

COVID-19 **CRISIS** **RESPONSE REPORT**

A White Paper on United Way of Santa Barbara
County's 2020 COVID-19 Crisis Response

2020



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Dear Friend,

This White Paper on United Way of Santa Barbara County's (UWSBC) COVID-19 Community Crisis Response reviews the pandemic-focused programs and partnerships we have created, managed, and/or actively supported in 2020.

Since the pandemic began, over \$27 million has been secured and managed by UWSBC and our community partners to improve the lives of local residents during this pandemic. Together with our partners, we launched numerous pandemic response initiatives including six major targeted projects detailed in this report.

This is more than the story of UWSBC's 2020 accomplishments. It is the story of what we and our community partners accomplished together. Success has depended entirely upon all of us working collaboratively – partners supporting each other to be their best – always putting the needs of people first.

As we continue this and other work in 2021 and beyond, we know difficult challenges lie ahead. The loss and upheaval felt by tens of thousands of our neighbors is unprecedented. Many continue to struggle to meet their most basic needs. For many, recovery will take years.

Despite these challenges, we remain optimistic. We have seen what is possible when we unite and work together as a community through the power of partnership. You are an important part of that united community – a community you have helped create.

We could not be more thankful for your involvement and support. I hope you will find the information in this report useful and inspirational. As always, we welcome your feedback, ideas, questions, or concerns.

Thank you again. We look forward to more good work together in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

Steve Ortiz, President & CEO



Our Core Approach:

Meeting Critical Needs through the Power of Partnership

We have all had to adapt and be flexible as a result of this pandemic. Within UWSBC's existing programs in school success and financial empowerment, we have shifted and expanded services in major ways to better meet new and evolving community needs.

Beyond our core programming, throughout the pandemic UWSBC applied our experience in crisis response and our expertise in collaboration to adopt broad approaches to support our community during this crisis. Specifically, since March 2020, the UWSBC team has purposefully set out to:

- Identify emerging gaps, challenges, and unmet needs across the County
- Establish committed networks of leaders and organizations working together toward shared goals
- Invest in, create, and lead new collaborative strategies and programs that directly support families, organizations, and school districts in need

Our work in this area has been driven by the clear recognition that in a time of community crisis many of our most important institutions, local governments, nonprofits, and leaders are spread exceedingly thin.

At many points during the pandemic UWSBC and its partners, including local issue area experts, have identified systemic weaknesses, gaps in local response efforts, and emerging unmet needs. In cases where our expertise positioned us well to be helpful, we have built alliances with leaders in philanthropy, nonprofits, government agencies, school districts, and with donors and volunteers to solve problems and help thousands of our most vulnerable neighbors.

For many years this has been the core approach to our work, one that is based on the power of partnership.



Donor Recognition

Philanthropic Partners

We wish to recognize the critical role that philanthropy has played in supporting effective responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Listed below are many of the philanthropic partners who have contributed financially and also with their time, passion, and expertise to support the programs and strategies described in this report.

Emergency Childcare Initiative

Anonymous
Audacious Foundation
Henry E. & Lola Monroe Foundation
James S. Bower Foundation
Linked Foundation
Susan and Rod Hersberger
The Ann Jackson Family Foundation
The Natalie Orfalea Foundation, with
Lou Buglioli
Upper East Association
Zegar Family Foundation

United Way of Santa Barbara County Critical Needs Fund

Anonymous
Anonymous
James S. Bower Foundation
John Lewis and Carrie Towbes
Wood-Claeyssens Foundation

Vaccination Equity Project

Anonymous
Cottage Health
James S. Bower Foundation
McCune Foundation
The Towbes Foundation
Tony and Kyra Rogers
Foundation
Wood-Claeyssens Foundation

Learning and Enrichment Centers Collaborative

Anonymous
Beverly A. Ryan
Deanna L. Marchiando
Goleta Union School District
Guadalupe Union School District
Hope Elementary School District
Hutton Parker Foundation
James S. Bower Foundation

John Lewis and Carrie Towbes
Linked Foundation
Ms. Gwen T. Dawson
Ms. Kate Ford
Natasha Freutal
Raymond James & Associates
Rotary Club of Montecito
Santa Barbara Foundation

The Ann Jackson Family Foundation
The Natalie Orfalea Foundation, with
Lou Buglioli
The Towbes Foundation
United Way of Santa Barbara County
Yardi Systems, Inc.
Zegar Family Foundation

Donor Recognition

Philanthropic Partners

COVID-19 Joint Response Effort

\$500,000 +

City of Santa Barbara
County of Santa Barbara
Hutton Parker Foundation
James S. Bower Foundation
Santa Barbara Foundation
Zegar Family Fund

\$100,000 - \$499,999

Audacious Foundation
City of Goleta
La Centra-Sumerlin Foundation
The Natalie Orfaela Foundation, with
Lou Buglioli
The Towbes Foundation
Wood-Claeyssens Foundation
Yardi Systems, Inc.
Anonymous Donors

\$10,000 - \$99,999

Deckers Outdoor Corporation
Roy and Ida Eagle Foundation
Farmers and Merchant Trust Company
G.A. Fowler Family Foundation
Goleta Union School District
Guadalupe Union School District
Hope Elementary School District
The Ann Jackson Family Foundation
Linked Foundation
John Lewis and Carrie Towbes
Ms. Sandra Lynne

Manitou Fund
Henry E. & Lola Monroe Foundation
Montecito Bank & Trust
Orange County Community Foundation
June G. Outhwaite Charitable Trust
Tony and Kyra Rogers Foundation
Gerry and Bobbie Rubin
Wells Fargo Bank
Anonymous Donor

\$5,000 - \$9,999

All Saints By The Sea Episcopal Church
Carla Amussen
Bank of America
Mr. and Mrs. William Cabeen, Jr.
Dylanian II Donor Advised Fund
Fidelity Charitable
Lee Heller
P D Jackson Family Foundation
Siri and Bob Marshall
Samuel B & Margaret C Mosher
Foundation
Maryan Schall
Union Bank

For a full list of donors, please visit:
www.unitedwaysb.org/recognition

Crisis Response Cash Assistance Grants for Individuals

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

Launched in mid-March of 2020

- \$2.1 million invested in cash assistance grants for individuals
- 2,373 grants awarded county-wide
- Waiting list of more than 300 ongoing
- Key programmatic and funding partners:



The Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic is first and foremost a health care crisis, but the economic impacts of this disaster were evident even before the stay-at-home orders imposed in March 2020. United Way of SBC's involvement in response and recovery efforts after the Thomas Fire and Debris Flow in 2018 taught us that thousands of people would need support immediately. Local residents living in poverty are especially vulnerable during a disaster.

With the COVID-19 outbreak, many more families would need assistance as entire industries shut down and tens-of-thousands abruptly lost work and government assistance would take time. We also knew that local agencies providing for basic human needs would be severely challenged with the exponential growth in requests for assistance. In times of crisis, people needed concrete support immediately.

Creating a Solution through the Power of Partnership

In early March, UWSBC began working with partners in philanthropy – especially the Santa Barbara Foundation and Hutton Parker Foundation – to create the COVID-19 Joint Response Effort. To date, with the support of many local funders, this philanthropic collaborative has raised more than \$5.3 million to help people impacted by the pandemic and the nonprofits that serve them.

As part of the Joint Response Effort, UWSBC launched a program that to date has awarded over \$2.1 million in cash assistance grants for individuals who experienced a COVID-19-related loss of income. Additionally, UWSBC has served on the nonprofits grants committee that has awarded 215 grants to nonprofit organizations totaling \$3.2 million.

It's really an existential crisis for those of us who lost work. When the money stops coming in, you start asking yourself questions you've never asked before... How will I pay my rent? What will I do if I can't? United Way was the first ray of light in that darkness.

- Cash Assistance Grant Recipient

The cash assistance grants for individuals program was informed by a similar model UWSBC first developed in response to the Thomas Fire and Debris Flow disasters. It was designed to eliminate the bureaucracy and complexity that often prevents the rapid delivery of assistance immediately after a disaster. Our goal was to get cash to people quickly through a simple application process while also ensuring accountability and compliance with IRS regulations. Knowing that needs would exceed the amount of funding available, and also recognizing that government assistance programs would eventually help, grants in our program were capped at \$1,000 per household.

Critical to the effectiveness of this model, UWSBC developed the program structure and guidelines and engaged the Family Service Agency of Santa Barbara County (FSA) to serve as our key programmatic partner. Case managers from FSA were engaged to review the applications, interview applicants, and provide UWSBC with recommended grant amounts. UWSBC staff review FSA's documentation and recommendations to determine grant amounts and make final payment. Importantly, by participating in the review process, FSA has been able to refer those who need more help to other supportive programs and services.

As of April 2021, United Way has awarded \$2.5 million in cash assistance grants to 2,700 households throughout Santa Barbara County.

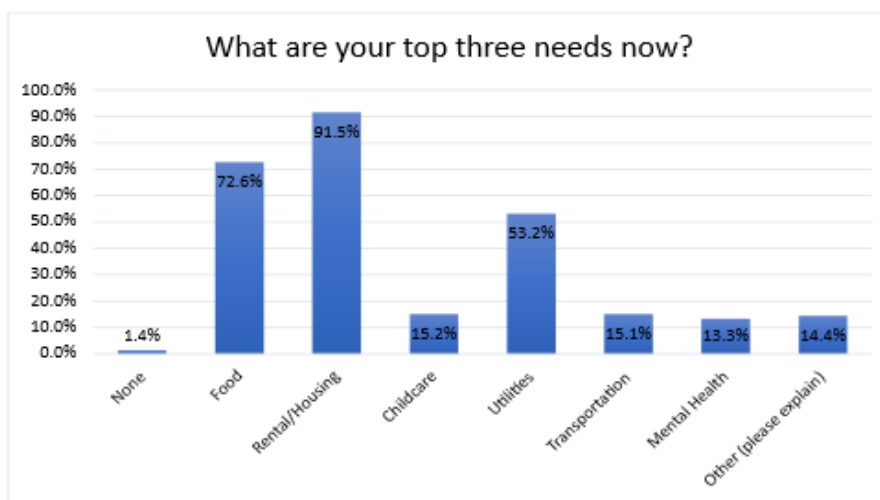
Lessons Learned

- A unified approach among leaders in philanthropy through the COVID-19 Joint Response Effort was an essential component of the program's success and is a model for how philanthropy can work together during times of community crisis.
- Though the program was launched quickly, it took time to secure funding. Many people needed support immediately.
- Rapidly communicating to those in need about the availability of funds was a challenge, especially early in the pandemic.
 - We struggled to reach socially and linguistically isolated populations in North County who are often fearful of government programs due to immigration status.
 - Agencies that would typically encourage people to apply were stretched to their limit responding to the crisis making communications with those organizations about the availability of funds difficult.
- The workload for administering the program was intense and required the attention of multiple FTE staff for many months.

Needs/Recommendations Moving Forward

Beneficiaries of UWSBC's COVID cash and rental assistance programs were surveyed in early January of 2021. A total of 766 responded.

- 54% of those surveyed reported a continued loss of income that is either moderate or severe.
- When asked to rank their current top three needs, 91% chose rent/housing, 72% chose food, and 53% indicated difficulties paying for utilities.
- Recipients named those same three categories as places where more assistance would make the most difference.



As we move into long-term recovery, it will be critical to find people whose needs are not met by government and other benefit programs and to specifically devote philanthropically funded cash assistance grants to those who continue to struggle.

United Way of Santa Barbara County's Ongoing Involvement

Throughout 2021, UWSBC remains committed to providing cash assistance grants to the most vulnerable community members who continue to suffer economic losses due to the pandemic. We are especially targeting grants to those who are either not eligible for government assistance programs or whose needs exceed funding available from other sources. We will work with our partners in the nonprofit, education, and government sectors to identify those most in need and we will continue to employ a model in which people in need are connected with additional services.

To better prepare our community for future events, we will also work to institutionalize disaster cash assistance grants as a permanent capacity at UWSBC. We will work with our nonprofit partners to build our permanent ability to quickly launch and administer cash assistance programs when disaster strikes. We will work with our partners in philanthropy to establish a fund to support cash assistance grants as a permanent strength in our community's disaster response and recovery system.

Crisis Response

Emergency Child Care Initiative for Members of the Essential Workforce

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

Launched March 2020-August 2020

- \$661,000 in philanthropic donations invested with support from seven donors
- 251 child care spaces for essential workforce members at four funded sites throughout the County
- Key programmatic and funding partners:
 - Allan Hancock College
 - Children's Resource & Referral of Santa Barbara County
 - Cottage Health
 - First 5 of Santa Barbara County
 - Hope 4 Kids Early Learning Centers
 - Hope School District
 - Lompoc Family YMCA
 - Lompoc Unified School District
 - Saint Mark Preschool
 - Santa Barbara County Education Office, Child Care Planning Council
 - Santa Barbara Unified School District
 - Santa Maria Valley YMCA
 - Santa Maria-Bonita School District

The Problem

Very early in the pandemic, we watched as systems providing for people's health and basic needs teetered on the verge of collapse in places like New York and Italy. At this time, local health care leaders shared with UWSBC and our partners in philanthropy about the urgent need locally for child care among their employees.

Most schools and preschools had just shut down by state mandate and with no clarity on when and how they might re-open to serve children safely. As a result of these abrupt closures, many members of the essential workforce suddenly found themselves without child care options. They could not leave their young children home alone to work in jobs that are critical to our community's effective pandemic response and public safety.



"Expanding our employee child care programs in the early months of this pandemic was critical. United Way brought the right people together to make it happen quickly. Cottage Health is grateful for this extraordinary effort to help keep our staff on the frontlines of hospital care."

– Ron Werft, President & CEO, Cottage Health

Creating a Solution through the Power of Partnership

In response to this emerging challenge, leaders in philanthropy (Jane and Paul Orfalea/the Audacious Foundation and the Natalie Orfalea Foundation, with Lou Buglioli) stepped up as major funders and co-leaders of a new Emergency Child Care Initiative (ECCI). United Way of SBC joined shortly thereafter to serve as the project's fiscal agent and manager, allowing funders to combine their donations within one organization. As more funders joined, UWSBC established a leadership group to provide input, oversight, and review of the programs and applications for funding. United Way of SBC also brought to the initiative our longtime experience in school readiness and educational achievement programs.

To strengthen our approach, UWSBC hired a highly respected local child care expert, Eileen Monahan, to design a more detailed model and to both help re-open programs that had closed or to create new programs to serve children. Child care providers, school districts, government agencies, and employers were engaged as key partners. Surveys were conducted to assess employee child care needs and identify priorities. The Public Health Department was engaged to inform guidance and other resources to help programs serve children safely.

Ultimately, \$661,000 was invested to support 251 free or subsidized child care spaces at four sites across the County. Funding from the State of California was also leveraged to support the effort. School districts provided facilities, food, and janitorial services. Existing state afterschool program funding was repurposed to help cover expenses. Sanitary supplies and personal protective equipment were provided free of charge.

The ECCI served employees of Cottage Health, Sansum Clinic, Lompoc Valley Medical Center, Community Health Centers of the Central Coast, the City of Santa Barbara, the County of Santa Barbara, the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County, and other essential workforce employers.

This collaborative ended in August 2020 as many child care programs reopened and the steep rise in COVID-19 cases began to decline. Most ECCI funders and partners transitioned their support to UWSBC's Learning & Enrichment Center Collaborative, an ongoing program described on page 17.

The Emergency Child Care Initiative helped YMCAs launch new child care programs for medical providers in Lompoc and Santa Maria. It also helped our employees get back to work, doing what they do best...serving children.

- Shannon Seifert, CEO, Santa Maria Valley YMCA



Lessons Learned

- Obtaining consistent guidance on safety standards and licensing was difficult causing inefficiencies. The science was not clear and government agencies were stretched.
- The ECCI was launched with the worst-case scenario in mind: severe increases in COVID-19 positivity rates and health system collapse. Thankfully, that did not come to pass. It was challenging to work and invest to meet an unknown need.
- Fewer parents were interested in care than was anticipated, mainly due to safety concerns and because some had a spouse working from home who could care for their children.
- Quickly engaging a child care expert to advise and serve as project manager was critical. Opening programs, coordinating across systems, communicating with a large number of partners, parents, and providers required specialized knowledge and practical experience.
- Quickly communicating with local essential workforce employers was challenging because a centralized list does not exist.
- Flexibility and willingness to take risks and move quickly despite uncertainties was critical as was having a centralized agency to serve as fiscal agent and project manager that could pool funding, track needs, and process applications for support to ensure that investments were targeted where they were most impactful.

Needs/Recommendations Moving Forward

The ECCI was deliberately designed to be replicable and represents a potential new strength in our local disaster response system. Disaster planning focused on child care would help better prepare us for future events.

The lack of affordable, quality child care spaces (especially for children age 0-5) is a serious issue locally during normal times. The pandemic revealed how this everyday systemic weakness puts our community at higher risk in disasters. This is a challenge that requires serious attention and concrete solutions in the future. Increasing the everyday availability of high-quality child care for working families is critical to the strength and health of our community in normal times and will also make us more resilient in times of community crisis.



United Way of Santa Barbara County's Ongoing Involvement

School readiness and academic achievement have been among UWSBC's highest priority focus areas for decades. UWSBC's Kindergarten Success Institutes and Fun in the Sun Summer Learning Program provide child care, learning, and enrichment services for hundreds of children each year. This experience helped position UWSBC well to support the ECCI. In the years ahead we will continue delivering our quality programs for children that provide child care and promote academic success. We are committed to supporting meaningful strategies to increase the availability of affordable, quality child care for working families. We also stand ready to assist in future disaster planning efforts focused on making our child care system more resilient, a topic covered later in this report.



United Way of Santa Barbara County Critical Needs Fund

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

Launched in May 2020

- \$218,000 invested in 2020
- Hotel rooms and supportive services for 51 people (328 days) who had no safe alternative to isolate/quarantine
- 26 culturally and linguistically competent contact tracers who served 3,630 hours handling 656 cases
- Key programmatic and philanthropic partners:
 - Family Service Agency
 - John Lewis and Carrie Towbes
 - Santa Barbara County Public Health Department
 - The James S. Bower Foundation
 - The Wood-Claeysens Foundation
 - Anonymous

The Problem

When the pandemic first struck, it was clear that many of our community's most important health care institutions and resources were stretched beyond their limit. The workload, complexity, uncertainty, and challenges were extreme. For months it remained unclear what assistance might, at some point, become available from state and federal sources. Local leaders and providers served valiantly, and without pause, in their seemingly ceaseless efforts.

United Way of Santa Barbara County and its partners in philanthropy wanted to help. However, it was important that our efforts be well informed and also efficient – never distracting those keeping our community safe and caring for those with medical needs.



The Critical Needs Fund has effectively connected local government with our partners in philanthropy to learn, think creatively, and take concrete action together. It has helped the Public Health Department accomplish important goals we would have struggled to achieve alone.

– Dr. Van Do-Reynoso, County Public Health Director

One of the strengths that grew out of UWSBC's work in the aftermath of the Thomas Fire and Debris Flow disasters in 2018 was strong relationships with key local government departments and frontline leadership. When the pandemic struck, UWSBC quickly reconnected with leaders at the County Public Health Department (PHD) to explore how UWSBC and its partners in philanthropy might support their leadership of COVID-19 response efforts.

From this relationship, two specific needs were identified early in the pandemic:

1. In April 2020, leaders at PHD shared concerns that many people who contracted the virus were unable to safely isolate and quarantine to prevent further spread. This dynamic existed especially among people from low-income backgrounds who lived in crowded housing. At the time, it was unclear whether state and federal funds might become available to help cover these expenses.
2. In May 2020, PHD shared the challenges they faced in launching a robust contact tracing program – an essential tool for virus containment. Challenges included the sheer person-power required for such an endeavor. Additionally, PHD made clear that they struggled to quickly find contact tracers with the linguistic and cultural competencies necessary to effectively engage with and serve immigrant, migrant, and indigenous populations who are especially at risk for contracting the virus.

Creating a Solution through the Power of Partnership

To help find solutions UWSBC joined with the James S. Bower Foundation to create the UWSBC Critical Needs Fund (CNF). Other funders joined the CNF, and the collaboration became a way for leaders in government and philanthropy to connect regularly, learn from each other, and become more informed in how they all invested in pandemic response. United Way of SBC served as the manager and fiscal agent for the CNF, also acting as a central point of contact between PHD leadership and local funders.

The Critical Needs Fund has helped leaders in philanthropy invest more effectively together, in partnership with government and nonprofits, to help get our community through this extremely difficult time.

**- Jon Clark, President,
the James S. Bower Foundation**



In April, CNF funders helped pay for hotel rooms and supportive services for people who tested positive but had no safe place to quarantine. More than \$54,000 was invested, supporting 51 people and 328 days of hotel accommodations. By June, the County let us know funding was no longer needed from CNF as federal sources had finally become available to fund this critical need. The timing was perfect as we were already exploring with PHD the challenges they faced rapidly building a robust contact tracing program.

In June, UWSBC helped develop a collaborative model in which the CNF invested \$164,000 to allow the Family Service Agency (FSA) to integrate 26 of their linguistically and culturally competent employees into PHD's contact tracing program. Those uniquely qualified tracers served 3,630 hours handling 656 cases.

By supporting meaningful connections between PHD leaders and major funders at monthly meetings, the government and philanthropic sectors were able to learn from each other and strategically align their funding to ensure maximum impact where it was needed most, and this model for collaborative learning and planning continues into 2021.

Lessons Learned

- Urgent priorities and extreme workloads understandably limit the ability of local disaster response leaders to engage with non-governmental partners in support of coordinated responses to pressing needs and challenges.
- Government leaders often are not aware of the strengths of local nonprofits and the willingness of funders to help, thereby limiting the development of potential solutions across multiple systems and sectors.
- The CNF's engagement with primarily PHD leaders did not facilitate perspectives from other, nongovernmental health care leaders such as hospitals and clinics. Involving more experts would have helped inform strategies and investments.
- Funders often lack the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue with leaders in government and disaster response, but they value these connections very much.
- Flexibility, a willingness to step outside our normal programs, and the ability to quickly take concrete action, were critical to successfully launching collaborative models through the CNF.

Needs/Recommendations Moving Forward

Our experience through the CNF proved the value of a credible convener with strong connections with government, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors to support collaborative solutions and quick action involving multiple organizations and systems. Maintaining this model would strengthen our community's ability to respond and recover when disaster strikes.

United Way of Santa Barbara County's Ongoing Involvement

United Way of Santa Barbara County continues to regularly convene leaders in the government, philanthropic, and nonprofit sectors through the CNF. In March of 2021, UWSBC and its partners launched the CNF Vaccination Equity Project to fund local nonprofits to engage vulnerable and underserved populations and to help them get vaccinated. As of May 2021, \$337,000 has been raised in 2021 for this project. Additionally, UWSBC has expanded the CNF's focus beyond public health issues. This shift is important as we move together into the long-term recovery phase of this disaster, when we must prioritize basic human needs, social and emotional wellness, academic achievement for our children, and the economic stability of our most vulnerable residents. We are committed to maintaining this collaborative model through 2021. We are also exploring how best to institutionalize the CNF model as a permanent strength in our County's disaster response and recovery system going forward.



Crisis Response

Learning & Enrichment Centers Collaborative

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

Launched in August 2020

- Helped raise \$307,000 to assist school-based strategies to bridge the digital divide
- \$1.3 million raised & invested with support from 12 major philanthropic partners to support learning and enrichment centers
- 600+ students served at 10 centers run by nonprofit partners
- Served students in partnership with nine school districts in Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, Hope, Goleta, Lompoc, Orcutt, Santa Maria, and Guadalupe
- Key Programmatic Partners/Providers:
 - Boys and Girls Club of the Mid-Central Coast
 - Channel Islands YMCA
 - Girls Inc. of Carpinteria
 - Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara
 - Good Samaritan Homeless Shelter
 - Isla Vista Youth Projects
 - People's Self-Help Housing
 - Police Activities League
 - Santa Maria Valley YMCA
 - United Boys & Girls Clubs of Santa Barbara County

The Problem

With the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020, schools were forced to abruptly close. Students, parents, teachers, and administrators did their best but faced huge challenges as they quickly moved to online instruction.

Local school district administrators informed UWSBC that 13,000 students in Santa Barbara County would need care and support while their parents were at work. United Way of SBC's research confirmed this need and found that during previous school closures many parents had to choose between staying home to support their children's education or working to put food on the table and avoid eviction. Meanwhile, most summer camps and typical afterschool programs had closed and lacked the resources necessary to reopen.

Obstacles for many children to participating in class were evident early on, and they were especially daunting for children from lower-income backgrounds. Many households lacked access to the internet and computers necessary to connect with teachers online. Many children live in overcrowded housing situations that lack quiet, private spaces required to engage in a virtual classroom. Many parents cannot afford to miss work, making them unable to help their young children get online and stay connected with their teacher throughout the day.

In August 2020, Governor Newsom decreed that schools would be shut down to in-person instruction during most of the coming 2020-21 school year.

As a technology focused company, Yardi wanted to help schools bridge the digital divide, but with 20 school districts in the County, it was difficult to determine which schools needed the most help. United Way provided their assessment of the schools' technology needs, helping us focus our donations to be the most impactful. United Way also connected us directly with school administrators to make the donations happen quickly. We are fortunate to have United Way as a partner in Yardi's efforts to support local schools.

- Arnie Brier, Yardi Systems



Creating Solutions Through the Power of Partnership

For many years UWSBC has partnered with schools to administer a variety of programs focused on school readiness and academic achievement including Early Learning Success Institutes (formerly named Kindergarten Success Institutes) and Fun in the Sun, both of which provide free child care and learning/enrichment opportunities for hundreds of children each year.

Our long-term relationships with educational leaders positioned us well to explore collaborative solutions to the many challenges posed by shutting schools down. With encouragement from district superintendents, we worked with our partners in philanthropy and the nonprofit sector to see how we might help.

We quickly assessed school needs in the area of technology and bridging the digital divide. We then engaged leaders in philanthropy and facilitated \$307,000 in grants to 13 school districts for wireless internet hot spots, hardware, and other digital divide strategies.

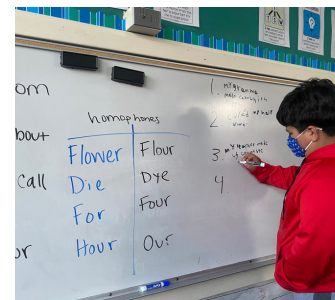
We also began extensive research into collaborative models for providing care and support for a large number of students during the school day. We conducted dozens of focused interviews with district administrators and school principals, potential nonprofit partners, and funders. We convened more than 70 leaders in the youth-serving nonprofit sector to help inform collaborative strategies and engaged leaders in philanthropy to assess their interest in supporting solutions.

Together with our partners we designed the Learning & Enrichment Centers Collaborative (L&ECC) which was officially launched in August 2020 and continued until April 2021 when schools began to reopen. The Centers provided access to technology and the internet; adult supervision; learning support; social/emotional skill development; and access to food, enrichment, exercise, and more. Schools identified children who are most in need and referred them for service. Many schools provided meals and supplies as well as hardware and internet access. United Way of SBC developed the program and served as the collaborative's fiscal agent and manager.

The L&ECC served more than 600 students at 10 centers across the County. United Way of Santa Barbara County raised and invested \$681,000 to serve students through December 2020. When the Governor extended school closures in November 2020, we raised another \$655,000 to continue serving children through April 2021. In total, \$1.3 million was raised for this effort.

Lessons Learned

- School districts faced many crises and severe operational disruptions limiting their ability to develop collaborative models such as the L&ECC. In focused interviews, district administrators identified UWSBC's unique strengths as a credible convener working with diverse partners and funders as being key to the L&ECC's success.
- L&ECC providers reported that it was critical to have one lead agency coordinating efforts and raising funds from numerous sources. This allowed educators and nonprofit partners to focus on launching programs and safely supporting student learning.
- While the L&ECC served many students, many others went without this support due to lack of funds and capacity.



Students attending a United Way-funded Learning & Enrichment Center at Girls Inc of Greater Santa Barbara. Students were provided all-day and in-person adult supervision and learning support, as well as online access, healthy meals, social/emotional wellness, enrichment activities, and exercise.

Needs/Recommendations Moving Forward

Experts in education and youth mental health anticipate significant learning loss, emotional trauma, and social-emotional deficits as a result of prolonged isolation and disruption in the lives of many children, especially those from low-income backgrounds. This will be a major challenge for our community to address in the months and years ahead.

The coming summer months will be an opportunity for our communities to join together to create collaborative models to address learning loss through dynamic, experiential learning and enrichment programs that include social interaction and physical activity.

The L&ECC was funded entirely with philanthropic support. In the future, school districts should be encouraged to set public funds aside and develop agreements with nonprofits and providers in advance to serve children in alternative models in case of disasters and pandemics. Disaster planning to support such models would be a wise strategy moving forward.



We really would not have been able to support as many students as we have without United Way reaching out and including us. We have been able to prevent a few suicides and found out about a sexual assault that wouldn't have been reported without us being on site with the youth and parents. We wouldn't have been able to stay open without United Way.

- L&ECC Collaborative Partner

United Way of Santa Barbara County's Ongoing Involvement

Looking toward the future, UWSBC is especially interested in creating further collaborative models to address the significant need for additional opportunities for student learning, enrichment, physical and emotional wellness, exercise, and activities in the summer months and beyond. This will be accomplished through our well-established educational and enrichment programs such as the United for Literacy, Fun in the Sun, Early Learning Success Institutes, and United for Learning Centers. Additionally, we are currently engaging with nonprofit partners, funders, and school leaders to develop further collaborative models to prepare students for school and support their academic achievement with an eye toward nurturing and supporting the whole child – body, spirit, and mind – after this extremely challenging year.

It is difficult to see how such a comprehensive model serving so many students would have been possible without United Way's leadership of the collaborative. As a funder, we are so thankful for all the work of all the partners involved. It has helped us be more impactful as a foundation.

- Carrie Towbes, President, The Towbes Foundation



Crisis Response Rental & Disaster Assistance Programs

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

Launched in July 2020

- \$3.1 million in rental assistance from the County of Santa Barbara
- \$1.3 million in rental assistance from the City of Santa Barbara
- \$202,000 in disaster assistance from the City of Goleta
- 1200+ recipients as of April 2021
- Additional \$13 million secured in partnership with the County of Santa Barbara for services in 2021

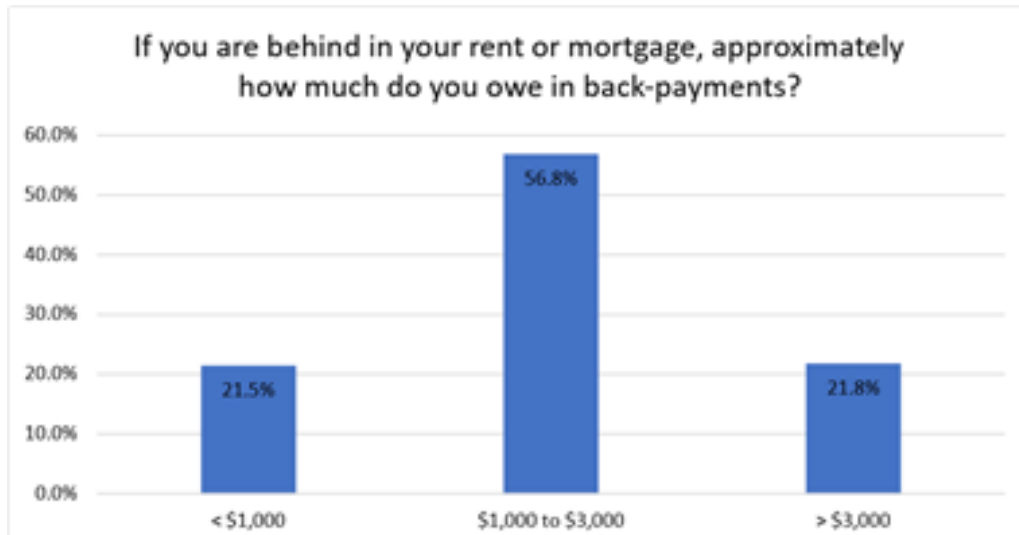


The Problem

Repeated stay-at-home orders and the shutting down of major industries have had severe social and economic impacts on the lives of many local residents. In April 2020, unemployment in Santa Barbara County reached 14%, up from 3% in 2019. Tens-of-thousands lost work and those in lower-paying jobs were hit hardest. Additionally, as schools and child care programs shut down, many working parents had made the difficult choice to leave their jobs and stay home to care for children. A large number of people in Santa Barbara County already live in or near poverty and have no savings. The pandemic pushed many more who were once stable into crisis.

In April 2020, Congress approved stimulus checks for individuals, disaster assistance for businesses, and increased unemployment benefits. The Center for Disease Control and state and local governments imposed eviction moratoriums. These steps helped, but as the pandemic continued for months, they were far from what many families needed to make it.

Renters are of particular concern because eviction moratoriums only defer the payment of rent to a later date. Families found themselves accumulating a large amount of debt that will eventually need to be paid. Additionally, eviction moratoriums do not apply to all situations.



Recipients of United Way's assistance programs were surveyed in January of 2021; 46% of respondents reported that they were concerned about losing their housing in the next six months due to being behind in rent; 56% owed between \$1,000 and \$3,000 in back rent, 21% owed more than \$3,000.

Renters are of particular concern because eviction moratoriums only defer the payment of rent to a later date. Families found themselves accumulating a large amount of debt that will eventually need to be paid. Additionally, eviction moratoriums do not apply to all situations.

It is important to note that landlords suffer as well, as some struggle to pay their mortgage without the rental payments that many rely on as their primary source of income.

Creating Solutions Through the Power of Partnership

In May 2020, UWSBC began working with local governments to explore models for delivering new rental and disaster assistance programs for people who suffered a COVID-19 related loss of income. We worked with the County of Santa Barbara, the City of Santa Barbara, and the City of Goleta to design programs that would help keep vulnerable populations stable and housed during this crisis and beyond. All three government entities were looking for cost-effective models to rapidly deploy funds.

The City of Santa Barbara provided UWSBC \$1.3 million in federal funding to cover the full cost of rent for up to three months for those who qualified. By the end of December 2020, 82 City residents were served by the program with an average grant award of \$4,304. More than \$2.9 million in federal funding was provided by the County of Santa Barbara to cover rental expenses of up to \$1,000 per month for three months. These funds were targeted to qualified applicants who lived in unincorporated areas of the County. In both programs, rental assistance payments were made directly to landlords to ensure the proper use of funds.

The City of Goleta provided \$202,000 to UWSBC to provide disaster assistance payments targeting seniors and other low-income residents living in that municipality. To date 96 Goleta residents have been supported through this partnership.

To help manage these programs and more effectively serve people, UWSBC once again engaged with the Family Service Agency (FSA) as a key partner. Applications were reviewed and eligibility was verified by FSA staff. Family Service Agency staff also connected those in need of further assistance with additional programs and services.



Our property management company represents mainly local property owners, many of them seniors and families who rely on rental payments as their primary source of income. It has been really difficult to see our tenants, who we care about, struggle through the pandemic. The rental assistance program has helped keep our tenants housed without unnecessarily worrying about an accumulation of a rental debt, and our clients stable throughout this crisis.

– Michelle Roberson, Sierra Property Management

Lessons Learned

- Government partners report a high degree of appreciation for UWSBC's flexibility and ability to move quickly to launch new, complex programs with a high level of accountability and effective support for applicants.
- Involvement in these programs expanded UWSBC's disaster assistance expertise to include government funded models and built strong relationships with municipalities and County departments with whom we had not previously worked.
- Because rental assistance programs were new, more work went into program design. Additionally, rules relating to eligibility, use of funds, and documentation shifted at times, presenting a challenge to program implementation.
- Compliance and documentation in government funded programs proved more complex and onerous than philanthropically funded models, requiring significantly higher levels of administrative support necessary for effective implementation.

Needs/Recommendations Moving Forward

Many people continue to suffer from the economic impacts of the pandemic. In UWSBC's survey of disaster assistance programs conducted in January 2021 we found that:

- More than 85% of respondents continued to experience a loss of work and more than 40% remain unemployed
- Nearly one-third of respondents reported being at risk of losing their housing in the next six months because they cannot afford to pay their rent or mortgage
- When asked to rank their top 3 needs, respondents selected rental/housing as being the most important - both presently and before the pandemic.

It is imperative that efforts to prevent evictions and a new wave of homelessness be included in our community's strategies for long-term recovery, including mediation with landlords and legal assistance for renters and social services and basic needs support.

A challenge to effective rental assistance programs is that different municipalities use different models making it difficult to track data across boundaries and likely creating a duplication in administrative expenses.

It would benefit our community's long-term disaster preparedness systems to explore ways to standardize these models so they can be more easily deployed in future disasters.

United Way of Santa Barbara County's Ongoing Involvement

United Way of Santa Barbara County is continuing to partner with local governments to facilitate the effective delivery of disaster and rental assistance programs for local individuals and households. In early 2021, UWSBC began working with the County of Santa Barbara to significantly increase the amount of funding available for rental assistance grants. More than \$13 million dollars has been secured for 2021 and UWSBC is once again administering this program to support people who have experienced a pandemic related loss and cannot afford to pay rent. In coming months, UWSBC will explore with government partners how to establish agreements and program models that can be maintained permanently, ready to launch immediately when disaster strikes. These goals are consistent with UWSBC's commitment to supporting response and recovery in times of community crisis and our decades-long support for financial empowerment programs.



Adapting Existing UWSBC Programs to Meet Community Needs During the Pandemic

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

Ongoing

- In partnership with 45 schools, United for Literacy served 25,000 students and their families – an increase from a pre-pandemic average service level of 10,000
- In collaboration with 50 programmatic partners and funding partners, Fun in the Sun served 350 children through a new and dynamic virtual model
- The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program engaged 113 volunteers to help 1,159 low-income residents file their taxes and receive over \$1.7 million in tax refunds.

The Problem

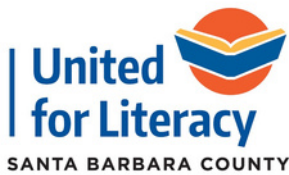
The COVID-19 crisis forced many nonprofit organizations to adapt and change how they normally do business to meet dramatic increases in community needs as a result of shutdowns and prolonged stay-at-home orders. It was immediately clear that UWSBC's programmatic impacts were now more important than ever, but that we needed to be flexible and move quickly to substantially adapt and re-imagine our core programs in ways that would continue serving our communities effectively in the new and challenging COVID-19 environment.

The successful adoption of new and effective programmatic models required an enormous amount of planning. The move to virtual/online services required new infrastructure, like hotspots for families who lacked wireless access. These new models required significant training of volunteers and staff delivering services. New partnerships and systems were needed to connect with people in person when necessary, while keeping our staff, volunteers, and those we serve safe.

We express deep appreciation to the UWSBC staff team and our many partners who make our programs strong and successful every year, but especially this past year when a remarkable amount of work was required to ensure our ongoing impact.



Creating Solutions Through the Power of Partnership



Each year, UWSBC supports the implementation of web-based literacy programs in partnership with 45 schools across the County. When schools closed in March 2020, program participants grew from 10,000 to over 25,000 students per day. These programs, such as Reading Plus and Lexia Core 5, have helped schools and parents transition their children to distance learning and expand learning at home. To learn more visit:

www.unitedwaysb.org/ufl



Every summer, UWSBC serves roughly 350 low-income children through its nationally recognized Fun in the Sun (FITS) summer learning and enrichment program. Due to COVID-19 closures, we adapted FITS to a virtual model, providing children and families with a safe, supportive learning environment. Students received weekly kits with supplies for art, STEM, and other learning activities. Nutritious meals were provided with support from the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County. Credentialed teachers, experienced para-educators, and community partners served 350 students through FITS in the summer of 2020. To learn more and to view the 2020 program video visit:

www.unitedwaysb.org/fits



As part of its focus on financial empowerment, UWSBC annually joins with 13 partner agencies and 150 volunteers to help low-income residents complete and submit their taxes, charging no fee for the service. In 2020 the program was moved online. Participants dropped their tax information off, and IRS-certified tax preparation volunteers scheduled online sessions to help complete their submittal. In 2020, the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program engaged 113 volunteers to help 1,159 low-income residents file their taxes receive over \$1.7 million in tax refunds.. To learn more, visit:

www.unitedwaysb.org/vita

Lessons Learned

- As noted earlier in this report, school readiness and academic achievement have been among UWSBC's highest priority focus areas for decades. UWSBC's programmatic experience with Kindergarten Success Institutes, United for Literacy, and Fun in the Sun were not only applicable to address pandemic-specific needs for remote learning and academic support but also helped position UWSBC well to develop and lead new pandemic initiatives including the Emergency Child Care Initiative and the Learning & Enrichment Center Collaborative.
- Similarly, UWSBC's ongoing core focus on financial empowerment and the VITA program were an element of the overall economic assistance dimension of the pandemic response and greatly informed our approach to implementing cash and rental assistance programs.
- UWSBC's networks of pre-pandemic partnerships and relationships with community organizations, government agencies, schools, and leaders in philanthropy strengthened its ability to quickly create and lead new partnerships and collaborative strategies to address community needs in the disaster context. These strengths served as the foundation from which to develop complex solutions across systems in key areas of need including academic support, child care, financial empowerment, public health capacity building, philanthropic coordination, and collaborative models with local governments and school districts.

United Way of Santa Barbara County's Ongoing Involvement

School Readiness and Academic Achievement and Financial Empowerment will remain core focus areas for UWSBC in the years ahead. In addition, UWSBC will add a new focus area of Response and Recovery in Times of Community Crisis. Several aspects of this new focus area are outlined in this report. See page 30 for an overview of UWSBC's 2021-2023 Strategic Plan and please visit www.unitedwaysb.org/reports to read the Strategic Plan in full.



Crisis Response

Funding and Supporting the Leadership of Others

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

In addition to leading the initiatives highlighted in this report, United Way has also supported the leadership of other organizations over the course of the pandemic. Below is a list of community partners that received a combined total of \$2.7 million either directly from United Way or through our advocacy to other funders on behalf of their work.

When Covid-19 first hit, United Way convened leaders of the nonprofit sector to understand what we were facing. While immediately implementing new procedures in accordance with CDC guidelines to transport our regular clients, Easy Lift also helped other nonprofits transport food and supplies throughout the county. Unexpectedly, we then received \$20,000 from an anonymous donor. We had no idea at the time that United Way was encouraging donors they knew to support Easy Lift and many other nonprofits. Their swift initiative enabled us to best serve the community at its most vulnerable time.

– Ernesto Paredes, Executive Director, Easy Lift Transportation



805 UndocuFund
 Blochman Union School District
 Boys and Girls Club of the
 Mid-Central Coast
 Buellton Union School District
 Carpinteria Unified School District
 Central Coast Alliance United for a
 Sustainable
 Economy (CAUSE)
 Channel Islands YMCA
 College Elementary School District
 CommUnify
 Community Health Centers of the
 Central Coast
 Cottage Health
 County of Santa Barbara
 Cuyama Joint Unified School
 District
 Cuyama Valley Family
 Resource Center
 Easy Lift Transportation

Family Service Agency of Santa
 Barbara County
 Foodbank of Santa Barbara County
 Girls Inc. of Carpinteria
 Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara
 Guadalupe Union School District
 Goleta Union School District
 Good Samaritan Homeless Shelter
 Hope 4 Kids Early Learning Centers
 Hope School District
 Isla Vista Youth Projects
 Latinx and Indigenous Migrant
 COVID-19 Task Force
 Lompoc Family YMCA
 Lompoc Unified School District
 Marian Regional Medical Center
 Foundation
 Mixteco Indigena Community
 Organizing Project (MICOP)
 Orcutt Union School District
 People's Self-Help Housing

Police Activities League
 Santa Barbara County Public
 Health Department
 Santa Barbara Education
 Foundation
 Santa Barbara Police Activities
 League
 Santa Barbara Rescue Mission
 Santa Barbara Unified School District
 Santa Maria-Bonita School District
 Santa Maria Joint Union High
 School District
 Santa Maria Valley YMCA
 Showers of Blessing
 Solvang Elementary School District
 United Boys and Girls Clubs of
 Santa Barbara County
 Transition House

Please join us in our work moving forward.

As portrayed in this report, United Way adapted in many ways to meet major community needs and challenges in 2020. While much of this work is new, all of it has been informed by our decades-long experience running programs and building partnerships that help children succeed academically and support families to be financially stable and strong.

Early in 2020, before COVID-19, United Way was in the process of creating a new strategic plan. When the pandemic struck, we paused the planning process so we could focus our resources on responding to the crisis. As the long-term impacts of the pandemic became clear, we restarted the planning process to help focus and strengthen United Way's future work helping our community recover from this disaster.

United Way's new, three-year strategic plan was launched in April 2021. In it, United Way continues to prioritize two programmatic focus areas that have informed our work for decades:

- School Readiness and Academic Achievement
- Financial Empowerment

Additionally, recognizing our experience and the programs we have developed with our partners during multiple disasters in recent years, the strategic plan also prioritizes a new programmatic focus area for United Way:

- Response and Recovery During Times of Community Crisis

At United Way of Santa Barbara County, we envision a strong community that is united through the power of partnership. We strive to engage with and empower others to achieve results – leaders, donors, volunteers, and organizations working together to support local children and families to be successful and resilient today, and in the future.

We hope you will continue to join us in this important work.

United Way gave us a grant directly to keep our afterschool program open for kids residing within our Santa Maria Shelter Campus so that they could distance learn in a safe way during the pandemic. Funding was critical to keep this program going, and also expand staffing and hours while students attended school online. In July 2020, we had a COVID outbreak at our Santa Maria Emergency Shelter serving 70 people resulting in unexpected costs to keep clients safely quarantined. Once again, United Way stepped up to help us during our first outbreak within our shelter systems. The same day I asked for help, they secured a \$10,000 contribution from an anonymous donor and advocated with other donors who came through for us as well. This was in addition to a \$25,000 donation they helped secure when the pandemic first struck. Having partners like United Way has helped us weather the storm of this pandemic.

– Sylvia Barnard, Executive Director, Good Samaritan Shelter

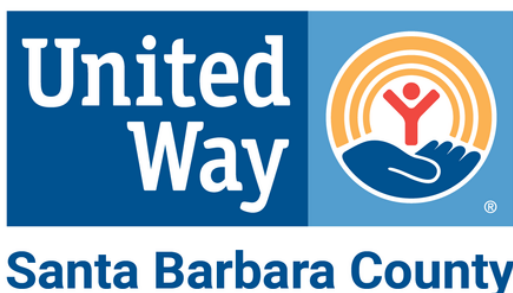


We wish to recognize those many family, friends, and community members who we have lost during this most difficult and tragic year. Our hearts go out to those many among us who have lost loved ones and people close to them.

We also recognize the hardship that so many have experienced during this pandemic and the instability and crisis it has created in the lives of thousands of our neighbors and community members.

And finally, we honor those who have helped us all get through this together, the many members of the essential workforce, especially medical providers and first responders, who have worked valiantly to keep us healthy, safe, and supported.

**We pledge to continue our work as a partner
and helping hand to support our community
and those most in need in this challenging
time and the years ahead.**



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www.unitedwaysb.org/COVID19