care Villages enable our guests to move closer to their goals be they large or small.

### **Radical Hospitality**

We've learned how a service is delivered is as important as the service itself. So we operate from a place we call Radical Hospitality: We call those we serve our guests; we create beautiful, dignified spaces for them to use; we know their names; we learn their stories.

We use human-centered design to tailor the villages around our guests and their goals. Shaped by those we serve, and fueled by Radical Hospitality, we believe Pop-Up Care Villages will ensure everyone touched leaves feeling better than when they arrived.

**If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.**



## ADDENDUM: METRICS

### Measuring Impact on Individuals

While our original theory of change – that access to hygiene eliminates obstacles to opportunity – is still valid, it's hubris to assume that a shower alone eases the path out of homelessness. We play only a small part in a person's trajectory. That said, what Lava Mae provides are two things:

1. reconnection to dignity/sense of humanity/self-worth that in turn,
2. boosts resilience, which is critical to overcoming adversity.

We are currently tracking the following: number of showers and unique guests, as well as basic demographics and anecdotal stories about how access to safe, reliable hygiene impacts people's lives. Our Pop-Up Care Villages – rooted in collective impact, however, allow us to begin tracking additional information beyond hard numbers/outputs (i.e. # showers, unique guests), and, in particular, provide us with information on the types of services most in demand and that have the greatest impact on resilience and the ability to move through homelessness.

To that end, we're testing different types of surveys at our PUCVs to zoom in on two to three metrics that effectively capture that information. By using scales (1-5) in survey questions, we'll be able to quantify our impact re these qualities. We're also working to define qualitative scales of resilience. Using Salesforce, which we're in the process of rolling out, we can also better determine the number of additional services we connect people to through our PUCVs and track their participation with these partners long-term.

### Community Engagement Metrics:

In addition to measuring impact on our guests, we're tracking our impact on the broader community, which includes awareness raising, volunteer engagement, and the number of projects inspired/supported by Lava Mae being launched around the globe. To that end, we are working to measure the following:

1. Amount of press secured and its impact on donations and social media engagement.
2. Number of volunteers engaged / hours worked over 1 year / quality of volunteer experience
3. Number and diversity of partners collaborating to deliver service (cross sector)
4. Launch of mobile hygiene projects inspired by Lava Mae

We anticipate having outcomes to report by the end of 2016. Our challenge to date re: collecting and tracking this information has been bandwidth but our recent hiring of a Community Engagement Manager will allow us to execute on this goal.

# CNN HEROES

THIS WEEK'S CNN HERO



## Where the homeless can board a bus to take a warm shower

By Allie Torgan, CNN  
Updated 10:46 AM ET, Fri June 2, 2017

**San Francisco (CNN)** Five years ago, Doniece Sandoval gained a new perspective on San Francisco's immense problem of homelessness. It happened in her own neighborhood.

Read full article here: <http://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2017/06/01/cnn-heroes-sandoval-mixed.cnn>

# Entrepreneur

## 3 Nonprofit Founders Who Are Inspiring Entrepreneurs

*Hygiene for the homeless. Flowers for the forgotten in hospitals. Crucial supplies for cops: Sounds a lot like entrepreneurship!*

Who's your business idol? In entrepreneurship circles, it's natural to look up to figures like Steve Jobs, Elon Musk and Richard Branson, three innovators who continually inspire people to dream bigger.

A relentless perfectionist, Jobs forever changed our relationship with computers, putting them literally in the palm of our hands. At PayPal, Musk changed the way we think about online payments. Now, he's creating the [future of automobiles](#) and reigniting our nation's passion for space exploration.

**Related:** [How to Know When You Should Partner With a Nonprofit](#)

And Branson, a self-made billionaire who dropped out of high school, has built an entire corporate empire by following his passion for "making business fun." While there's no denying these three leaders are certainly role models, others may receive less media attention but are inspiring nonetheless. In fact, you may be surprised to learn that some of the most inspiring aren't in the corporate world at all: They're leading successful *nonprofits*.

They're just like us.

Nonprofit leaders have a natural entrepreneurial mindset. They have to, because like startup founders, nonprofit leaders aim to solve a problem by providing goods or services.

In the process, they use [creative problem-solving](#) and marketing to raise public awareness and financial support for their vision, just the way entrepreneurs strive to secure financing and build public excitement for their product launches. Many nonprofit leaders also supervise a passionate, paid staff while recruiting and training a

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robust volunteer force. Moreover, these leaders must be creative, open-minded, flexible and nimble -- just like, you guessed it, entrepreneurs.

So, there's nothing wrong with looking up to entrepreneur giants like Jobs, Musk, and Branson. But you may be surprised just how much you can learn from these three nonprofit leaders:

Doniece Sandoval: Founder and CEO, Lava Mae

A complex issue like homelessness can feel overwhelming: Can a single person really make a difference? That's the challenge Doniece Sandoval decided to take on when she tackled a single but singular aspect of homelessness: how lack of access to hygiene hurts human dignity.

Sandoval founded [Lava Mae](#) in 2013 and began converting public transportation buses into showers and toilets on wheels to deliver hygiene and rekindle dignity for San Francisco's homeless. To date, Lava Mae has served more than 4,000 individuals who have taken 20,000-plus showers in its mobile units. Today, Lava Mae is amplifying its impact, having created a replicable model for similar hygiene services in cities across the country.

***Entrepreneurship lesson:*** Break big challenges down into smaller, more manageable issues. Rather than trying to solve every problem at once, focus on being exceptional at one thing, and then build from there.

Final thoughts

Larsen Jay, Aaron Negherbon and Doniece Sandoval may never appear on the same or lists as Steve Jobs, Elon Musk and Richard Branson, but they are true innovators nonetheless. They've all demonstrated passionate, open-minded, flexible and nimble thinking about the best way to solve problems outside traditional for-profit business models. And that is the true definition of "entrepreneurship."

# San Francisco Chronicle

## Hardworking heroes move faster than City Hall to help homeless

By [Heather Knight](#)

April 30, 2016 Updated: April 30, 2016 1:44pm



*Photo: Connor Radnovich, The Chronicle*

*Heather Knowles gives a haircut to William Ortiz during the Pop-Up Care Village outside the Main Library.*

Within view of the mayor's balcony at City Hall last week was a display of fast-moving, innovative, entrepreneurial work about homelessness. Say what?

We've told you before about Lava Mae, the nonprofit started less than three years ago to turn decommissioned Muni buses into mobile shower stalls for homeless people.

It's time for another check-in because in that short time, the organization has been copied around the world, has plans to expand to San Jose and Los Angeles, and has launched a Pop-Up Care Village. It was on display for the first time Tuesday next to the Main Library and furthers Lava Mae's goal of "radical hospitality" for the homeless.

[READ MORE](#)



## Nonprofit providing showers for the homeless rolling along

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE  
SEPTEMBER 8, 2015 | HEATHER KNIGHT

Lava Mae — the unlikely nonprofit that turns old Muni buses into shower stalls to be used by homeless people — said Tuesday that its second bus is rolling along and that it has a new plan to expand throughout California.

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## Mothers of Invention

NEW YORK TIMES  
APRIL 22, 2015

Remarkable women actively contribute to their community and the world through innovation, entrepreneurship, and invention.

[READ MORE](#)



## Showers on Wheels

NEW YORK TIMES  
JANUARY 15, 2015 | ALLISON ARIEFF

Back in San Francisco, LavaMae (a play on “wash me” in Spanish) expands the program to include showers, because there are only eight shelter facilities in San Francisco that offer public showers. LavaMae uses a repurposed city bus outfitted with two shower-&-toilet modules to “deliver dignity, one shower at a time.”

[READ MORE](#)



## These Old City Buses Have A New Purpose: Mobile Homeless Shelters

FAST COMPANY  
JUNE 18, 2015 | ADELE PETERS

When Honolulu wanted to find a new way to help its growing homeless population, it turned to an unlikely source: Old city buses.

[READ MORE](#)



## Cities Turn to Upcycled Buses as a Creative Way to Help Homeless

GOOD MAGAZINE  
JUNE 16, 2015 | RAFI SCHWARTZ

Homelessness is a serious and deep-rooted issue that affects nearly every country on Earth. It's a problem for which there are no easy fixes or silver-bullet solutions.

[READ MORE](#)

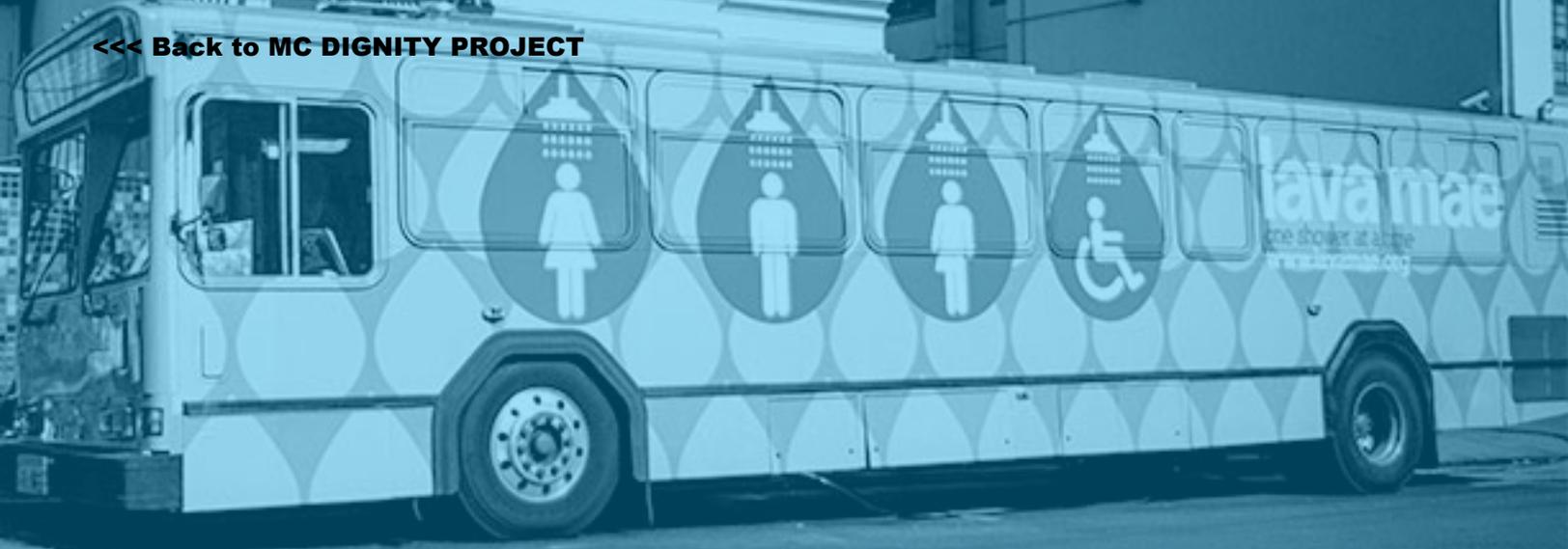


## The "Transformative" Experience of Taking a Shower

NEW YORK TIMES  
APRIL 24, 2015 | EMILY CEGIELSKI

As many as 3.5 million people in the United States experience homelessness in a given year, and many great organizations across the country work to combat the problem. But one woman is tackling the issue on an exceptionally incremental level. Toyota's Mother of Invention Doniece Sandoval, founder of Lava Mae, spoke Thursday at the Women in the World Summit.

[READ MORE](#)



You can change the world with a hot bath, if you sink into it from a place of knowing that you are worth profound care, even when you're dirty and rattled." ~ Anne Lamott

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