



Community Bulletin

A Word From Terri Wolfe, Executive Director

Welcome to our new normal... almost!

We are very excited to have June 15th fast approaching, the day the state should “reopen.” While we are not completely clear what the new normal will be, we are happy to expect that things will feel freer and we will be more connected.

The last year has been challenging for us all – you and HELP. While we certainly hope to never experience something of this type again, we are ready if it does.

HELP’s Mission is to help meet the unmet basic needs of the Valley. Our mission guided us in what we focused on during our COVID-19 efforts – food, shelter, access to medical care, and caring for our valley’s aging friends and neighbors.

By the numbers, HELP of Ojai accomplished the following:

Thousands of phone calls have come in over the last 14 months, asking hundreds of different questions. In the beginning, phone calls were “I need food.” and, “I am lonely and need someone to talk to.” As COVID-19 continued, it became “Where are the testing sites?” and “I don’t have a computer and need a vaccine appointment.” The longer the pandemic went on, the more people wanted to chat to feel connected to another person.

The need for food was seen almost immediately. Starting the first week of the stay-at-home order, and extending for seven months, we delivered 840 perishable/nonperishable food boxes to area seniors and distributed hundreds of Vesta and Berry Man food boxes to lower income residents from our Fox Street office.

We expanded transportation hours so seniors could take advantage of the early opening “senior” hours at Vons and Westridge, and made 758 trips to the grocery stores.

Our Senior Nutrition Program ballooned the first week of the stay-at-home order. It increased from a normal of 60 to over 200 seniors at its height. The program was providing daily meals for seven days a week.

Great Plates Delivered began the last week of April, 2020. Fourteen local restaurants joined HELP to deliver 133,000 meals to 250 seniors for 13 months. Great Plates is ongoing. This effort – through CARES Act funding – brought \$3,000,000 to local restaurants, keeping them financially alive and people employed.

Housing and rental assistance became key focuses. During the last year we provided rental assistance to 21 families facing eviction.

For our unhoused residents, we assisted 15 of the most vulnerable in obtaining rooms at the hotels in Ventura and Oxnard through the County’s Project Room Key program.

Health

Operation Inoculation started with a “bang” in January, and since then we assisted 400 seniors in getting appointments. We transported approximately 100 seniors to various vaccine sites around the County. We started scheduling vaccine appointments because residents did not have access to a computer, an active email address, or the ability to maneuver the website.

As the eligibility criteria expanded, we assisted 240 agricultural and 120 restaurant workers in getting appointments scheduled. We accomplished this through a collaboration with Ventura County and Ojai Valley Community Hospital.

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A Word from Terri Continued from Cover...

One day alone, over 100 agricultural workers and restaurant employees got inoculations at the Nordhoff site.

Once the County saw our results, they provided us with early access to appointment spots so we could get the most vulnerable and highest risk Valley residents appointments. This carried on until the Nordhoff site closed and the State took over the enrollment process.

In addition, we transported 901 seniors to doctor's appointments and picked up scores of prescriptions and delivered them to seniors who were under the stay-at-home orders.

Finally, we developed the Neighbor-to-Neighbor Program in the first weeks of the stay-at-home order. The program was created to provide isolated seniors a phone "companion" who would call and check-in once per week. Over 60 seniors were paired with a phone "pal", some for up to six months.

Through all of this, you donated designated funds so we could do this good work. Over \$350,000 came in to support these efforts. To date, the Ojai Valley has kept one of the lowest per capita infection rates and, currently, stands as the second highest inoculated group in the County. We could not help this to happen without all of your support.

Finally, since almost all our volunteers are seniors, the first few months of the stay-at-home order, the HELP of Ojai staff did this work on their own. After that, a few select volunteers came back to help and we thank them for this tremendous effort.

So, that is our story of 2020-2021 COVID-19 at HELP of Ojai. Stay Healthy and GET VACCINATED!

Terri

◆ PROGRAM UPDATES ◆

Activities Update • Little House, 111 W. Santa Ana Street, Ojai • (805) 646-5122

HELP of Ojai is dedicated to bringing back senior activities in a safe environment. To protect participants from COVID-19, we will slowly bring back activities and assess safety protocols for each activity. Activities will have a maximum number of people, participants will need to remain socially distant, and will be required to wear a face mask.

Returning Activities:

Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance is a 12-week course that meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00AM-11:30AM at Little House. The course will start on Tuesday, June 1st. You must pre-register for the course by calling Megan at (805) 646-5122. There are a maximum of 12 participants for the 12-week course. Strict COVID-19 protocol will be followed during the course.

Ongoing Activities:

The Caregiver's Haven Support Group meets via Zoom on the second and fourth Monday of each month. Please E-mail Deirdre at deirdredaly@roadrunner.com for more information or to register for the meeting.

Parkinson's Support Group meets via Zoom on the second Tuesday of the month at 1:30PM. The next meetings are on Tuesday, May 11th and Tuesday, June 8th. Please E-mail Tony at traconsult@outlook.com or call (301) 529-9510 for more information or to register for the meeting.

Ventura County Area Agency on Aging Health Insurance Counseling (HICAP) To make an appointment, please call (805) 477-7310, E-mail HICAP@ventura.org or visit <https://www.vcaaa.org/our-services/medicare-help/>.

Community Assistance Program

(805) 640-3320 • 108 Fox St., Ojai 93023 • Fax: (805) 640-3322

CAP continues to serve as a hub for low-income services. We see an average of 65 people a week, who access a variety of services including food boxes, grocery bags of food, household and hygiene items, lunches for our unsheltered clients, utility assistance and rental assistance.

The CAP office is open for food distribution Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings from 9:00AM-12:00PM. If you would like to have food box delivered, please call us at (805) 640-3320.

HELP of Ojai, Inc.
 111 W. Santa Ana St.
 P.O. Box 621
 Ojai, CA 93024

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



HELP of Ojai, Inc. — *Neighbors HELPing Neighbors*

If you would like to be removed from the Community Bulletin mailing list, or wish to receive your Bulletin via email, please call Kerry Ballantine at 649-9218 or email her at kerryb@helpofojai.org.

West Campus • Kerry Ballantine • 370 W. Baldwin Rd., Ojai • (805) 649-9218

HELP's West Campus remains closed to the general public until further notice. Our 2nd HELPing Donation Center is now receiving donations, by appointment only, Thursday—Saturday. Please call (805) 646-5122 to schedule an appointment. Please DO NOT leave donations outside of the gate. Please call Kerry Ballantine at (805) 649-9218 with any questions regarding West Campus or our Donation Center.

Senior Nutrition Program • Barbara O'Grady, Program Director
370 W. Baldwin Rd., Ojai • (805) 649-8018

HELP's Congregate Lunch Program remains closed at this time. Home Delivered Meals are available to recipients who are 60 years of age or older and homebound by reason of function and/or disability and/or isolation. Please contact Barbara at 649-8018 for more information.

2nd HELPing Thrift Store • Naomi Collins Babcock • 841 E. Ojai Ave., Ojai • (805) 646-5812
2nd HELPing Donation Center • 370 W. Baldwin Road, Ojai • (805) 649-8750

2nd HELPing Thrift Store is OPEN. Store hours are Wednesday—Saturday, from 10:00-5:00. Face masks, or proper facial coverings, are required to enter store. We are allowing 25 customers in the store at one time, so there may be a short waiting period before you may enter. Social distancing is expected and is closely monitored. Hand sanitizer is placed at the door and throughout the store. We encourage you to sanitize your hands often while shopping.

Any person who is non-compliant to the above mentioned safety precautions will be asked to immediately comply or will be asked to leave the premises. HELP staff and volunteers reserve the right to refuse entrance or service to anyone who refuses to comply with the store's safety measures.

Our 2nd HELPing Donation Center at our West Campus facility is now open to receive donations, by appointment only, Thursday—Saturday, from 9:00-2:00. We reserve the right to refuse items that are unsellable or in poor condition. Please call (805) 646-5122 to schedule an appointment.

Our First Saturday Sales have been halted indefinitely. At this time we do not have an established date of when they might resume. Please stay tuned.