A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

I want to begin my first letter as CEO with a heartfelt “Thank YOU!” Thank you for being with us through a busy holiday season. Thank you for supporting Samaritan House through a major transition. Thank you for continuing to be with us as we meet record levels of need. I am grateful and excited to be here as CEO, and to partner with you in carrying out our very important mission.

I have spent the past eleven years as Samaritan House’s COO, working hand in hand with staff, volunteers, and our partners. Spending time with community members and staff alike these past years has given me the opportunity to listen and to learn from them. I come to this new role ready to continue to learn and listen and use those insights to guide Samaritan House forward into a bold future.

As we see levels of need reaching record highs, I believe we need to expand and enhance our services. As pandemic support vanishes and inflation hits families hard, it’s up to us – the great heart of this great community – to step in. Expanding our services to reach new and existing clients where they are will help us serve our neighbors more fully. It won’t be us alone either. Samaritan House has hundreds of partnerships with service providers in the county allowing us to provide the highest quality services and care, right when and where our clients need it most.

With every step forward we take, growing programs, partnerships, and more, we are committed to improving our organization. Every crisis we face in the community is an opportunity for us to become better and sharper, and able to reach and support our neighbors in need during a critical time.

Every day, the lines at our pantry are long while more new families come, looking for help. I am proud we are here for them, learning from them about the needs they have and how we can more efficiently and productively meet their needs. Some of our big projects are almost complete, like the official opening of Cora’s Community Market later this year. I look forward to the day we can welcome folks into this market-style pantry named after our founder, Dr. Cora Clemons.

Lastly, I am pleased to inform you that we have a forward-thinking board who would like to research how our organization can alleviate poverty. I would like to invite the partnership and support of community members who want to dream big with us. Poverty is an immense challenge, both right here in San Mateo County, and worldwide. We aren’t the only ones thinking about how to meet this challenge, but we have the experience, partnerships, and passion to move the needle on poverty in our community. I know, working together, we can find innovative ways to meet the need and lift our neighbors up out of poverty into economic stability.

Our community is strong, and our desire to help each other has achieved so much already. Together, we can do – and be – so much more. Again, thank you for being a critical partner helping us to achieve our mission and goals.

Be well,

Laura E. Bent
Chief Executive Officer
FOOD NEED IN SAN MATEO COUNTY

For residents of San Mateo County, it comes as no surprise that our community is home to some of the wealthiest zip codes in the country. But our county also struggles with a wealth disparity that has grown throughout the pandemic and resulting economic fallout. In these times of compounding crisis, our neighbors in need have struggled to find stability.

We see the signs of the economic challenges facing us in the prices at the grocery store and record high gas prices. We see it in the number of our neighbors stretching thin budgets impossibly far and in the number of families losing their housing. When Samaritan House’s pantry is open, we see it in long lines of hungry clients.

The truth is unavoidable: Though the pandemic’s darkest days are behind us, the challenges facing our community are not over.

CalFresh numbers reflect the rising need in our county. From 2021 to 2022, there was a nearly 10% increase in households receiving CalFresh. In the beginning of the COVID pandemic, government programs helped working poor families make ends meet. With the end of those programs and increasing inflation, those same families are being hit with the loss of essential support at a time they need it most.

That need is clear to Samaritan House staff members who work every day with clients looking for help. LaTrice Taylor, our Associate Director of Programs and Services, knows better than anyone that it’s not just long-time clients asking for help, it’s also neighbors who have never had to come to us before.

It’s not just low-income workers affected by these uncertain times. Former tech workers caught in recent layoffs are beginning to come for help. “We have seen tech workers and people who own small businesses, too,” says LaTrice. Her team are here for every one of those clients, day in and day out. Recent supply chain issues and shortages have caused even the most basic food essentials to jump up in price. “When you’re talking about $7, $8 eggs, if you can even find them, it’s a problem for clients.”

Though our economic situation is uncertain and there may be bumps in the road ahead, Samaritan House is still here. It’s staff like LaTrice, partners like Second Harvest and Sonrisas, and donors and volunteers like you who enable us to continue responding when the need is high. Working in partnership, hand in hand, we can be the support our neighbors need as we navigate these challenges together.

“IT used to be we would get 7 to 10 new families a week. We are now seeing around 10 new families a day. These are folks who have never come to us before.”

– La Trice Taylor, Associate Director of Programs & Services
The weather has added an additional challenge to the Molinas. Frieda’s husband got sick for three weeks, so she had to take extra care of her family, and she was impressed that Samaritan House has been open and working through all the flooding and tough weather conditions. Rain or shine, she can tell that the volunteers and workers she talks to really care about helping people. Even though they have masks on, she can sense their smiles.

“It is a very sad time for Americans struggling to make ends meet. With prices rising nearly across the board, it’s getting harder to pay for basic necessities. When you have two little kids and you have to choose between paying rent and putting food on the table, it is a huge relief to be able to turn to Samaritan House for help.”

— Frieda Molina

*Client asked not to be photographed for this story.*
PARTNER SPOTLIGHTS:
FROM THE BANK, TO THE TRUCK, TO THE TABLE.

Second Harvest of Silicon Valley
Serving as many meals as we do in a year is a big task! In order to keep all our clients fed, we rely on support from both donors and from our partners. Second Harvest is one of our biggest partners and a huge source of the food that goes out from our pantry every day. In a year, we receive more than 4 million pounds of food from them alone. That food is essential and is distributed to our clients in the form of groceries and prepared meals.

“Second Harvest of Silicon Valley and Samaritan House have collaborated for over 37 years to ensure our community has access to the nutritious food it needs. To say we are partners doesn’t begin to describe the deep impact of a relationship that has spanned nearly four decades. Over those years, Samaritan House has not only grown to become one of the largest and most diverse programs we work with, it has also proven to be one of the most innovative, continuing to push boundaries to find new ways for community members to easily access nutritious food they need to thrive,” says Leslie Bacho, CEO of Second Harvest of Silicon Valley.

In times like today, when food prices are on the rise and stability is out of reach for many, the support of Second Harvest is invaluable. Working hand-in-hand, we are finding ways every day to meet the need right here in San Mateo County.

Sonrisas Dental Health
Picking up food from local drives and delivering meals to our community partners requires time, work, and of course, a truck. That’s where Sonrisas Dental Health came to the rescue this year with the generous donation of a new truck for Samaritan House. This addition makes it easier for the food we distribute to get where its going.

“Sonrisas received the panel truck as a donation; and when we no longer needed it, it made perfect sense to donate it to a partner who is serving our shared patients/clients,” says Tracey Carrillo Fecher, CEO.

Sonrisas Dental Health stepped in at just the right time with this important resource. As we continue to deliver food to schools, senior centers, and more, we are grateful for partnerships like this one, that enable us to reach more clients together.

“Sonrisas Dental Health has had a partnership with Samaritan House for many years. As safety net healthcare providers, equity is key to our shared mission in San Mateo County.”

– Tracey Carrillo Fecher, Sonrisas CEO
MAIN EVENT 2023

Thank you to our generous Main Event sponsors who made our annual gala possible and to everyone who helped make the event a success. Missed the Main Event but still want to support the Fund-a-Need auction? Consider making a donation at the link to the right. Every dollar raised will help Samaritan House keep up with the record levels of need in our community.

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GET INVOLVED WITH MOBILE MEALS

In a year, Samaritan House receives millions of pounds of food from our generous partners and donors. But once those food deliveries make it to our kitchen and pantry in San Mateo, what does it take to get that food into the hands of our clients all over the county? It’s no small task to distribute all that food to neighbors in need but, with the dedicated support of staff and volunteers, it happens, every day, all year long.

It starts early each morning with a busy kitchen full of volunteers and staff, all working together under the guidance of long-time kitchen manager Ruby Kaho, who says that love is the secret ingredient in every meal.

“I love working here with Samaritan House because it’s a team effort,” Hannah said of her experience volunteering in the kitchen where she packages meals. “Working with everyone that comes here and knowing that we’re giving back to the community makes me feel like I’m adding to their experience and helping other people.”

Many clients receive meals through our dining room, open Monday through Friday. But, for clients who are homebound or unable to come to our pantry, Samaritan House volunteers step in to help these folks – mostly seniors – get the nutrition they need. Every day of the week, meals are delivered by these hardworking volunteers, working alone or in pairs as they drive their routes all over the county.

Amanda, one of the regular drivers, enjoys being able to connect directly with neighbors in the community.

“I love delivering meals because it’s a way to share love with our neighbors.”

Martha is another one of the Mobile Meals drivers who has enjoyed the opportunity to make connections. “My favorite thing about delivering meals for Samaritan House is the joy on the faces of the people who open the door. And their joy brings me joy. I am getting to know some of the clients and their stories are always interesting. I treasure them!”

The value of these deliveries for clients is also more than just the food. Alex Herron, another member of the kitchen staff, jumps in to support deliveries when needed and has seen firsthand the difference Mobile Meals makes.

“It’s hard when you’re a senior and you don’t really cook anymore and you’re used to throwing things in the microwave and money is tight. The fact that you get a volunteer that says hello and brings you a meal that is healthy and tastes great – that gives you a little bit of joy.”

You can be a part of the Mobile Meals team, too, and help make sure our senior neighbors are getting enough to eat! To learn more about available shifts and to sign up, reach out to our volunteer team at volunteering@samaritanhousesanmateo.org.
WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR LEGACY TO BE?

“There are several reasons why I decided to add Samaritan House to my Estate Plan. The need is great and becoming greater. Samaritan House is all about neighbors helping neighbors; something our family is passionate about. Through volunteering, my daughter understands the importance of giving back to the community. By giving my final gift to Samaritan House, this idea of giving back will stick with her over her lifetime. Also, it’s a very tax efficient way to give if you simply reallocate a percent of your 401K. Login – click, and submit!”

– Jason Ting, Board Member

To join the John Kelly Legacy Circle all you need to do is tell us that your gift is in place. Contact Jessica Mitchell at 650-523-0817 or send an email to jmitchell@samaritanhousesanmateo.org. We respect your right to privacy and will keep your intention confidential, if you wish.