



Haven to Home
PAGE 2



Service Learning: the new trend
PAGE 3



Sharing a Success Story
PAGE 4

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A Caring Project

Many of West Valley Community Services' supporters remember the agency's origin as the vision of three nurses who observed a need for food and rose to meet it. This founding principle of looking to our community to identify and address its most pressing needs has led to the continued development of WVCS programs, most recently with expansion of project CARE (Community Access to Resources and Education).

When basic needs agencies across the county began to rumble with the latest data that only 40% of eligible households in Santa Clara County were accessing CalFresh (food stamps) benefits, the staff at West Valley Community Services were already in the midst of an intervention to bridge the gap. Through project CARE, WVCS pre-screens clients for CalFresh eligibility and completes the application on-site through a partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank. As a result, WVCS clients are able to determine whether or not they can receive the benefit, schedule an appointment to apply, and even file their formal application *without ever stepping foot* in the Social Services Agency. Dennis Stewart, Regional Director of US Department of Agriculture, highlights the importance of this kind of coordinated effort;



noting that many households would not sign up for the benefit unless it is offered through a trusted community partner, such as WVCS. His observation has been supported by the immense relief clients have expressed about accessing this valuable service. Of course, food is not the only unmet need in the community. As the recession's impact continues to linger, many households are finding themselves experiencing the

challenges of surviving on low or no income for the first time. These households are at an especially high risk for missing out on services such as healthcare or free/reduced price school lunches for children. Here again, project CARE is able to intervene to bring health and wellness services to WVCS clients through educational workshops or application clinics onsite. For individuals that need an extra hand along the way, comprehensive case management is also offered to support them as they learn about available resources for the first time. However, WVCS' services do not stop with project CARE. In keeping with the three nurses' vision to address our community's immediate needs, WVCS understands that health services alone are not sufficient. To find out more, visit us at www.wvcommunityservices.org.

The stepping stone for Haven to Home

Haven to Home (HTH) program addresses the needs of homeless individuals and families while helping them secure permanent, affordable housing in the west valley. The main goals of this program are for homeless clients to secure permanent housing, maintain employment, and enhance income opportunity. In 2010, WVCS served 85 homeless families and couples.

The 2011 Homeless Point In Time survey counts an estimated 7,042 individuals experiencing homelessness in Santa Clara County. Out of these individuals, 73% were



An estimated 7,042 individuals experience homelessness in Santa Clara County nightly. provided him with case management and transitional housing. Now Ernest has a part-time job, is sober and is living in our transitional housing program. His health has improved and his next goal is to reunite with his children and gain their trust back.

To have your own place seems like a dream for most of our HTH clients. All of them expressed what it feels like to wake up in the morning knowing that there is a place to cook, eat, and take a shower. That feeling of stability has motivated some of them to become productive citizens in the community. Matt moved into his own apartment in July after living 10 years on the streets. He quickly turned around his life and worked towards his recovery of alcohol addiction. Matt got his driver's license and connected with his son. Matt is now helping others who have been on the street and getting them motivated to be housed. Matt is starting his own window cleaning business and helping out at St. Lukes Church, the church

that provided him the support system when he needed it the most.

WVCS' HTH program this year was able to place 29 homeless clients into permanent housing. We wouldn't be able to do this work without the various community partners who contributed to the success of this program including Trinity Church, the UPLIFT program, AACI and the Goodwill Internship program.

WVCS strives to become a one-stop center and make services such as on-site mental health counseling (through AACI), Benefit Clinics, Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and free or reduced school lunch more accessible and available to clients.

Our work to eliminate homelessness has not ended. If you feel compassionate about this cause and want to help the most vulnerable citizens of our community, please contact us to find out how you can help our Haven to Home program through volunteerism or donations.

Ernest had a house before but his problems with alcohol caused him to lose everything including his children.

on the streets and 27% were in shelter facilities such as emergency shelter, transitional housing, and safe havens. The main focus of our work has been to help the unsheltered population find housing and help move them into permanent housing. This program is meant to help people like Ernest. Ernest came in to WVCS as a referral from the Fire Department because of his health condition. Ernest had a house before, but his problems with alcohol caused him to lose everything including his children. He came to WVCS because he did not know which direction to go. WVCS

Donald's Story

Although Donald had been a long-term food pantry client, he had always assumed that he was ineligible for CalFresh benefits. One day when he was waiting for the food pantry, a CalFresh Outreach Volunteer approached him and offered to complete a pre-screen. Donald was amazed to discover that he was eligible for over \$300 a month in benefits. Donald has since successfully applied for the benefit and is expecting his EBT card in the next two weeks. With hundreds of dollars a month spent on medical expenses, the \$300 that he will save on food will make an enormous difference in his economic well-being.

Learning through service



Summer Youth Volunteer Club members Ken Saxton, Evan Noronha, and Elliott Perreira plan group projects over the summer including food drives and charity fun run event.

In the last decade there have been a growing number of high school students participating in volunteer work in their communities. Some of this can be attributed to the increasingly competitive college admission process and a student's need to stand apart from his or her classmates, but most of the increase is directly linked to recent high school district-imposed graduation requirements. Today's high school students are often required to complete 10 to 25 hours of community service annually in order to graduate. The school districts' hopes in implementing these requirements are to expose their students to the world outside of their classroom and in turn, provide non-profits like West Valley Community Services (WVCS) a replenishing supply of much-needed volunteer support.

There is no doubt that non-profits have benefited from these programs but with a flood of students pressured to satisfy graduation requirements comes a few obstacles for the organizations that host them. Our goal shouldn't be to simply expose our youth to the real world but to give them meaningful and practical experience that they can apply to their education. This notion of 'service learning,' in which volunteerism is viewed as part of an overall

educational curriculum, is a popular trend in community service programs and one in which WVCS will continue to explore more of in the future.

In response to this growing trend, WVCS launched the Summer Youth Volunteer Club (SYVC) in May 2010. The SYVC is a youth based community service club run entirely by high-school aged volunteers. The club gives its members the opportunity to take leadership roles, plan a summer's worth of service projects and develop a better understanding of low-income families in their community and their struggle towards self-sufficiency. The results have been astounding. In only two years the SYVC has had their hand in fundraising, organizing food drives, planning an annual charity fun-run, outreaching to new volunteers, painting client rooms, staffing special events and filling volunteer shifts in the food pantry, office, and front desk. While the club was originally designed to be a summer club, much of their work has expanded into the school year showing a great deal of dedication towards WVCS' mission. If you are interested in learning more about the volunteer program at WVCS or how you can become more involved, please contact WVCS at volunteer@wvcommunityservices.org or at (408)255-8033 ext 303.



Thank You to our 2011 Taste of Compassion Participating Restaurants

Thank you to everyone who has participated in our Taste of Compassion program this year. Stay tuned for our next featured restaurant in January 2012!



Cupertina Bakery

BOWL MOR
LANES



SUSHI HANA



Pedro's
RESTAURANT & CANTINA



WINCHESTER CHEF

For more information about Taste of Compassion, visit www.tasteofcompassion.org or call (408) 255-8033 x152.

Another success story...

Phillip and Sophia came to WVCS in the midst of physical and financial problems that had been plaguing them for years. Sophia had been fighting a long term battle with lymphoma and recently learned that she may have bone cancer, while Phillip badly needed a knee replacement but was too afraid to get the surgery due to the uncertainty of their financial crisis. They couldn't afford their utilities, were a month behind on rent, and several days earlier had been given a 3-day notice to pay or leave. During good times, Phillip had helped others to invest their money wisely while his wife managed their home. As the couples' health declined and business faltered during the recession, they found themselves struggling to keep afloat. Phillip and Sophia came to WVCS to get help with their utilities, food and applied for Below Market Rate housing. They now have a shot at a happy ending. They regularly tell their case manager that they can't express their gratitude for the services they have received enough. They are truly a testament to the success of health, home, and heart services coming together to meet the needs of households in crisis.

WVCS

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WVCS has a new look!

Introducing WVCS' new logo

As you may have noticed we have slowly started to introduce a new logo that better reflects the programs and services that West Valley Community Services provides. We hope you like our fresh new look!



HEALTH • HOME • HEART

West Valley Community Services



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West Valley Community Services

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