

# FOUNDING HISTORY OF WEST VALLEY COMMUNITY SERVICES From 1972 through 2011





West Valley Community Services came into existence because of the spirit and energy of three public health nurses assigned to Cupertino. They were Harriet Jackson, Julie Venkus and Sue Borgstorm. The three women recognized the need for a central place where people could go seeking information and help. They decided to call a meeting of Cupertino residents to discuss it further, and they wrote an invitational article for the Cupertino Courier.

Approximately 20 people attended a 'brown bag' luncheon meeting held on March 3, 1972 at the Northwest YMCA. Representatives from the city, county, schools, churches, Salvation Army, service clubs and interested citizens attended. The formative committee included Catherine Gasich, Vi Kinghorn, Dot Nordheim, Barbara Rogers, Betty Sellers, Reed Sparks, Ken & Betty Stanger, Joe Tembrock, Marion Tibbets and others. Believing we, in Cupertino, should take care of the needy in our own community, the group decided to form an agency to be called Cupertino Roundup because it was an accurate description and evocative name.

The City of Cupertino, with the leadership of Cupertino City Councilman Jim Jackson, donated the seed money needed to get the Cupertino Roundup started. It seemed a good omen that the first office space was a spare classroom donated by Principal Kaye Fisk of the Cupertino Union School District. Later help came from the Department of Social Services. The first full month of operation was August 1973, and referrals for assistance were made to 14 families. The office initially was open four hours a day, and 100-125 phone calls were received and made to connect individuals and families with mental health services, housing, child care, emergency food, clothing and transportation. Later, a small office, with telephone service donated, was rented off Blaney Avenue.

The original Board of Directors included Catherine Gasich (King's Daughters), Harriet Jackson, Joe Tembrock (St. Joseph of Cupertino Church), Susan Fuller (Cupertino Library), Vi Kinghorn (United Fund), Harvey



Loew (Cupertino Union School District), Vicki McElroy (De Anza College), Barbara Rogers (American Association of University Women [AAUW], Sunnyvale-Cupertino) and Cyndy Strite (Junior League of San Jose). Harvey Lowe was the first president and Barbara Rogers the second. Joe Tembrock was treasurer. Joe Tembrock also facilitated the donation of chits by St. Joseph of Cupertino Outreach Ministry to Cupertino Community Services, relying on their excellent staff to screen applications for food, gas, clothing, and other essentials.

At first, 'Roundup' was run entirely by volunteers, but it soon was realized that a permanent, paid person also was needed. In 1974, Marilyn Christian was hired as the first director. She set up the agency's policies and procedures, visited local service clubs, etc. to solicit donations to fund the agency's operations and often delivered needed items, herself. Staff member Barbara Jones was a caring case manager and provided continuity over her long tenure. Cupertino Inner Wheel member Linda Walker provided support during transitions. Other past directors were Ruth Platt, Sally Brennan, Jan Stephenson, Mary Ellen Chell and Naomi Nakano-Matsumoto. Currently, the agency is flourishing under Director Josh Selo's leadership.

Cupertino Roundup could not get additional funding from the City of Cupertino and became inactive for approximately two years. In 1976, local attorney Paul Koslow, Barbara Rogers and Joe Tembrock met for many noon luncheons at Hewlett Packard. Barbara Rogers with Paul Koslow's help drew up the bylaws, and in 1976 Cupertino Community Services (formerly Cupertino Roundup) was incorporated as a nonprofit organization. Free rent for five years was obtained from the Cupertino Union Church for use of its Rainbow Room. The agency next was housed at the First Baptist Church on Miller Avenue. In 1985, Optimist Club of Cupertino member. Dennis Whittaker organized an annual barbeque at Cupertino's Blackberry Farm that was a major source of revenue for many years. In 1990, a room in the City's newly-constructed Quinlan Community Center was made available for a full-service food pantry thanks to the good offices of City Manager Bob Quinlan.



The Rotating Shelter founded in 1991 by Kathy Edwards was part of Cupertino Community Services. It provided food, housing and counseling for some 15 homeless men in Cupertino-area churches and a synagogue. In 1996, a fourplex was purchased to provide housing for homeless men, women and children. In 2002, Dorothy Stow, Cupertino Chamber of Commerce board member, was able to obtain a major endowment from the Burrel Leonard estate.

Executive Director Mary Ellen Chell held exploratory talks with City Planning Director Bob Cowan, who suggested a multi-use project, and with Fire Chief Doug Sporleder, requesting donation of the excess land after construction of the new fire station on Vista Avenue. In 1999, these discussions led to a project that resulted in Vista Village which opened in 2003. This provided a permanent place for Cupertino Community Services, 24 units of affordable housing and a food pantry. Sandy James from the City Council was an initial champion. Cupertino National Bank President Don Allen and Cupertino Councilmembers Richard Lowenthal and Dolly Sandoval were key organizers. Cupertino Rotarian Dick Lohmiller did an excellent job as project manager. The Reading Nook was created for the use of children coming with their parents to Vista Village and was funded from a bequest by Carol McDowell, League of Women Voters of Cupertino-Sunnyvale. This memorial was administered by Sharon Blaine, AAUW Sunnyvale-Cupertino, who with Barbara Rogers, chose the project and selected the location.

Originally, the agency served the area comprising the Cupertino Union School District with the main focus on Cupertino. Over time, service was expanded to West Valley communities. In 2008, Cupertino Community Services changed its name to West Valley Community Services to better reflect the communities it serves.

On November 19, 2011, the first Annual Chefs of Compassion: Cooking for a Cause fundraiser was held. It is an excellent fundraiser that brings the entire



community together.

West Valley Community Services (Cupertino Roundup – Cupertino Community Services) has been taken to heart by the community from the first. The Cupertino Chamber of Commerce has honored the following board members and director as Cupertino Citizens of the Year: Board Members Steve Andrews, Catherine Gasich, Phyllis Ishida, Michael Lashen, Richard Lowenthal, Barbara Nunes, Barbara Rogers, Dolly Sandoval, Dean Skeels, Lauralee Sorensen, Darryl Stow, Dorothy Stow, Joe Tembrock, Linda Walker and Dennis Whittaker and Director Sally Brennan.

WVCS is grateful to Barbara Rogers and Joe Tembrock for putting together the history of our leaders and founding members.

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