MEND hires a dedicated emergency assistance program manager

People seeking assistance from Upper Valley MEND will encounter a new face this year: Liz Hurtado, the new Emergency Assistance Program Manager. Hurtado helps people in crisis by helping them pay for rent, mortgage and utility bills, fuel and transportation costs, and connecting them with available services in the Wenatchee Valley. For people in need of longer-term support, Hurtado can follow up on a regular basis to make sure things are going well.

"As someone who grew up in the Upper Valley and as a child of immigrant parents, I know firsthand about the services Upper Valley MEND offers as my family and I once benefited from the generosity of Upper Valley MEND,” Hurtado said. “The kindness that Upper Valley MEND and the Leavenworth community showed my family years ago was a contributing factor that led me to join this wonderful organization.”

Hurtado joins Upper Valley MEND at a critical time. The need for financial assistance is growing as many community members have experienced job loss or reduced income and are struggling to stay afloat. And, in addition to financial support, clients often need help navigating the ever-changing landscape of possible benefits.

Hurtado has a background in mental health and social service. She holds an undergraduate degree in Sociology from the University of Washington and is on track to graduate with a master's in social work from Western New Mexico University.

“I’m very excited to welcome Liz to the team,” said Kaylin Bettinger, Upper Valley MEND’s executive director. “Liz will be able to grow the emergency assistance program with her background and knowledge in social work. She is also bilingual in English and Spanish and will focus on making sure our emergency assistance services are reaching people in both languages.”

Covid-19 has impacted many local families and individuals. MEND’s emergency financial assistance helps families like the Bill and Sandra’s family. (Names changed for privacy.) Bill and Sandra are raising their three grandchildren near Leavenworth. When the Bill’s hours were reduced last summer, they weren't able to stretch their money enough to cover their mortgage payment. When their mortgage company refused to offer mortgage forbearance because Bill’s job loss was not COVID related, they were facing eviction. MEND paid their mortgage for one month, helping them through a stressful time and preventing even more financial hardship. Then, we were able to connect them with additional resources to help them navigate longer-term support.

Upper Valley MEND uses a wraparound approach to help people in crisis. Many people in need first engage with Upper Valley MEND at the Community Cupboard food bank. But they are often dealing with other underlying struggles, like housing insecurity, health problems or lack of reliable transportation. Some of those underlying struggles are harder to solve, and Hurtado is available to walk with them through their crisis and connect them with longer-term services available in the Wenatchee Valley.
“I hope that my experience in social service and my educational background will be an asset to Upper Valley MEND, and that I can help expand the emergency assistance program and the services that we provide,” Hurtado said.

If you or someone you know needs emergency financial assistance please call Liz Hurtado at (509) 548 0408.