

## On the Verge of Homelessness

Saul is 49 and lives with his wife and child. Before COVID-19, Saul and his wife worked 2 jobs each in order to be able to pay all their bills. After the pandemic hit, Saul found himself without any jobs. He was able to negotiate paying his March rent in installments but wasn't sure what he was going to do when it was time to pay April's rent. He was spending sleepless nights because now he and his family were going to be homeless. He only had \$200 in savings with which he was buying moving boxes. When he came to WVCS for help, he admitted that he was embarrassed to apply for anything because he has always worked in order to make ends meet.



**But thanks to you, Saul and his family are not homeless. They are now current on their rent, and Saul is focused on looking for a new job. This kind of help is possible because of your support.**

## COVID-19 Cuts Deep at a Community Already in Crisis

*"I have nowhere to go."  
"I have no money and no job."  
"I'm not prepared for this."  
"I don't know what to do."*

These simple words tell the harrowing story of the impact COVID-19 is having on the most vulnerable members of our community.

While all of us are facing challenges as the result of the global pandemic, the coronavirus has had a **disparate impact on the lives of low-income families**. Silicon Valley was already in the midst of a severe housing crisis, and despite the high level of wealth in our region, a growing number of individuals and families were experiencing the horrors of poverty, hunger, and homelessness.

Then COVID-19 hit - and took everyone by surprise. In addition to clients who had already been coming to us for help, we are seeing an influx of new clients who had been working

in the hardest-hit industries. We have seen restaurant workers, taxi drivers, gardeners, daycare employees - all coming to us for the first time ever for assistance with food and rent. The coronavirus has left them without a job and unable to find new employment. We see the fear in their eyes and hear the desperation in the voices. It's about more than just putting food on the table. They are coming to us to help them **survive through this crisis**.

As an essential business, we have been operating continuously throughout the pandemic, providing food, rental assistance, information, and referrals to the growing number of people coming to us for help. However, COVID-19 has required us to shift the way we deliver services, and in order to keep our clients, volunteers, and staff safe, we have made the following changes:

- Transitioned to pre-bagging of groceries for clients.
- Launched a new doorstep drop-off program for seniors and adults with medical conditions that put them at greater risk if they are exposed to coronavirus.
- Transformed the lobby into a pantry extension to enable us to pack more food and maintain a 6 foot distance between volunteers and staff.
- Moved case management online and over the phone, enabling us to continue to help clients and keep them safe at the same time.
- Implemented social distancing protocols, limiting the number of people who can be in the pantry, lobby, and offices.

None of this would have been possible without the support of our incredible community of donors, partners, and ►

volunteers. Our clients have been truly touched by the outpouring of support and compassion. Rita, an out of work hairstylist, sent this note of thanks for the support she received:

*"Today I called the leasing office and my rent is paid in full. It feels like a dream but this dream became the most beautiful reality. All I can say is I'm speechless and can't thank you enough for being here for me. I have no one, nobody to ask for help and you took care of me in this storm. You have given me hope and saved my life."*

COVID-19 is truly an unprecedented and life-changing challenge - one that we are all struggling with in our own way. But this difficult time will pass. When it does, what will remain is **the impact your compassionate support** has had on the lives of our most vulnerable residents. On behalf of Rita, and all of our clients, thank you for bringing hope during this most difficult time.

## COVID-19 Client Impact By The Numbers (as of May 24, 2020)

Last fiscal year, WVCS saw **1,070** new clients over **12 months**.

By comparison, we have had

**729**  
new clients since **March 16**.

WVCS has seen a

**474%**  
increase in new clients year over year.

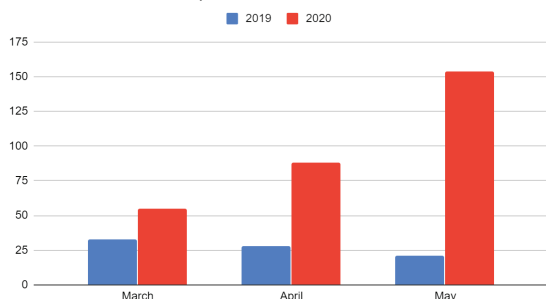
We have experienced a

**262%**  
increase in requests for rental assistance year over year.

**1400+** boxes of food have been distributed at West Valley College.

**50** clients are now receiving home delivery of food, a new program launched in **April 2020**.

Rental Assistance Requests Year over Year



## Changes Coming to Back to School Program



Big changes are coming to Back to School 2020 - and we want you to be the first to know how we plan to continue to offer this program while keeping our clients, volunteers and staff safe.



At a typical Back to School program, children are paired with an adult volunteer chaperone who assists them with choosing the clothing they need for school. Afterward, they are given a backpack, supplies, and breakfast. Unfortunately, that format is not possible this year.

Instead, we will be assembling packages made of backpacks and gift cards at our office. We are reaching out to the community for volunteers to do contactless drop off of backpacks and gift cards on our client's doorsteps. We are also seeking donors to "adopt" the kids and enable us to purchase the items they need to prepare for school in the fall.

The COVID-19 shelter in place has left many more families struggling with the sudden loss of income and jobs. We are anticipating more demand and expect to serve at least 250 children in TK through 12th grade this year.

To find out how you can help, contact Bobbi Bornstein at [volunteer@wvcommunityservices.org](mailto:volunteer@wvcommunityservices.org).

## 10th Annual Chefs of Compassion Cooking for a Cause

Dear Friends, In light of the COVID-19 crisis, Chefs of Compassion 2020 will be postponed to the following year.

While we are sad to make this announcement, we believe it is the prudent choice as your health and safety is of utmost importance to us. Once it is safe, we intend to have a grand celebration for our 10th year, in 2021.

We certainly hope you will join us!



Now in 2021



## Donor Spotlight: Scott Ellis donor, consultant, and strategist



**Q: WVCS is so lucky that you found us. Tell us how that transpired.**

Scott: I live a few minutes from West Valley Community Services, but knew nothing about the organization. One weekend my wife and I took a different route for our usual morning walk. We saw the building and said, "What is this place? It looks nice!"

Later I looked up the website and liked what I saw, so I decided to check it out. Kohinoor invited me to come for a tour, and she helped me realize how much hunger and housing are real challenges in our community. I met with Josh, and they both invited me to engage as a thought partner. Eventually my son Ryan (age 15) also got involved in researching avenues to increase awareness of WVCS.

**Q: You are highly skilled in strategic planning, finance, operations, and consulting. You and your wife not only became donors, but you are going above and beyond to help WVCS strategize for the future. What inspired you to engage so deeply?**

Scott: I have been very impressed by Josh and Kohinoor. Not only are their hearts in the right place, but they are also extremely focused, realistic, and effective. Over the last several years I have advised dozens of nonprofit leaders, and Josh and Kohinoor are some of the best I have encountered. After meeting them and seeing their vision, I decided to get engaged more deeply by working with them on their strategic plan and execution processes. My personal mission is to advise nonprofit executives, and they have been great in their follow-through and engagement.

**Q: Tell us more about your personal mission and your message to the community.**

Scott: My personal mission is to help kind and grateful people make a significant positive difference in the U.S. I like to advise nonprofit executives and help them succeed. Honestly, I usually like to use my skills to help nonprofits that "cure" things rather than those that provide "treatment" for problems. But with WVCS I realized how many people in our community simply need food and housing--until these issues are addressed, people cannot possibly think of taking the next steps forward in their lives. Hunger and homelessness are critical issues in our community.

**\* WVCS is extremely grateful to Scott and the whole Ellis family for making a true difference in the community!**

## Senior Food Delivery Program: Groceries-To-Go

As the COVID-19 pandemic posed an extra risk to our community's seniors and folks with health challenges, our team realized we needed to find a new way to get food to the people who need it the most.

So in late March, we launched Groceries-To-Go, which provided weekly contactless food drop-offs on the doorsteps of food-insecure seniors and adults with other health challenges that are unable to come to one of our food pantries due to the pandemic.

Our staff works with clients to create food bags that meet their individual nutritional needs. Each free bag includes milk, high fiber cereal or oats, brown rice, peanut butter, canned vegetables, low sodium soups, eggs, meat, fresh vegetables, and fruit. Once a delivery time is set, volunteers assemble and deliver the grocery bags to the client's doorstep.

We are currently delivering food to 50 households, with the number increasing weekly, including Kia, who says, *"Thank you for this, it really helps. I haven't needed to leave my home in a month. Thank you for your patience with all my requests. You all are doing so much. Thank you!"*

The Groceries-To-Go program is not only helping to put food on the tables of our community's oldest and most vulnerable residents, but it is also helping low-income seniors stay healthy, avoid homelessness, and maintain a good quality of life that promotes long term mental and physical well being.



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## WVCS Legacy Society

**DID YOU KNOW: Even a gift in your will of 1% of your estate can make a difference!**

Making a donation to West Valley Community Services in your will leaves a legacy of your values, and makes it possible for you to continue to support a cause you care about. As a member of our Legacy Society, you can:

- Allow your personal values to make a lasting impact on the community
- Help West Valley Community Services continue to fight hunger and homelessness in your community
- Inspire others to join in your commitment

**To find out how you can become a member of the WVCS Legacy Society, please contact Kohinoor Chakravarty at [kohinoorc@wvcommunityservices.org](mailto:kohinoorc@wvcommunityservices.org) or 408.366.6096.**

## Interview with WVCS Volunteer Mallika Thoppay

**Q: Tell us a little bit about yourself and why you chose to volunteer here at WVCS?**

Mallika: I am a software engineer and entrepreneur by background, currently spending time volunteering in the community and taking care of my family. I chose to volunteer at WVCS as I have always wanted to contribute to helping in a crisis situation. As we are currently in the COVID crisis, WVCS was one of the few places accepting volunteers, it proved to be the ideal opportunity right at my doorstep.

**Q: How have the changes that WVCS made for its food distribution due to the COVID Virus affected you as a volunteer?**

Mallika: As I have not volunteered before COVID, I am not aware of exactly what has changed. However, I can say that we have a fairly streamlined process of getting our donations out to the community at this time. We are well prepared with an adequate number of bags before the clients come out. We do our best to honor any requests such as gluten-free and vegan.

**Q: What if anything have you learned about yourself through this volunteer experience?**

Mallika: Since we live in the mostly well-to-do bubble of Silicon Valley, it was an eye-opener for me to see how much of a need there is for food distribution. When I went grocery shopping, I always wondered and shuddered to think of how many groceries go to waste when people don't buy them... especially at stores that offer organic items that are easily perishable. It is wonderful to be able to be in a position that allows me to contribute to solving a problem that I myself saw.

**Q: What has been a particular bright spot for you in the past few weeks?**

Mallika: I have been working on checking in clients. I particularly enjoy this as it gives me an opportunity to interact with clients. It was heartwarming when on two different days, donors walked right up and generously handed over donation checks of \$2,500 and \$10,000 respectively!



Like us... follow us... engage with us... WVCS is online!

## A Thank You to Our Compassionate Community

**Our deepest thanks to the foundations, corporations, cities, and individual donors who made a contribution to support our community's most vulnerable residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

A Gift in Honor of Mrs. Padmavathi  
& Mr. K.V. Ramakrishna  
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**A special thank you to the employees of the following companies that generously matched donations.**

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*List assembled 5.24.2020. West Valley Community Services does not print the names of individual donors or family foundations without permission.*

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