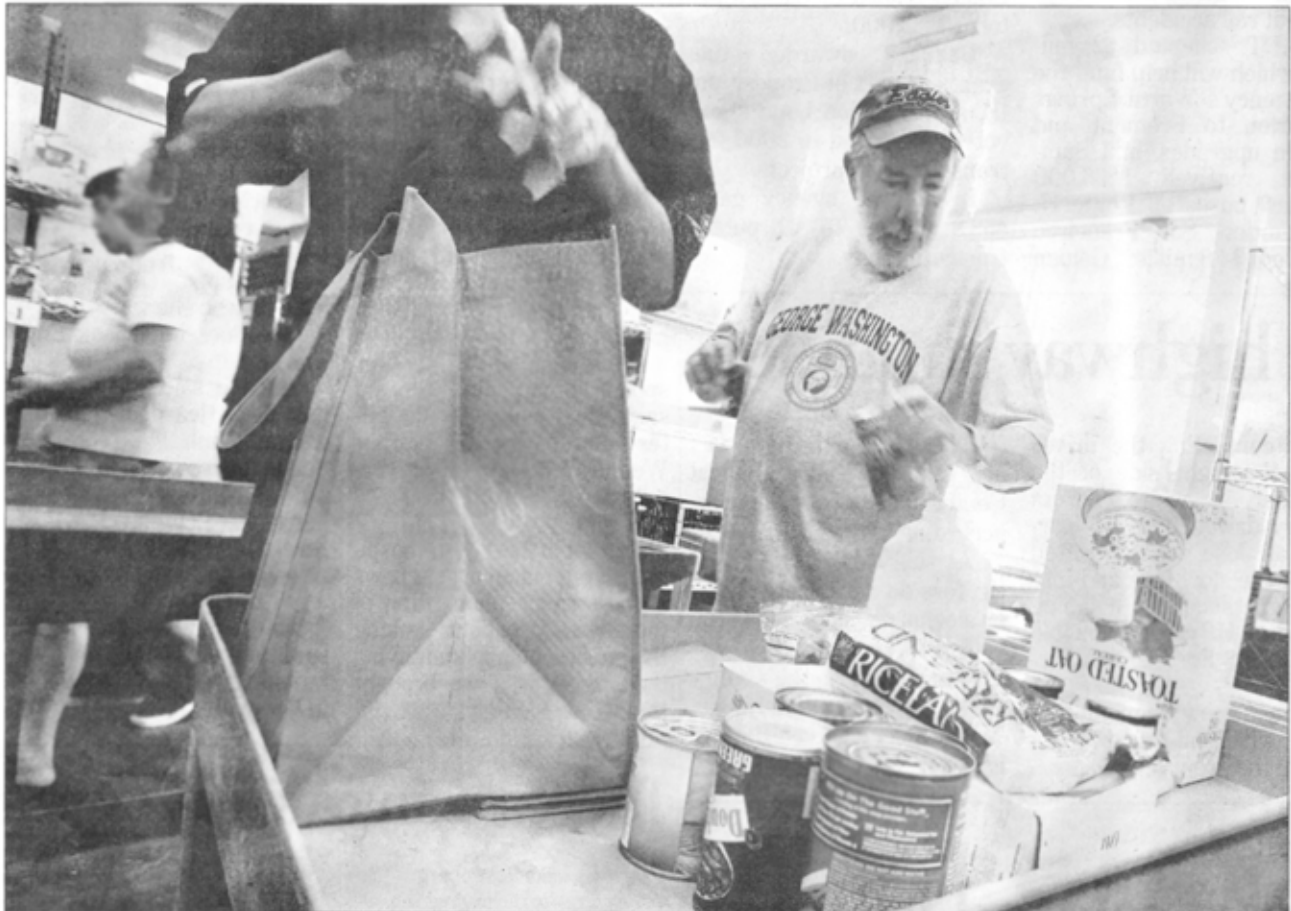


OUR COMMUNITIES IN BRIEF



JACQUELINE RAMSEYER/BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

Volunteer Dr. Peter Kaufman, right, helps a food pantry client fill his reusable grocery bags with food for his family of four at the West Valley Community Services food pantry in Cupertino.

Reusable food bags sought

By Matt Wilson

Bay Area News Group

West Valley Community Services wants 1,200 reusable shopping bags to curb the number of disposable bags used by the nonprofit group's food pantry that serves needy residents in Cupertino, San Jose, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno and some unincorporated areas in Santa Clara County.

Its goal is to give each of its 400 client households three reusable bags to carry their food home from the pantry.

The drive comes as the center faces a possible 82 percent funding cut. San Jose is looking to balance a \$119 million budget deficit and could stop contributing to the program. Cupertino and other communities that contribute to the program will continue to receive assistance, but the budget cut will have a far-reaching impact on the center.

Naomi Nakano-Matsumoto, West Valley Community Services executive director, said 43 percent of the group's approximately

6,000 clients reside in West San Jose and services could dry up for that area as early as July.

Collecting bags will help with some of the center's costs, said Faith McCarthy, a program coordinator for the nonprofit.

"When we initially approached this, it was an operations issue. We go through them really, really quickly," McCarthy said.

With so many clients coming through the pantry each week and more on the way, there will always be

a need for efficient ways to carry food home.

"There have been times where we have completely run out and we don't have room in our operating budget to get more," said McCarthy. "The bag need is going to be ongoing because even if we get each of our households three bags, we still have new clients coming in all the time and these things will wear out," she said.

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