COVID-19 IMPACT REPORT
The United Ways of California’s Central Valley

United Way Fresno and Madera Counties
United Way of Kern County
Kings United Way
United Way of Merced County
United Way of San Joaquin County
United Way of Stanislaus County
United Way of Tulare
From San Joaquin County to the North, and Kern County to the South, California’s Central Valley is a region that is not only rich in agriculture - it is rich in community spirit. Hardworking individuals, businesses and our collection of dedicated nonprofit organizations have worked tirelessly to build community, impact people’s lives and serve as a catalyst for change in every Central Valley region where our United Way’s exist.

This community spirit is led by United Ways of California’s Central Valley that make up the ten counties throughout the Central Valley. Each with a clear vision and passionate mission to serve their communities, collectively they all reflect a culture of giving time and resources to non-profit organizations, the marginalized and the disenfranchised. They have always been an essential part of the communities they serve. Individually strong, they represent more than 495 years of dedicated support within the Central Valley.
During the most disrupted time in recent history, the commitment to serve and advocate for their communities never faltered – if anything, it grew exponentially throughout the organizations. In the midst of COVID-19, it became even more evident, as the inequity of social and economic issues rose to the forefront. These issues became a driving force for many to pause, study and look at new and more effective ways, to not only change their organizational structure, but change the way they served the people in their communities. Both individually and collectively, the seven regions representing ten counties, the United Way’s across California’s Central Valley rose far above the challenge. The impact they had throughout COVID-19 was significant, especially for those who had the greatest need.

The reality of COVID-19 was beyond a health crisis – it created homelessness, food insecurities, joblessness, and significant financial obstacles. The United Ways of California’s Central Valley received an outpouring of financial support during this worldwide pandemic. A generous and significant anonymous donor, many businesses, organizations, community leaders, and governmental agencies made significant contributions. These funds allowed each region to collaborate and respond quickly to the individual needs of their county. Collaborating with city and county leaders, other non-profit organizations, and service organizations allowed them to broaden their reach. Together, they were able to provide significant support and financial help to individuals, families and non-profits who experienced job loss, and food insecurities. It also opened many eyes to the unrealized needs of individuals, families, and senior citizens in their communities.

To add to this unprecedented time, the Central Valley also experienced the worst fire season in California history. Whether the dense, thick smoke was from the Northern California fires, or the local fires in the Sierra Nevada just east of Madera, Fresno and Tulare Counties, the Central Valley lived up to its geographic definition of a valley. The elongated low area running between mountains was the perfect vessel to hold the heat, smoke and ash that lingered for several long months.

Amidst all this turmoil, the United Ways of California’s Central Valley were eager to step up and fill in the service gap, especially where other organizations were spread thin. As you read through the stories of each region within the Central Valley, you will find common threads of collaboration, service, energy, strength - and often-times - tears from heartbreak, as well as tears of joy. Furthermore, you will feel and experience the caring, determined spirit of dedicated staff members and volunteers who worked tirelessly to make a significant difference in the lives of the families and individuals in their communities. Although each County provided a broad range of services throughout the pandemic, each chose to share their most significant, impactful stories.

Despite these compelling stories of hope, the work is far from being completed! United Ways of California’s Central Valley is committed to working hard to broaden their vision to embrace the needs of the underserved and the marginalized. With strong support from local businesses, corporate funding, and state, city and county assistance, their goal to create a better world will continue one region at a time.
UNITED WAY FRESNO AND MADERA COUNTIES
Living United

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, United Way Fresno and Madera Counties (UWFMC) rallied their then-eight-person crew and quickly adapted to the traditional model of response, recovery, and rebuild. They established their first round of Coronavirus relief within weeks of the first shelter-in-place orders and set to work distributing PPE and disaster go-bags to local agencies, government partners, and clients.

In addition to COVID-19, 2020 found the Fresno-Madera team dealing with the aftermath of the single largest wildfire in California history and an increasingly clear knowledge of how disasters disproportionately impact communities of Color. It quickly became apparent to

“We’ve seen the COVID pandemic discriminate against People of Color because our system is inherently discriminatory. We have accepted as normal systemic racism, extreme poverty, and institutionalized cycles of oppression and discrimination for far too long. There is still this push for a return to ‘normal’. Some of us are working overtime to develop a roadmap for a new normal. One where race is not the lead indicator of mortality, poverty, health, or privilege.

- Lindsay Fox, President / CEO
United Way Fresno and Madera Counties
the UWFMC team that things would not go back to “normal” because they were fighting what they refer to as ‘many pandemics at once.’ This inspired a reimagining of their LIVE UNITED mantra including a new mission statement and bold shift in their organizational focus.

Applications for the first round of United Way Fresno and Madera Counties’ Coronavirus Relief Fund, which issued direct cash payments to help those affected most during the early stages of the pandemic. Funds received from the generous gift from an anonymous donor, along with acquiring additional funds gave them the opportunity to distribute cash for rental assistance, PPE, and funding to local food banks to meet their increased demand.

Seeing a spike in calls to their 211 helpline throughout the pandemic lead to the next step in their transformation. They enlisted help from their friends at Reading and Beyond to put Super Reverse 211 into play: a program design to call back 211 users after their initial needs are addressed, to ensure gaps in care are being attended to, and distribute information about all available resources in their area.

This work led to a clearer reality emerging during the early days of COVID-19: the UWFM team started to notice that Black, Indigenous, and other community members of Color seemed to be facing more (and harsher) inequities from the pandemic than their White counterparts at disturbingly disproportionate rates. To truly “LIVE UNITED” they needed to shift their focus to addressing the racial wealth gap to meet the greatest needs of their neighbors.

From there, the Fresno and Madera Counties team ramped up the development of their Prosperity Coaching Model. With guidance from Circles USA and the Fresno DRIVE Initiative (Developing the Region’s Inclusive and Vibrant Economy), prosperity coaching provides even more extensive support for community members seeking to move out of financial solvency into financial abundance. The approach focuses on providing intensive and comprehensive support to households, while simultaneously working to change policies and systems that challenge working families and keep them poor. Prosperity coaches support goal setting, educate on financial literacy, and provide households with connections to information, services, and advisors to build wealth. Depending on the individual, coaching can include addressing cash flow, employment, building connections (social capital), and providing access to resources like emergency loans, mobile banking, and comprehensive financial capability training.
United Way Fresno and Madera Counties

Coming out of 2020, the team at United Way Fresno and Madera Counties has emerged with hope and excitement for a bold new chapter in their organization. They are working to rebalance systems that for too long created the vast inequities that impact communities of Color and rural communities, which were amplified by COVID-19 and the Creek Fire. United Way Fresno and Madera Counties envisions an equitable world, one with limitless possibilities and prosperity. Their strong work ethic, deep passion, and expanding team will help guide such efforts moving forward, ensuring they move even closer to achieving this goal.

COVID FUNDING

$3,879,792

Agencies Funded

10

Rent/Utilities/Mortgage Assistance

$2,000,000

Individuals

1,400

Families

920

Funds For Food Banks

$140,000

Number of Meals

Individuals

17,500

PPE Provided

Masks Distributed

220,000 Masks

Hand Sanitizers

60,000 Units

For funding reports, and to view photo galleries and videos, visit: www.uwfmc.org

United Way Fresno and Madera Counties
4949 East Kings Canyon Road
Fresno, California 93727
559-244-5710
UNITED WAY OF KERN COUNTY
The Unexpected Blessings

COVID-19 brought the United Way of Kern County (UWKC) an unexpected blessing. Through the pandemic, they not only worked alongside many agencies, but partnered with them and community members to make a collective impact throughout their county.

When the pandemic closed their mobile sites, sending their staff to work remotely, they paused to strategize how they would move forward. Then, a generous anonymous donation, as well as other sources of funding, were received that opened up many opportunities to serve. Knowing

During COVID-19, my disabled son had become very depressed. When he heard about these meals, he told me, “Let’s go help.” They began volunteering every day. Because of this volunteering, his depression lifted. He experienced unexpected personal growth and an appreciation for volunteering on behalf of his community.

- A proud dad
they wanted to engage staff and collaborate with educators, volunteers and community members, they began planning outreach projects that would make a big impact.

Feeding the people of their communities became their primary goal. From local families and essential workers, to the rural communities throughout the county and senior citizens without transportation, they began planning the distribution of what would total more than 60,000 meals.

One of the larger employers in the area, Marriott’s, had to close during the pandemic. Staff reached out to Marriott’s and shared the idea of feeding the community. Loving the idea, Marriott’s rallied their staff (they had all been laid off) and they were excited to come back to work and serve the community.

Even in the heat of Kern County—the drive-thru evening meal distribution in the parking lot of Marriott’s became a daily event. For six weeks, an atmosphere of positivity, gratefulness and compassion could be felt from the individuals and families lined up in their cars for the evening meals. The upbeat festive music, and the compassionate volunteers who served and listened to, not only stories of suffering, but stories of thankfulness, were appreciated. Each ‘dinner guest’ received a delicious, boxed meal, cold water and utensils. It was as if everyone said, “You know what? We are struggling, and we are doing our best to deal with this.” Yet, through the smiles and graciousness, the volunteers knew that no kind of compensation could offer the sense of joy they experienced. These evening meal distributions were not only for those who were financially suffering, they were also for the essential workers, the health care workers and the police officers on their way home from work. The experience was also a benefit for those serving and giving back to their community—as their joy was their reward for giving back.

The last day serving meals was bittersweet. One recipient said, as he drove through on the final distribution day, “For six weeks the volunteers showed up. They could have been at home, but they were here feeding us. We will miss you, but we sure appreciate you. You stuck it out and fed us every day.” At the end of the six-weeks, United Way Kern County held a nice luncheon for the volunteers, Marriott employees, and community organization teams who partnered with them during this impactful project.
United Way of Kern County

The meal distribution broadened to include delivering more than 1,000 meals to rural areas of Bakersfield, as well as delivering directly to the homes of senior citizens without transportation.

Throughout the pandemic, UWKC continued to serve the community in many different ways. They rolled up our sleeves to help those in need. Because of the generosity of the anonymous donor, local businesses, volunteers and community-based partners, the United Way Kern County touched lives. Through this experience, they all stood strong with the community, and created an opportunity to bring everyone together. United Way Kern County is proud to be a leader in the non-profit world.

For funding reports, and to view photo galleries and videos, visit: www.uwkern.org

United Way of Kern County
5405 Stockdale Highway, Suite 200
Bakersfield, California 93309
661-834-1820

COVID FUNDING
$1,703,320

Agencies Funded
30
$353,855

Backpacks with School Supplies
3,400+

Brand New Books Distributed
16,500

Meal Distribution
Individuals
60,000+ meals in 30 days

PPE Provided
Individuals
8,000
Families
3,500
$65,000
Despite the harshness of 2020, we rose above as a community to help those in need and care for our most vulnerable populations. One of my favorite quotes by Patton Oswalt was originally offered under another difficult period in our history. ‘The good outnumber you and we always will.’

- Nanette Villareal, Executive Director
issues during the pandemic became a high priority, particularly for those not able to get support from school-related meals. This included meal delivery to seniors and others considered high risk during the virus outbreak.

The staff at KUW were committed to helping wherever possible because they knew that due to COVID-19, all issues were very important. However, early on they made the decision to put a substantial amount of the funding they received, as well as their time, into helping families keep their homes by providing rental and utility assistance.

They realized that they needed the help and assistance of other organizations to help identify families in need, as well as distribution of the funds. They joined forces with the local Salvation Army – which had the infrastructure to assist with distribution.

Another important partner was Proteus, an organization that provides agricultural and farm workers, and their families, with affordable health care, education assistance and job training. Proteus was able to help identify farm and agricultural workers – giving the staff an opportunity to reach out.

Salvation Army and Proteus, both valuable resources, are well-connected with the individuals and families in Kings County that needed assistance.

Communication throughout this process was important as well. Even though there was a rent moratorium, the team continued to encourage individuals and families to keep their rent current. Even though they are one of the smaller populated counties in the Central Valley, they received more than 4,500 website inquiries and nearly 3,700 calls to 211. It was important to find every avenue possible to keep the community informed about the services that were available.

Rental assistance is an expensive service. It can be as much as $2,000 compared to a $40 food box. Yet, if a family becomes homeless, the cost to get them back into affordable housing is much greater. The future trauma of homelessness can all be avoided by offering the assistance. Ultimately, because of the generous donation from an anonymous donor, as well as other funding sources, Kings United Way provided more than 240 households
with rent or utility assistant or workforce stabilization, allowing them to remain in their homes while hoping to get back to full-time employment.

Last year tested everyone in ways that could not have been imagined. Small businesses struggled to stay afloat while service industry workers saw their jobs vanish in a matter of days. Parents had to figure out ways to work while making sure their children participated in remote learning. Seniors were more isolated than ever, facing serious health risks when leaving their homes to get groceries and prescriptions.

The COVID Relief Fund was established within a matter of days of the onset of the pandemic. Funds have been used to provide rent assistance, utility assistance, worker stabilization funding, food boxes, congregate meals, home delivered meals to seniors, survival kits to the homeless, and activity kits for disabled children. Through it all, the team at Kings United Way worked to stay focused on their core mission: Increase the organized capacity of people to care for one another.

For funding reports, and to view photo galleries and videos, visit: www.kingsunitedway.org

Kings United Way
125 W. 7th Street
Hanford, California 93230
559-584-1536

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agencies Funded</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workforce Stabilization</td>
<td>35+</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPE Provided</td>
<td>20,500 Units</td>
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<td>Number of Food Boxes</td>
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<td>Rental/Utility Assistance</td>
<td>240+ Households</td>
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<td>211 Website Inquiries</td>
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<td>Number of Meals</td>
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<td>Individuals</td>
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<td>Families/Household</td>
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<td>Disabled Children</td>
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<td>Survival Kits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Households</td>
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<td>Homeless Individuals</td>
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COVID brought us together! We’ve made partnerships, very strong partnerships, that previously had not been developed. And it also brought together community partners, pantry partners, and our faith-based partners. We’ve all come together for the greater good of our community. We were able to provide for our community because of the funding and tangibles we received through United Way Merced County. We were very, very grateful for that.

- Janet Kasper, HSA of Merced County

United to Combat the Consequences

Determined people working together can do anything. This concept rings true at United Way of Merced County (UWMC), as it was determination and collaboration that helped them be successful in addressing the immediate needs in their community. It also paved the way to create a new model and process for future success – all built in the midst of a crisis.

When Merced County reached out to the local United Way asking for help to navigate the overwhelming needs that were created because of COVID-19, UWMC soon realized the necessity to help provide clear, widespread communication. Already in strong
relationship with the community-based organizations they had served for decades, they knew they could rely on each other to help fill in the gaps that the County could not accommodate. They united to combat the consequences of COVID-19. All involved were spread thin – the essential workers, the community-based organizations and the County employees. With growing requests for food, rent assistance, educational supplies, UWMC realized they not only needed to organize swiftly, they needed an efficient way to communicate. Navigating a very complex and confusing time would not be for the faint of heart. Determination drove them to rely on the strength of their community. This strategy would bring together those who needed help, and those that wanted to give help.

Utilizing the expertise of a UWMC board member and UC Merced graduate, a platform was created: **Help Hub** – where people could ‘Get Help or Give Help’. Designed to be a simple process, people would sign in and request their specific need, such as food for themselves and families, rent assistance due to their job loss or reduced hours, and so much more. And for those who were wanting to give back to their community, **Help Hub** served as a place to donate money, product, as well as sign up to volunteer. Through volunteerism, product and financial donations, generosity was at a premium.

Utilizing **Help Hub**, UWMC filled the need as ‘the buyer’ for the county to get supplies and PPE to individuals, front line workers and organizations who did not have the additional funds to combat the increased demands over the last year. Through **Help Hub**, UWMC would fulfill the order, or they would send the request to one of their trusted community-based organizations, or refer them to the county, who had sundry items stored in a warehouse. Most importantly, as soon as a request was made through **Help Hub**, it would notify the volunteers – and the response was immediate.

**Help Hub** became like a triage center: identifying the most immediate needs, acting upon the situation and then moving on to the next. **Help Hub** made the communication, and more importantly the relationship possible which opened the doors to feed the hungry, provide rent-relief for those who lost their jobs, deliver PPE supplies. As the program grew, so did the trust.

This trust was especially felt throughout the senior community. With isolation and loneliness being a reality amongst them, the senior delivery program was implemented, providing food and supplies along with a regular check-in from volunteers.

**United Way of Merced County**
Every program, every request, and every delivery sprang from Help Hub. Whether it was the Food Bank filling cupboards throughout the region, or organizations supplying sanitizers and masks – the system proved to be efficient and sustainable.

During this unprecedented time, the UWMC also realized that supporting their community-based organizations was critical. Moving forward, their goal is to continue to help them, so that when life returns to normal, they will still be able to continue the good work they do in their community. The reality of these valuable community-based organizations being so vulnerable encouraged UWMC to create the Workplace Sustainability Program. This will offer these valued partners the educational and financial tools necessary to stay organizationally and financially healthy as they continue serving.

The staff at United Way of Merced was determined to unite and combat the consequences of COVID-19. In doing so they went well beyond what was necessary to unite their community. From those who had the greatest challenges to stay fed and housed to the collaboration of the community-based organizations, county officials, essential works, and the volunteers. All gave generously of their time and talents, and most importantly, their love of community.
Remember, recovery takes time. We are at a place where people are thinking of the future and want to see HOPE. We want to put it out there that UW is a place of HOPE for our community.

- Kristen Spracher-Birtwhistle, President / CEO United Way of San Joaquin County
United Way of San Joaquin County

on marketing campaign, and aligned with City and County health officials in the homeless encampments to provide health screenings, to name a few. The reach was broad, and the hours were extreme.

Although these efforts were made in a variety of areas, the passionate, consistent care and attention to the homeless in San Joaquin County, as well as the shelters and organizations who serve them, became the focus of UWSJC—to reach the most vulnerable population.

In every human being there is a story, a story that needs to be heard of those who are homeless and living on the streets. UWSJC became the voice for the homeless during the pandemic. They created a video series that captured the lives of those living in, and utilizing the services of, the shelters throughout the county. The homeless are people—and they’re a part of this community. Telling their stories highlights the reality that many of those in homeless encampments just need a helping hand in order to get back up and stabilize themselves.

As the nightly team of Public Health, County and City leaders, and even the Animal Protection League, met in the encampments, an undeniable sigh of relief was felt by the encampment community when a doctor, social worker or volunteer became a part of their world. We live in a County where agencies and their staff charged with helping those who are homeless go well beyond their own job descriptions every day to learn the names of each person they encounter, hold their hands, and above all, listen. UWSJC was in the midst of these efforts, working alongside the champions whose expertise, support and connectivity during the time of COVID-19 and beyond, is helping to redirect and support a new path for the unsheltered.

Through daily involvement, they became aware of the much-needed services for behavioral health and assistance with counseling, substance abuse disorder, and supportive measures for temporary housing, with the goal of getting the homeless population into affordable permanent housing. The homeless seniors have many needs as well, including advanced stages of cancer and diabetes, where they’ve lost limbs, have high blood pressure and CFPB. Because they were involved, UWSJC could immediately help them find the necessary services.

The homeless were not informed about what was coming out in the media, and by reaching out, building relationships and trust with them, pathways to intervention, prevention and education were created. This was an important step to help these
individuals; to get them educated, tested, isolated and protected early on. It helped their community in the encampments as well as the community as a whole. These efforts resulted in over 200 individuals being tested for Covid-19 and not one of them came back positive.

As UWSJCs look back over this past year, the impact they had on our most vulnerable homeless population, along with the many other community projects implemented, went beyond their highest expectation. It was because of the generosity of an anonymous donor and many supporters who contributed to the work they have done that they could have this effect.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVID FUNDING</th>
<th>$1,943,467</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agencies Funded</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent For Low Income Individuals and Families</td>
<td>400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food (Meals, Boxes or Vouchers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>20,555</td>
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<td>Families/Households</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPE &amp; Hygiene Kits</td>
<td>Over 100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housed Homeless Veterans</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Vouchers</td>
<td>35</td>
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United Way of San Joaquin County

For funding reports, and to view photo galleries and videos, visit: www.unitedwaysjc.org

United Way of San Joaquin County
777 N. Pershing Avenue, #2B
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209-469-6980
UNITED WAY OF STANISLAUS COUNTY
It is a massive understatement to say 2020 was a year like no other. As we have done for over 6 decades, United Way of Stanislaus County pivoted, persevered, and prepared. A lot was at stake in our County and we were there at the forefront with support.

- Francine Foley, President / CEO
United Way of Stanislaus County

Relationship and trust are significant characteristics in the partnership between United Way of Stanislaus County (UWSC), the many community-based organizations throughout their region, and the community members that they serve.

For more than 65 years, the UWSC has been engaged with, and has provided funding to support a multitude of community-based organizations. During COVID-19, this work not only continued, but it broadened thanks to the generous financial support from an anonymous donor, as well as many other businesses and individuals.

Knowing there was already a need for more community engagement and assistance, the pandemic created unprecedented

United Way of Stanislaus County
concern with regards to connecting and supporting the most vulnerable people in their communities to the services they needed.

During this time, UWSC connected people to resources during COVID-19 not only with funding, but with 211 Stanislaus County. The 211 Call Center went into disaster mode, and UWSC partnered with Stanislaus County to develop a “Pop-Up Call Center”. Calls that came through 211 and needed more specific, detailed Stanislaus County information and support were transferred to the correct County department to assist in their needs. For example, if a caller wanted support with unemployment, they were connected to the County Workforce Development Department for hands on assistance. Calls to 211 Stanislaus were routed to other departments such as Public Health, Health Services Agency (testing, vaccine information), Office of Education Child Care Assistance and more. 211 Stanislaus saw a 34% increase in calls during COVID-19.

They worked closely with their partners—the community-based organizations—to identify and provide funding for individuals, senior citizens, and families. They partnered with Family Resource Centers (FRCs), as their network and broad reach into all areas throughout Stanislaus County created an effective and efficient distribution of essential Covid-19 supplies to the most remote, isolated, and vulnerable citizens. Their thirteen FRC sites are in multiple cities throughout Stanislaus County, one site in Tuolumne County, as well as one site in Calaveras County. Together, with the funding provided by UWSC, and with the FRCs having identified those with the greatest need, they provided direct support countywide. FRCs are not only respected and trusted throughout the region, but they also have deep roots into their neighborhoods. This was made apparent as staff maneuvered with ease in the distribution of food, clothing, gas cards, children’s clothes and shoes, school supplies, support for seniors, infant supplies, utility and rent assistance, PPE, and much more.

With this trusted staff, UWSC was able to assist thousands of people hardest hit by the pandemic. The effect of this changed and saved lives and strengthened community relationships that will be felt for years to come.

**WORKFORCE STABILIZATION**

A portion of the funding also created viable opportunities for struggling non-profits to sustain their organizations as they pivoted their service delivery model to support at risk and isolated clients. Working closely with agencies, UWSC made a systematic plan to work directly with the community-based organizations to address their immediate and critical needs.
The importance of developing a program for Workforce Stabilization was to help nonprofits hit hardest by the pandemic, while they were trying desperately to continue to serve clients in need. Examples of the support given to local agencies was:

**Habitat for Humanity**
- Computers and technology support
- PPE
- Rent payment to assist them keep their Re-Store open. (This store sold housing, lumber, building materials and maintenance supplies to low-income individuals.)

**Enrich and Employ** – a job training program for individuals who had language and disability barriers to employment. Individuals are trained in a working ice cream restaurant.
- Restaurant equipment
- Computer
- Uniforms

**International Rescue Committee** – provided transportation support for low-income households of special immigrant visa community to allow them to continue to work.
- Gas cards for ride sharing
- Funding for bikes and helmets

**LearningQuest** – a literacy program for adults
- 60 Chromebooks to continue virtual ESL classes

**United Cerebral Palsy**
- Landscaping equipment for working landscaping business that provided vocational training and income for individuals with disabilities

The combination of support to individuals and families, as well as support for dozens of local non-profits, played an integral role during COVID-19 – a role United Way of Stanislaus County successfully filled.

For funding reports, and to view photo galleries and videos, visit: [www.uwstan.org](http://www.uwstan.org)
Graciously Extending Compassion

Very early on, the staff of United Way Tulare County (UWTC) realized the need to fulfill the many inquiries about food, financial assistance, and daily supplies, as well as keep people up to date on COVID-19 information.

The community need was great, and the inquiries and requests were overwhelming. This was confirmed when Tulare County officials approached United Way Tulare County to help manage communications with their citizens, and spread the word about their services and COVID-19 related matters.

"It has been an honor to serve alongside so many nonprofits and public entities to support our community during this pandemic and beyond. This coalition has created a partnership that truly is for the greater good.

- Rosemary Caso, President / CEO
United Way of Tulare County
Answering the call from the County, they reached into the community and pulled together forty-nine different organizations to identify the gaps to help individuals and families with whatever they needed. Also being the recipient of funding from a generous anonymous donor and other financial support, they began planning. This resulted in the creation of the Community Care Coalition, a committed and compassionate team of 49 organizations that met every week (and continues meeting) to discuss different topics such as COVID-19 testing updates, how to support local restaurants, schools, and kids in virtual classrooms. Not having to look far, the CCC searched for gaps they could fill such as lack of income; rent and utility assistance; help for the homeless and vulnerable; how and where to have farm workers tested, as well as providing resources and developing trust.

And then they went to work—boots on the ground and compassion in their hearts.

Utilizing the 211 Directory to communicate available services and assistance, they watched and reviewed it daily to confirm that the most current information was accurate. It was a very important part of the plan to keep the community informed and required many hours of focused attention. This resource was so popular it crashed several times. The staff saw a 600% increase in calls, which confirmed the value of this service.

It also became apparent that food insecurity, especially in the rural areas of the county, was a critical need. Providing food, and food vouchers became their biggest effort! Working with the food pantries to assist with food distribution became a priority, especially in the unincorporated, rural areas such as Pixley, Tipton and Poplar. Another option for people to request assistance was to apply on-line, stating their need and number of people in their household. Every day, and within 24 hours of receiving the applications, United Way of Tulare County would fulfill and mail food vouchers, which totaled more than $400,000.

Just one of the many lives touched by the work being done by CCC is Steven, a father who suddenly gained full custody of his kids because their mother contracted COVID-19. Realizing he really had nothing for his children when they went to live with him, they not only provided rental, utility, and food assistance, they delivered several boxes of clothing, educational materials, games, and toys for the children.
In the midst of COVID-19, Tulare County also experienced the Complex Fire, one of the most devastating fires in California. Working with partners Parenting Network and The Salvation Army, UWTC accepted both in-kind and monetary donations on behalf of Tulare County residents affected by this horrible fire. To date, $40,000 in cash and in-kind donations have been delivered to Community Church in Camp Nelson. During the evacuation, 143 families were housed in local hotels, 59 families received gift cards, hygiene kits, non-perishable food and more than 300 care packages were delivered. Those that lost their homes due to the fire are being given the use of a storage unit, a place to keep replacement items while they rebuild.

Through all of this, the United Way of Tulare County realized much of the structure and programs that were created due to COVID-19 have long term value. The CCC will continue to meet and be a collective voice in assisting those in need. The 211 Directory is an invaluable tool that continues to be polished and updated on a regular basis. And most importantly, because of the opportunity to reach further into the community, they realized their need to serve, aid, and graciously extend compassion to their community.

For funding reports, and to view photo galleries and videos, visit: www.unitedwaytc.org

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COVID-19 IMPACT REPORT

The United Ways of California‘s Central Valley