

*In Service To*

# **GREAT IDEAS**

A COMMUNITY INITIATIVES WHITE PAPER:  
The COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund



## INTRODUCTION

### GRANTEE STORY

*“For many formerly incarcerated recipients, the direct assistance played a key role in sustaining their basic necessities, such as housing, food, utilities, and more. The long-term impact of this support will reduce recidivism and promote family reunification. The Covid-19 pandemic and economic shutdown posed many unprecedented challenges for APSC and formerly incarcerated individuals. Many recipients were released from prison within the past six months. They faced greater reentry challenges due to the paucity of employment opportunities and decreased social support during Covid. Unfortunately, the formerly incarcerated community has experienced very high rates of positive Covid-19 cases, in part due to crowded and unsafe transitional housing conditions. While direct financial support helped many individuals, long-term support and societal changes are needed in order for all formerly incarcerated individuals to truly thrive and lead sustainable lives during and after Covid. In response to the multitude of reentry challenges during Covid, APSC provided additional reentry services (peer support, support groups, and navigation assistance) to recipients as needed. APSC received an outpouring of thanks and gratitude for providing financial support and peer support during this project.”*

Asian Prisoner Support Committee, located in Oakland, provides direct support to Asian and Pacific Islander prisoners and raises awareness about the growing number of Asian and Pacific Islanders being imprisoned, detained, and deported.

With the advent of COVID-19, already marginalized communities became less secure due to illness, work stoppages, and job loss. Rent that was hard to pay before became impossible, and lines at food banks became longer and longer although the demand for food far exceeded supply. Furthermore, families with children encountered schools moving to distance learning – resulting in fewer subsidized meals and barriers to learning because of little access to technology. These kids were falling behind.

Because of COVID-19, the global pandemic was declared on March 11, 2020. Within the first week, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation established the COVID-19 Coronavirus Response Fund to help mitigate the impact on the most at-risk individuals and marginalized families. Community Initiatives jumped at the opportunity to serve as the lead agency for donation distribution in Alameda County and partnered with the Alameda County Public Health Department to establish parameters for distributing funds to local social impact organizations that work directly with the marginalized communities. People wanted to help, and the Fund provided a way for the donations to reach the impacted communities. The COVID-19 Coronavirus Response Fund partnership was able to step in and provide relief through rent vouchers, food, school supplies (including access to technology), Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), education programs on health and safety, and help in many other ways. Because of the more than \$2 million in donations, to date, made possible by this partnership, thirty-one social impact groups were able to help greater than 50,000 individuals and over 19,500 families so they could avoid falling into deeper peril because of the pandemic.

The Silicon Valley Community Foundation asked Community Initiatives to serve as the official distributor of donations for the Fund within Alameda County. Community Initiatives then partnered with the Alameda

## INTRODUCTION - CONT.

County Public Health Department (ACPHD) to determine criteria for disbursement to qualified nonprofit social impact organizations.

**Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF):** SVCF created the COVID-19 Coronavirus Response Fund and initiated partnership with Community Initiatives to distribute donations to organizations throughout Alameda County.

**Community Initiatives:** Community Initiatives partnered with SVCF to distribute funds and donated goods in Alameda County (California). Community Initiatives also partnered with the Alameda County Public Health Department to establish parameters for distributing funds to community-based partner organizations that work to alleviate the pandemic's negative impact. In addition, Community Initiatives researched and invited qualified organizations to apply for funding.

**Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD):** ACPHD partnered with Community Initiatives to help establish parameters for distributing donations to social-impact organizations throughout Alameda County. In addition, ACPHD also referred some social impact organizations to contact Community Initiatives to apply for assistance.

### PROJECT STAKEHOLDER:

*"The start-up process helped ensure that funding processes do not exacerbate inequality and that no populations fall through the cracks."*

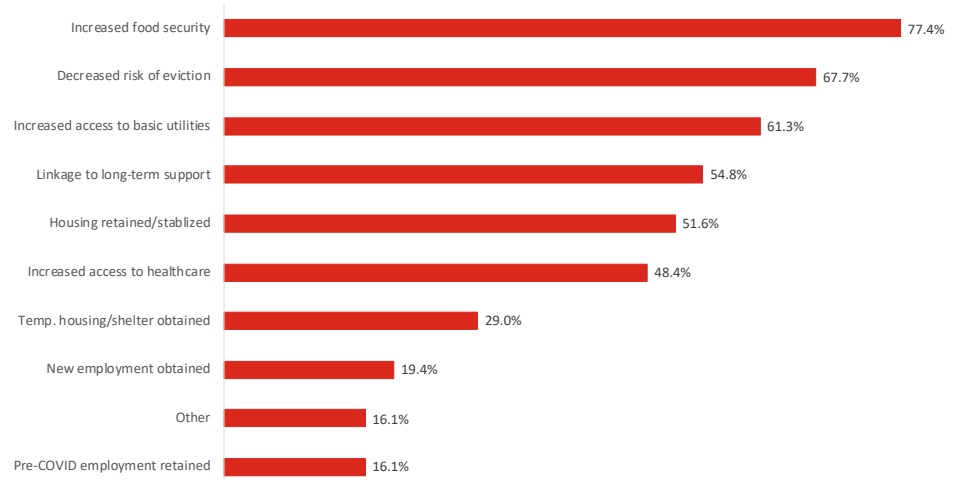
## COVID EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND IMPACT

The COVID-19 Coronavirus Response Fund partnership began in June 2020 and lasted until July 2021.

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>\$2,316,400</b> | Distributed between June 2020 and July 2021        |
| <b>31</b>          | Organizations funded through Community Initiatives |
| <b>50,016</b>      | Individuals served                                 |
| <b>1,447</b>       | Additional households supported                    |

## COVID EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND IMPACT - CONT.

The COVID-19 Coronavirus Response Fund partnership has been an undeniable success. Since its inception, the Partnership has distributed over \$2,000,000 to thirty-one different nonprofit organizations in Alameda County. More than 19,500 families and over 50,000 individuals have received aid because of the funding made possible to the nonprofit organizations. The nonprofit organizations that received funding were able to provide a range of relief in the communities they serve, including:



### And more specifically:

- Case management & hotel rooms - to aid escape from domestic violence
- Cash assistance - including stipends for undocumented individuals
- Clothing disbursement
- Diaper distribution
- Educational and technology support for distance learning (K-12)
- Essential child and family care
- Food security
- General support
- Medical care - including telehealth
- Mental health resources
- PPE
- Shelter - housing and rental assistance
- Transportation
- Unemployment enrollment assistance

### GRANTEE STORY

***“Clients were able to pay their rent and utilities after losing their jobs due to COVID to avoid eviction and amassing increasingly high rent bills, as well as pay their medical bills. Clients receive 1-1 information and assistance in multiple languages on services including food security, education, employment and unemployment services direct financial assistance, rent payments, eviction moratorium, and public benefits.”***

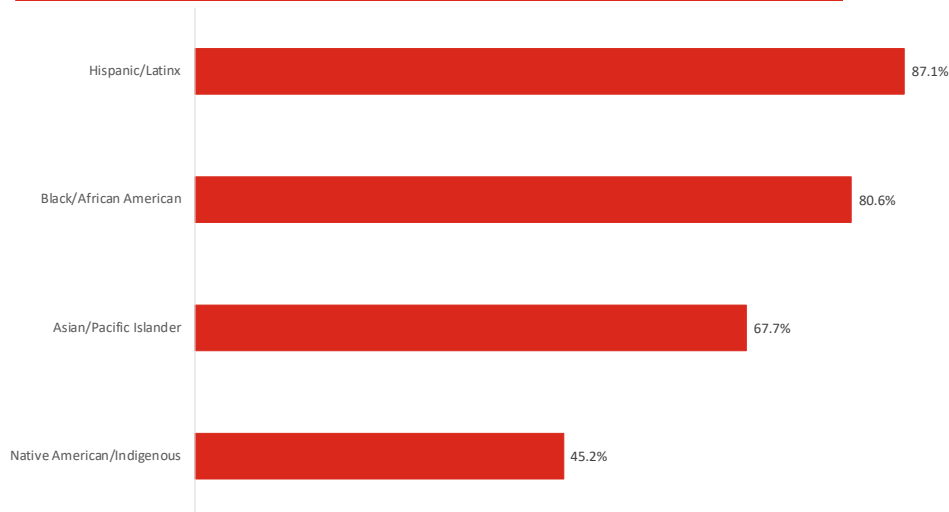
Vietnamese Center of the East Bay, located in Oakland, serves and supports low-income refugee/immigrant families in integrating, thriving, and attaining self-sufficiency within American Society

## COVID EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND IMPACT - CONT.

- Utility supplementation
- Water distribution for the un-housed - including washing stations

Furthermore, the relief provided by the COVID-19 Coronavirus Response Fund partnership contributions reached many different communities, including:

- At-risk Black, Latinx, & Asian Youth
- At-risk Southeast Asian Women
- Black communities
- Drug-using communities
- Food insecure populations
- Formerly incarcerated individuals
- Handicapable individuals
- HIV positive individuals
- Households with kids < 3 years
- Immigrant communities
- Latinx communities
- Low-income populations
- Seniors
- The Convalescing
- The Immigrant and Asian refugee community
- The medically under-served
- The un-homed
- The uninsured
- Victims and survivors of domestic abuse
- Women and kids



Proportion of communities served by funded organizations

## GRANTEE STORY

***“[A] mother and daughter needed assistance with housing rent, keep car from being repossessed, utilities, food. Funds help pay two car notes, two months’ rent and utilities and provide food while Mother searched for employment.”***

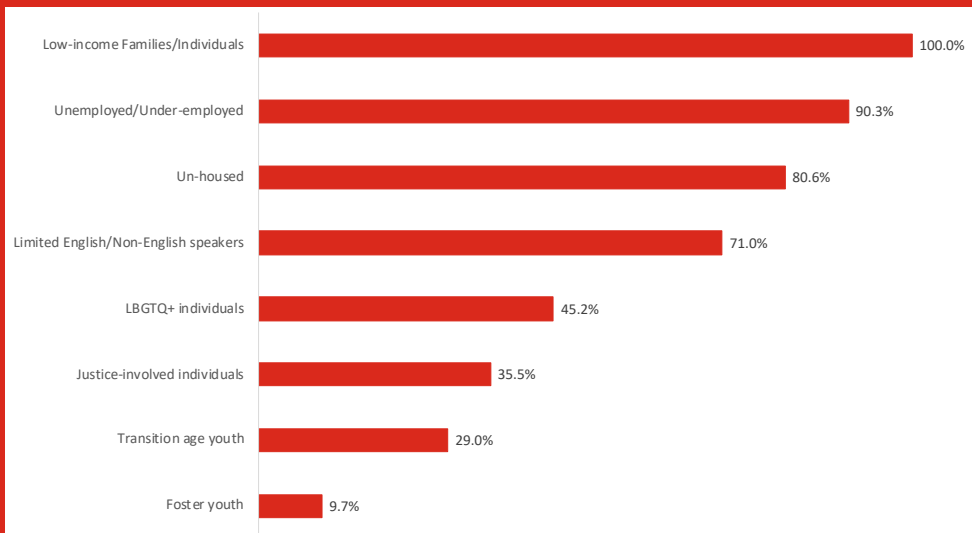
Magnolia Women’s Recovery seeks to reconnect women who experience addiction to their individual essence of love, compassion, and beauty. Magnolia women learn to walk in dignity, restore their families and become contributing members of the community.

## COVID EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND IMPACT - CONT.

### GRANTEE STORY

***“We could NOT have kept the food bank doors open without your support. Your grant allowed us to purchase enough food, cleaning supplies, and PPE to help every person who turned to us for help. The amount of people accessing our food pantry nearly quadrupled during May and June compared to the year before. Your quick and timely grant making was essential to us as an organization. Having your funds in hand so quickly allowed us to purchase everything we needed in a timely manner.”***

Davis Street Family Resource Center, located in San Leandro, works to improve health, address poverty, and increase the overall quality of life of residents in the Eden area.



### Aid was distributed throughout Alameda County:

|               |       |
|---------------|-------|
| Oakland       | 80.6% |
| San Leandro   | 54.8% |
| Hayward       | 54.8% |
| Alameda       | 54.8% |
| Berkeley      | 48.4% |
| Fremont       | 38.7% |
| San Lorenzo   | 35.5% |
| Castro Valley | 35.5% |
| Emeryville    | 32.3% |
| Union City    | 29%   |
| Pleasanton    | 25.8% |
| Dublin        | 25.8% |
| Ashland       | 22.6% |
| Cherryland    | 22.6% |
| Livermore     | 22.6% |
| Newark        | 19.4% |
| Albany        | 19.4% |
| Piedmont      | 16.1% |
| Fairview      | 16.1% |
| Sunol         | 12.9% |

## AN INNOVATIVE, PROVEN MODEL

The COVID-19 Coronavirus Response Fund partnership is an innovative, proven model of collaboration that can be implemented by other funds, fiscal sponsors, and local agencies to provide a wide array of relief to many different communities in the areas they serve. Our model can be quickly set-up to receive individual (or public) donations and responsibly distribute these contributions to organizations that can provide need-based relief directly to the most at-risk communities during a crisis. The model could also be replicated beyond crisis to focus on funding other critical struggles, like combatting obesity, fighting against drug use, or alleviating food insecurity.

**Our process:** First, we conducted a needs assessment and scan. Second, we developed an intentional funding strategy. Third, we created a theory of action and associated framework to ensure that funding addresses inequity in the community and that no populations fall through the cracks. We also defined three phases to our grant making process: Early funding emphasis is meant for the short-term, to quickly fund needs-based relief to key providers able to operate in adverse circumstances; Medium-term funding emphasis is more direct critical financial support to help reduce negative longer-term impact; Finally, Longer-term emphasis allows for opportunities to coordinate, develop, and implement ongoing resilient response systems.

Additionally, we have identified a handful of opportunities to improve our partnership as we move forward and can share our lessons learned. Our opportunities to grow are: 1) Focus on the most vulnerable populations, 2) Minimize the administrative burden on applicants; 3) Coordinate with other efforts in the region; 4) Establish a permanent rapid-response fund; 5) Address the digital divide; and 6) Prioritize flexibility.

We can also share the parameters we established for distributing donations to qualified organizations as a guideline for other aspiring partnerships. Community

## GRANTEE STORY

*"[Community member] is originally from Ethiopia, and was working as an app Driver in the Bay Area when COVID began. Suddenly facing a steep decline in business, we helped him apply for unemployment benefits. He struggled to afford basic needs while waiting for his unemployment benefits to come through, which were delayed for many people during covid. We supported him with direct financial assistance to support him and his family's basic needs (food, rent, etc.) while he waited for benefits. While unemployed, we connected him to a fully-funded truck driving training to receive his Class A Driver's License. He successfully completed the training, and is now working as a full-time Truck Driver!"*

The Vietnamese American Community Center of the East Bay serves and supports low-income underserved refugee/immigrant families in integrating, thriving, and attaining self-sufficiency within American society.

## GRANTEE STORY

*“These funds have made an immense impact on our clients living with HIV during these unprecedented stressful times. Cardea has provided direct assistance that has included late rent payments to avoid being evicted or being displaced. The funds have also been used towards supporting clients living in unsafe households with others not following COVID safety to seek other safe housing, and we were also able to support homeless clients living in their cars and on the streets to get funds towards temporary housing or for deposit for their new apartment. Case managers also were able to utilize the gifts cards to purchase cell phones for their homeless clients to keep in touch with them and to increase their access to needed health care services. We supported clients with payments towards late utility bills to avoid shutoff of important services. There were clients who hadn’t been able to pay utility bills since shelter in place began and thus had mounting bills; We also provided gift cards to local grocery and household stores to allow purchase of food, household items, PPE. For clients who were homeless or undocumented and unable to seek direct rent payments or other government support programs during these difficult times, particularly appreciated gift cards and direct check payment to support them with mounting expenses.”*

Cardea Services, located in Oakland, works with public agencies and nonprofit organizations with a mission to improve organizations’ abilities to deliver accessible, high-quality, culturally-proficient, and compassionate services to their clients.

## AN INNOVATIVE, PROVEN MODEL - CONT.

Initiatives, as a steering committee and founding member of the National Network of Fiscal Sponsors (NNFS), can advise other fiscal sponsors who wish to act as donation facilitators around the nation.

## THE TIE TO COMMUNITY INITIATIVES’ MISSION

Our mission is: *“Community Initiatives acts as a thought-partner and provides professional services to nonprofit startups, established initiatives, networks, and collaborations. We sponsor projects for the benefit of communities in service to social change.”*

The COVID-19 Coronavirus Response Fund partnership advances the Community Initiatives’ mission by enabling us to distribute donations to thirty-one different organizations for the benefit of many vulnerable communities throughout Alameda County. The contributions made possible by the Partnership enable the funded organizations to move their agendas of social change forward as they help those most heavily impacted by the pandemic.

## MORE GRANTEE STORIES

*“It has been comforting to count on financial support in these times, when my work has been practically stopped due to the pandemic. But even more important is to feel that I am not alone and that there is a group of women that has my back in times of crisis.”*

*“Definitely without this support I would not have been able to buy a quality laptop that helps me provide services through my cooperative business, and at the same time the opportunity to grow and offer basic technology workshops for free to other women in my community. Because my business has work, I have work and this brings prosperity to my family. My son can complete his college applications; we can support my daughter who is in college and my mother in Mexico. It is an enormous opportunity and blessing to have access to a more sustainable economy.”*

*“In my personal and family life, not only did [the Fund]*



## MORE GRANTEE STORIES

*give us the tranquility to keep moving forward, but also to prevent and be alert and ready for other possible events. It was like an infusion of oxygen when we felt like we were drowning.”*

**World Central Kitchen uses the power of food to heal communities and strengthen economies in times of crisis and beyond.**

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*“One recipient... was one of the primary income earners in a large family. Due to the pandemic, many of her family members lost their jobs and income. In order to make ends meet, she started going into more and more debt as she struggled to provide for her family. As a recipient of APSC’s Covid relief direct aid, she was able to get back on her feet during this tough time--covering food and other living expenses. As a formerly incarcerated leader, she was also sustaining her career and continue her much-needed community organizing work.”*

**Asian Prisoner Support Committee provides direct support to Asian and Pacific Islander prisoners and raises awareness about the growing number of Asian and Pacific Islanders being imprisoned, detained, and deported.**

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*“One success story that has been shared with us is from a youth client living with HIV who gets his HIV care at East Bay Advanced Care. In March 2020 this client was furloughed from work and shelter in place made it hard for him to go to the gym and stay on top of his fitness and health. He has been waiting months to receive any support compensation including unemployment funds. As a result of loss of income, he lost his housing and became very ill and ended up in the hospital. After release from the hospital, he had to stay with a friend on his couch until he could figure out what else he could do. Finding housing became even more difficult and he ended up sleeping in his car. His case managers heard about his*

## GRANTEE STORY

***“Maria R is a 43-year-old mother of 2 children who live in a one-bedroom apartment in Oakland. She lost her job because of the pandemic. She used her savings to keep current on her rent, utilities and basic needs. She had found a new job that would start in a couple of weeks and she needed \$1,000 to pay her August rent and meet basic needs before she was re-employed.”***

St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County’s mission is to feed, clothe, house and heal the most vulnerable individuals and families throughout Alameda County

## MORE GRANTEE STORIES - CONT.

### GRANTEE STORY

***“We had a Black trans woman client who was living with her partner, who died of COVID. We were able to get her into a temporary hotel situation and temporary emergency housing program with the city of Oakland (Project Turnkey). From there, she has moved in subsidized permanent housing, and has her own apartment for the first time.”***

The Oakland LGBTQ Community Center is dedicated to enhancing and sustaining the well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals, our families and allies, by providing educational, social,

*and immediately worked with Cardea to provide him with emergency financial assistance and support funds as a result of the funding you have provided. Client was received funds to help with safe, secure temporary housing and also towards purchase of personal grooming items both of which helped him to feel more confident and supported. Within a month of this support and new found confidence he was able to find employment again!”*

**Cardea Services, located in Oakland, works with public agencies and nonprofit organizations with a mission to improve organizations’ abilities to deliver accessible, high-quality, culturally-proficient, and compassionate services to their clients.**

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*“Pricilla’ called Tri-Valley Haven’s crisis line in June 2020. She was sheltering at home with her children and her abusive boyfriend. She conveyed that the abuse had gotten much worse since the COVID-19 pandemic had erupted. Priscilla was scared for her safety and the safety of her children. Priscilla’s abusive boyfriend had left the house for a few hours, which he rarely did, so we needed to act quickly. Making matters scarier, one of Priscilla’s sons had become ill. A Tri-Valley Haven (TVH) case manager met Priscilla and her family and put them in a motel room, while maintaining social distancing requirements. The next day, TVH found Priscilla free COVID-19 testing for her and her children. The mobile pantry brought healthy groceries to Priscilla. A Tri-Valley Haven Case Manager checked in with Priscilla and her kids daily.*

*Thankfully, a few days later Priscilla and her children’s COVID-19 tests came back negative. All the family members were feeling well physically. The Haven was able to bring the family into its domestic violence emergency shelter where CDC prevention guidelines and social distancing are practiced. Priscilla and her children flourished at the shelter. They received case management*

## MORE GRANTEE STORIES - CONT.

*and counseling services provided via video technology. Limited n-person services were provided adhering to social distancing and with staff and clientele wearing masks. With the help of Tri-Valley Haven, Priscilla and her kids eventually were able to move out of the shelter.*

*Recently, Priscilla called TBH's crisis-line to check in.*

*Priscilla said, "Everything you did for me and my kids finally pushed me to break away [from her abusive boyfriend]. My kids and I are living in peace for the first time! I realize that I grew up as a child in and around DV. I am so glad that my kids, my sons do not live thinking domestic violence is normal. Thank you!"*

*There are many households like Priscilla's who were helped by this grant funding. The funding from Community Initiatives, paid for the emergency motel and food for Priscilla and her children. The funding also allowed counselors and case managers to provide safe, remote assistance to the family while they were in extreme crisis."*

**Tri-Valley Haven, located in Livermore, serves people who experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, and homelessness. TVH creates homes safe from abuse, contributes to a more peaceful society one person, one family, one community at a time.**

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*"The COVID-19 pandemic has left the majority of the families [Brighter Beginnings] serves without a job or with their work hours reduced. Many of these individuals are the sole providers for their families. This has meant that on a monthly basis, families are having to choose what basic needs they are able to pay for. Staff documented families using the funds to pay for overdue bills including phone, electricity, and water. Funds were also used to pay for rent or housing. A family shared that they were evicted from their home and were using the funds to pay for a hotel while they found a new home. In addition, families also*

## GRANTEE STORY

*"One of our 92-year-old recipients was recently the victim of identity theft. A large portion of his savings was stolen, and he called to stop meal delivery because he couldn't afford it anymore. I was very glad to be able to tell him that we would continue delivering meals and he could pay us whatever and whenever he could. I was able to use the grant funds to pay for his meals."*

**Alameda Meals on Wheels promotes independent living for persons of all ages by providing nutritious food services to homebound, handicapped, and convalescent individuals in the City of Alameda.**

## MORE GRANTEE STORIES - CONT.

*expressed using funds to pay for medical expenses (ex. knee surgery, asthma medication, cold medication). One family shared that a portion of the funds received would be used to help pay for a family member's funeral. The funds provided to these families have helped to reduce financial stress and provide the safety net they needed to stay positive for their future."*

### GRANTEE STORY

***"One family was late on rent and the main breadwinner of the family had been laid off but was unable to work due to lack of jobs. There are 5 people, 3 generations in a 1-bedroom apartment. Food was lacking. We were able to provide a \$1500 grant to the family (one of our larger grants) to catch up on rent, deliver regular groceries to reduce expenses, even provide hot meals and brain snacks for the kids Zoom classes. The family is so encouraged and the main breadwinner feels like things are looking up so that he can start working in October."***

Oakland Trybe works in partnership to build and nurture community, create safe gathering spaces and recreational activities for youth and families, revitalize and beautify neighborhoods in the low-income, multi-ethnic San Antonio/Fruitvale area of Oakland.

**Brighter Beginnings supports healthy births and successful development of children by partnering with parents and helping to build strong communities**

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*"The grant from Community Initiatives supported meals to individuals including Laura, an Oakland resident who works at the Next Step Program. She came to our meal distribution site three days a week to pick up food for herself and 12 clients who were unable to come themselves— a wonderful example of a community coming together and supporting one another. The grant also provided support to WCK's partner restaurants in Oakland, including Rob Ben's restaurant. The restaurant is run by Shawny and her sister Kecia, who told us, "WCK has made it possible to take the pressure off and make us feel like we wanted to be here the next day... My sister is my rock. It's just the two of us making all of these meals. We are so grateful to WCK. We have always been givers, WCK has enhanced our ability to give. We are very family oriented and we treat everyone who comes in like family."*

**World Central Kitchen uses the power of food to heal communities and strengthen economies in times of crisis and beyond.**