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ANNUAL REPORT



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Changing Lives.
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CommUnify
A Community Action Agency.



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

For some, 2020 was a year to forget, but for CommUnify, it was transformational. Like everyone, we transitioned to a strange new world of masks and Zoom calls. But we also challenged ourselves to meet the fast-changing needs of the children, youth, families and seniors that we continued to serve – all facing unique problems brought about by the pandemic. I continue to be inspired by our staff's resilience, innovation and compassion.

Our Head Start teachers quickly shifted to providing online classes with children and their parents to ensure continued social, emotional and academic growth. We provided over 300 computers to families, including assistance with internet access to bridge the digital divide.

Family & Youth Services switched to telehealth services, meeting with youth online to provide mentoring and emotional support. Our CA PREP staff were recognized for creating an online model that delivers reproductive health education in a virtual classroom – a model now implemented in other CA PREP programs throughout California.

Community Services pivoted to develop virtual Financial Literacy classes to help families learn to manage money more effectively. Our Family Self-Sufficiency program expanded to include rent assistance and other services for families struggling with lost wages. At the same time, our 2-1-1 Santa Barbara helpline became a critical resource in the pandemic, serving as the hub of COVID information and referrals.

The Senior Nutrition Program experienced unprecedented growth, doubling the number of seniors served between March and June. It was a "Team CommUnify" effort, with staff from across the agency stepping up to deliver over 700 meals a day to seniors sheltering at home.

Finally, we took the bold step of rebranding our organization as *CommUnify - A Community Action Agency*. The new name honors our history as part of the national Community Action network, and casts a vision for working collaboratively with every facet of the community to address the causes and conditions of poverty. Indeed, COVID has challenged and changed us – better preparing us to meet the needs of the coming year as many families continue to face economic uncertainty. Rest assured, we are here for those families. Onward and upward!

Patricia Keelean



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

If one word can sum up 2020 for the Community Action Commission of Santa Barbara County (now CommUnify), and our communities as a whole, it's "perseverance."

To persevere is to weather a storm or crisis with resolute determination and come out all the better. So now, with light at the end of the COVID tunnel and a return to some normalcy, CommUnify has proven with merit that it can, and did, persevere.

First, 2020 brought a radical shift with lockdowns that was a shock to the system. As people sheltered away from the virus in the safety of their homes, schools underwent major disruptions. For CommUnify, the cancellation of Head Start classes resulted in significant funding reductions. In addition, the loss of in-person interactions prompted a hard hit to its workforce — an outcome that was particularly concerning for people whose jobs depend on social contact. Meanwhile, the employees that were able to carry out their duties had to do so from home. These abrupt changes were challenging at first, both from an operational and financial standpoint. Nonetheless, work did continue and services were rendered. Most importantly, those who rely on CommUnify's programs were still largely able to receive them.

Though what lies ahead may be uncertain, CommUnify is still firmly looking towards the future, ready to persevere should a new storm cross its path. One way they acknowledged change in 2020, was with a new name. This was necessary in order to update both the role and goals of the organization as the communities' needs have evolved. The name "CommUnify" seems to sum up the varied services the agency offers in a single term. In fact, with the pandemic being a seminal event, there is a before, and there is an after. Going into the lockdown with one name and coming out with another sums up the chrysalis quality of CommUnify in 2020.

Robert S. Freeman

2020 BY THE NUMBERS

CommUnify creates opportunities for families and individuals to achieve stability through its 22 health and human service programs, including **Head Start, Senior Nutrition, Weatherization and Energy Assistance, Family & Youth Services, and 2-1-1 Santa Barbara County.**

8,207

total individuals
served by CommUnify



172,616

meals provided to
seniors



53,302

meals provided to
children ages 0-5



22,863

calls & texts answered
by the 2-1-1 helpline



3,279

youth participated in
Youth Services programs



1,075

families received assistance
with their energy bills



1,150

children prepared
for kindergarten



358

children received
dental care



178

families received
home repairs and
energy-efficiency upgrades



HEAD START

programs promote the school readiness of infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children from low-income families. The programs also engage parents or other key family members in positive relationships, with a focus on family well-being.



NORMA PACHECO, A THREE-TIME HEAD START PARENT WITH HER YOUNGEST DAUGHTER

It was a newspaper ad that started this Goleta family on the path to educational success. In 2013, **Norma Pacheco** saw a small advertisement for the local Head Start program, and thought she'd give it a try for her first born, Maya. Soon, the five-year-old was enrolled and thriving. "She cried the first day after I left. But then never again," said Norma. Three years later, Norma's second daughter Sophia started in the program, and fast forward another six years – daughter Victoria is a student at the **Los Ninos Head Start** in Santa Barbara. That makes Norma Pacheco a Head Start parent, three times over.

"My girls have learned so much from this program – all three of them are bilingual now. They have developed respect for others and for traditions. The two older ones are doing well in their local public schools because they were prepared by Head Start," says the hardworking 33-year-old mother, who grew up in Goleta, attended area schools, and once had her own house cleaning business.

Norma now has a full-time job in construction as well as a "side gig" cutting hair to make extra money for the single-parent family. Having all three of her daughters engaged in school helps her stay on the job to achieve financial self-sufficiency. She knows the girls are happy and secure, and in a positive learning environment.

Norma says that as an adult she has also learned from Head Start. "I took a 12-week parenting class and learned a lot about communicating with my child – like getting down to their level to look eye to eye, and to have patience – sometimes the parent also needs to take 'a time out' to calm down." She participates in monthly meetings for Head Start parents where she has seen first-hand the

powerful impact that learning can have on a family. She told us about one man who was overcome with gratitude for the Head Start teachers who helped his young son overcome a speech disorder. "He got choked up telling us that a doctor said his son would never really be able to talk, yet now his son was speaking clearly."

Norma's daughter Maya is now 12-years-old and in seventh grade, with a penchant for math. Middle child Sophia also enjoys math but at 10 years of age, science is her true love. Youngest daughter Victoria is the family "diva", striking an exaggerated pose for photos. The five-year-old is popular at school – other kids excitedly shout out "Victoria" when she walks into the room. This however wasn't the case back in August 2020, when Victoria first began Head Start. The pandemic prevented in-person classes, and the active preschooler was initially too distracted to participate in online learning. But, Norma says, "she got better at it as the months passed," particularly enjoying the new learning materials that teachers dropped off, and the themed online events such as Pajama Day, and Crazy Hair Day. Now that students are back in the classroom, Victoria is always eager to help her teachers, and can't wait for this September when she will be a "big girl" in Transitional Kindergarten.

"I want all three of my daughters to go to university, and achieve their goals," says Norma Pacheco, proud mother and working woman. "One says she wants to be a veterinarian, the other a lawyer and little Victoria says a teacher." Perhaps in a few decades, this Head Start student will return to the preschool classroom... as the teacher.

To facilitate online learning during COVID-19, Head Start provided

300
COMPUTERS
to families in need.

"The two older ones are doing well in their local public schools because they were prepared by Head Start."

Norma Pacheco

SENIOR NUTRITION

The Senior Nutrition program provides nutritious meals to seniors throughout the county. Every weekday, hundreds of seniors participate in one of two initiatives – *Healthy Senior Lunch* welcomes seniors at community centers where hot meals are served; *Healthy at Home* delivers meals personally to housebound residents.



PROGRAM PARTICIPANT **TIMOTHY NAVARRETE** RECEIVES A MEAL DELIVERY AT HOME

For the Senior Nutrition program, 2020 was the most challenging year of its 47-year history. In a “normal” year, the program serves fresh, nutritious meals to hundreds of seniors in lively community settings, and delivered to homebound seniors across the county. The COVID-19 crisis, with its necessary public safety measures, suddenly limited seniors’ access to a fresh, healthy meal. In response, program coordinators immediately converted a majority of the meals to home delivery. Not surprisingly, hundreds of new clients, cut off from their usual support systems, called on CommUnify for help. This resulted in delivering nutritious meals to nearly 700 seniors every week, double the usual number of seniors served.

The biggest increases in senior meal enrollment overall came from the northern part of Santa Barbara County, but there were also larger numbers of seniors arriving daily to pick-up a healthy prepared lunch at the downtown Santa Barbara community sites, including Louise Lowry Davis Center and Presidio Springs Senior Living.

“Though many seniors who were enrolled in the community center meal program switched to home delivery, and a majority of the new enrollees are requesting home delivery, we continued to serve to-go meals at most of the open community sites as there was definitely a need for this,” said **Patty C. Lopez**, CommUnify Senior Meal Program Manager. In 2020, meal site coordinators noticed an increase in homeless seniors picking up lunch at several community centers within the city of Santa Barbara.

July topped all previous monthly records, providing 17,667 meals, a 55% increase over the projected monthly meal count. Food expenses skyrocketed— nearly \$1 million spent on food alone in 2020—along with increased staff time and transportation costs. It was a monumental effort representing a staggering increase over previous years, but one that the agency felt was essential to protecting local seniors during this difficult period.

Even during some the darkest days of 2020, evidence of the community’s resiliency and hopeful spirit appeared. For example, on one particularly difficult day, the agency was heartened to receive a voice message. The caller, “Anne”, just wanted to express her gratitude, through tears, for the meal and the friendly visit she had received that day.

I was just going to put my bin out on the step, and I get a knock on the door and it's my delivery man. How nice and sweet he is. I don't know what his name is, but I called to him and we exchanged words. I'm very grateful. You know, I don't have any money to give you...I'm two months behind on my rent...um, but what's amazing is the simple things...I just wanted to say thank you...I'm so appreciative and God bless you.

Anne’s message served as a reminder that it’s not only financial stress and loneliness that thousands of our local seniors experience every day, but also the positive impact that a kind word, a friendly face and a hot meal can bring to someone in distress. The pandemic deepened seniors’ sense of isolation and fear, as they found themselves facing a global health crisis alone. Without help, many of these seniors would experience hunger and food insecurity every day.

During the pandemic year, more than ever before, CommUnify remained firmly committed to ensuring that no senior is turned away from this meal program, and every senior who needs a meal is fed.

“Your program is just really awesome. Your drivers are so great. I am a caregiver for two ladies who live in a mobile home park. Those drivers really add cheer to them during this quarantine. So I just wanted to give you kudos for that.”

Unidentified Caller, Orcutt

LOS COMPADRES

Since 1997, the program's goal has remained the same: to help youth in at-risk situations become self-empowered while addressing the psycho-social issues that impede their path to success.



LEO, PROGRAM PARTICIPANT WITH JOSHUA HURST, MENTOR

At 15 years of age, **Ronny*** is already a junior in high school due to the extra school work he requested and successfully completed while at Bob Forinash Community Day School in Lompoc. Science is his favorite subject. For his proactive efforts to earn school credits, Ronny received the Principal's Award.

This pursuit of excellence is a testament to a young man's desire to overcome difficult life challenges. Ronny is the middle child of three siblings who were placed in foster care when he was in the 4th grade. A few years later, Ronny, his brother and sister were all adopted by their aunt.

According to Ronny, "problems follow me." As a freshman, there were physical fights with guys who harassed him, so he got "kicked out" of high school. He was familiar with Los Compadres from older friends in the program, so he readily agreed to participate when the resource was offered to him. Not only does Ronny enjoy the group hiking, fishing and beach trips but he values "the talks and life lessons," he says, that often happen on the drives with his Los Compadres mentor. "I get a bigger view of things. Our conversations offer up a better life."

Los Compadres mentor and case manager **Joshua Hurst** tells us he has watched Ronny grow up, "starting in his middle school years when he wanted to hang around with us and his friends in our program," said Joshua. "I've watched him become a young man, navigating the ups and downs in his life, still always with a smile on his face."

Ronny has successfully completed the Los Compadres program, achieving specific personal goals through mentoring. When asked about future plans, Ronny says he likes the idea of being a truck driver with its independence and opportunity to see the country. He is aware that Allan Hancock College offers a free vocational education course that trains students for a career in the commercial trucking industry. Of course, first he needs to get his learner's permit and driver's license – "hopefully this summer," he says with a smile.

Leo* is 16 and new to Los Compadres. Just a month into the program, the soft spoken yet articulate young man is open to talking about his recent trouble in an effort to understand "why?"

The only son in a family of five siblings with a single parent, Leo likes to keep busy with hands-on projects and experiences like playing games and high school football. This would indicate that the year-long lock-down of the pandemic was particularly difficult for the high school sophomore. Isolating at home, he didn't have a mobile phone or cable for his Play Station so he couldn't connect with friends. Leo says "there was no one to talk to" for most of 2020.

When Leo first heard about Los Compadres, he wanted to participate because it was "something to do." Due to COVID regulations, the fishing and hiking trips that participants relish the most, couldn't happen, but Leo did connect with Josh, who is also his mentor. Josh's communication and mentoring were especially important when Leo was making the transition into foster care.

"I get a bigger view of things. Our conversations offer up a better life."

Ronny, Program Participant

* Name of participant has been changed to protect their identity.



SEBASTIAN, PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

"I find Leo open to learning and making the best of even a tough situation," said Josh. "He is much more capable than he realizes."

Currently living with his foster family in Santa Maria, Leo looks forward to the next year of high school and playing football. With the loosening up of COVID restrictions, and Los Compadres group trips and face-to-face mentoring sessions on the horizon, life appears brighter for the young man who thinks about joining the Army after high school. Leo told us proudly that, in May, he wished his foster mom a "Happy Mother's Day."



LOS COMPADRES CASE MANAGERS AND MENTORS (BACK ROW) **RICARDO GARCIA VILLANUEVA**, **RAFAEL ALVARADO** AND **JOSHUA HURST** WITH **PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS** (FRONT ROW).



RONNY, PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Sebastian* has been involved with Los Compadres for about a year. At 16, the self-confident young man is unusually polite, answering questions with "yes, ma'am, and "no, ma'am. From a family of four kids and two hardworking parents – mom and dad both work in the local strawberry fields – Sebastian loves and appreciates his family. Seemingly, he has come to understand that his actions have consequences that can affect his family's solidarity.

It's an understatement to say that Sebastian did not enjoy "school online". He is looking forward to a much better year as a senior at a smaller high school in Orcutt. He says his Los Compadres mentor **Rafael Alvarado** stayed in touch with him throughout his time at home during the COVID lockdown. Sebastian gratefully acknowledges Rafael's encouragement to "go to school and get good grades", and seems glad to have an interested adult who listens, and offers hope.

"At Los Compadres I have had the opportunity to work with youth going through individual challenges," said Rafael. "We strive to guide our participants through our Seeking Safety, El Joven Noble, and Mentoring programs to feel empowered while emphasizing skill-building. Sebastian has shown that, although he may encounter challenges, he has the skills to overcome them."

Los Compadres is starting to plan group outings again as the county opens up from the pandemic. Sebastian looks forward to that. When asked about a favorite time in his life so far, he immediately brings up a 6th grade field trip to science camp in the local mountains. Sebastian's face lights up relating that overnight camp experience with other students "in the wilderness," he says. Through Los Compadres, Sebastian, as well as Ronny and Leo, could very well create similar new memories in the next chapter of their young lives.



WEATHERIZATION

The program provides no cost or low-cost home energy upgrades and education designed to provide safe, healthy, and energy-efficient homes for clients. The services provided can help reduce client utility bills and increase awareness of energy conservation.



ADRIAN AND DAVE OF JERRY'S PLUMBING AND HEATING IN SANTA MARIA, A LOCAL SUBCONTRACTOR FOR COMMUNITY.

One day CommUnify received this voice message, *Hi! Good Morning. My name is George Kingsley. The staff member I've been talking to is Maria Vega. I would just like to tell you that your whole staff and Maria have been so wonderful through this water heater thing with me, and helped me out.*

I don't know how to thank you but to tell you what a wonderful staff you have. The people that they sent over to replace it – Adrian and his assistant – they were all wonderful also. I just wanted to let you know that I think they are fantastic, and I appreciate everything that you guys do for us. I want to thank you. Have a real nice weekend and keep safe.

This message was from a retired man who was born in Ventura, grew up in Buellton and spent most of his adult life living and working in Santa Maria. Now at 73 years of age, **George Kingsley** resides in a mobile home in Orcutt.

When his hot water heater stopped working, George tried to work through the manufacturer's customer service department. As instructed, he sent away for the recommended part and paid to have the part installed at \$100 per house call. The water heater would work for a while and then break again, including one especially frustrating time when George was in the hospital and his son was staying in his home – without hot water. Finally after investing \$400 in the irredeemable water heater, and the manufacturer refusing to reimburse him, George gave up and called CommUnify. Explaining that he had been showering in cold water for over a week, George was thrilled with their response: the agency installed an efficient new water heater at no cost to the senior.

When we interviewed George he had just returned home from cataract surgery. He conveyed to us his earlier frustration with the broken water heater and how “every time you think you are starting to get ahead, something happens.” This is the lament of many seniors living on fixed incomes in Santa Barbara County.

Before retirement, George had worked successfully in both the automotive industry and in construction. When the 2007 financial crisis hit – building and construction businesses were particularly impacted – George was laid off by his employer. At 58 years of age and in the middle of a recession, jobs just weren't there. Like many aging baby boomers at that time, George went ahead and retired earlier than he had planned.

In spite of some of the hardships of aging on limited means, George is upbeat and grateful. He has a strong, clear voice and is quite articulate, so it was no surprise to learn that he was often asked to speak publicly during his many years as a member of the Elks Club Santa Maria Lodge #1538 – the fifth largest Elk Lodge in the United States.

George told us proudly of another time in his life, several decades ago, when he and a neighbor founded an annual “Candy Cane Lane”.

“All the residents participated by decorating their homes in some way, and we helped them. Since I worked in construction I was able to get a scissor lift to help hang lights,” said George. “One homeowner, dressed as Santa Claus, got up on his roof. We handed out thousands of candy canes to the families who slowly drove down our street.” For many years, Candy Cane Lane was a popular Holiday tradition in Nipomo.

Good memories like these, as well as a nice warm shower makes life sweeter for this local senior who has contributed so generously to his own community.



“It is a pleasure to provide these Community Services to seniors – especially during a hard time like the pandemic. Mr. Kingsley is such a gentleman, and now knowing he is comfortable, I can smile.”

Maria Vega, Energy Services Assistant (worked from home for most of 2020).

FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY

provides case management, employment counseling and financial literacy coaching to low-income individuals and families striving to achieve self-sufficiency. Participants receive support to overcome barriers in education, housing, and employment.

2020 was an especially challenging year for **Mercedes Solis** and her family. Though she was able to hang on to her restaurant job in Lompoc where she cooks and does meal prep, her life partner lost his job of ten years at the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown.

Because Mercedes knows it takes two incomes for a family to “make it” in Santa Barbara County, and she didn’t want to fall behind in paying household bills, she quickly reached out to CommUnify’s Family Self-Sufficiency program (FSS). She had heard about the resource from another CommUnify employee in Children’s Services, where Mercedes’ 2-year-old daughter Sofia is enrolled in early education. (These intra agency referrals and partnerships are a hallmark of CommUnify.)

One of the eligibility requirements for FSS is that the applicant be “highly motivated.” This description certainly fits Mercedes Solis, 35. Her forethought and the effort she made – with the encouragement of Case Manager **Bianca Lopez** – prevented Mercedes from losing her apartment. During the pandemic, the family was able to receive short-term rental assistance, in addition to utility assistance. With disaster averted, Mercedes and her partner Richard were able to breathe a bit easier, and start putting a little money aside – a safeguard in the event of another unexpected crisis.



MERCEDES SOLIS, PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

A problem can easily become a crisis in a family with low income. Mercedes experienced such a set-back last year when her daughter unexpectedly needed surgery. Missing a few days of work in order to care for her daughter meant that Mercedes earned less money that week. “It was a stressful time,” admitted Mercedes. “There were highs and lows in 2020. On the positive side, when Richard was laid off, he was able to spend more time with our daughter, and we didn’t need to pay for childcare,” observed the practical mom.

Richard is working again, and Mercedes remains in the FSS program, continuing to set goals, develop a strategic plan and follow through to completion. She envisions eventually having a house painting business in partnership with Richard, and plans to improve her English and grow their savings. Mercedes also looks forward to more time doing what she loves most – being with Sofia, especially reading to her.

“I appreciate the opportunity to consult with Bianca, who has such a kind and patient approach,” said Mercedes. “My original goal – to be in control of the family budget and manage money more effectively – is taking shape. Richard has noticed the difference and has joined me in saving some of our earnings each week...for our family’s future.”



“Mercedes has shown determination and stays motivated to continue reaching her goals. I am grateful to be part of the journey to success.”

Bianca Lopez, Case Manager,
Community Services

COMMUNIFY

is a nonprofit organization working in partnership with the community to find innovative and sustainable solutions for residents to improve and maintain their health, resilience and financial security.



KIM EICHERT, PROGRAM SUPPORT MANAGER, COMMUNIFY CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Kim Eichert has a big job. As Program Support Manager for **Children's Services** at CommUnify, she is responsible for overseeing and supporting six **Head Start** centers that serve 242 children and families in the northern region of Santa Barbara County. Her responsibilities include interviewing, hiring, and training employees; planning, assigning, and directing work; appraising performance; engaging and guiding employees; anticipating, preventing and resolving problems. And that was before COVID-19!

Kim first connected with Head Start in 2003 as a parent and volunteer at the children's center in Cuyama. Her middle son Isaiah was 2 years old when local Head Start staff came by during their door-to-door recruitment. Kim thought that preschool might be a good idea – her oldest son didn't go to preschool and had some difficulty when he started kindergarten. The young mom quickly became involved on Head Start's parent board and served as a representative on the policy council that gives parents a say in hiring and program direction. Kim's interest and dedication prompted a Head Start supervisor to suggest a career in early childhood education. "Growing up, I enjoyed taking care of children, helping my mom at the church preschool, and often babysitting for others," said Kim. In 2004, she enrolled in Allan Hancock College, and within two years – degree in hand – Kim was hired to work at the very Head Start school that Isaiah had attended. Fulfilling the promise that Head Start managers had initially seen, Kim quickly moved up in the organization, taking on a supervisor position within her first year. "I love the 'whole child, whole family model' at Head Start. My mind was set to work for them," said the educator.

One might not have predicted Kim's career success based on her early teenage years. She was a self-professed "wild child" from a troubled family, running away and even spending time in juvenile hall. At 15 years old, Kim was pregnant. "But I settled down when I knew I was becoming a mom", reflected Kim. "I wanted a better life for my child."

The pandemic of 2020, brought a whole new level of learning to Head Start staff, teachers, students and parents. Suddenly, in March, we got word to close the centers," said Kim. "Making those calls to teachers and parents was so hard. It was definitely an uncertain time. But the agency was awesome and kept us all safe."

After a few months, the Head Start education team had the new guidance for at-home learning, and began to put it into practice for their students. "A silver lining to the pandemic year was increased participation by parents, who found that the at-home, online classes and meetings were more convenient for them to attend.

"Kim is a terrific Regional Manager," said **Lorraine Neenan**, Children's Services Director at CommUnify. "She maintains good, professional relationships with her staff, families and the community. The Coronavirus upended most of our program's systems for the last year. Kim was nimble and flexible in addressing the many issues encountered. She adjusted to virtual meetings, lesson planning, and opening classrooms to meet COVID-prevention standards. She is a valued member of our Program Development Team!"

With a 15-year career in early childhood education, Kim Eichert remains a steady advocate for children and their families, passionately supporting the Head Start premise that "every child, regardless of circumstances at birth, has the ability to reach their full potential." Kim tells prospective early childhood educators that they need to be compassionate and truly love children because it's not an easy job. "Come in with your heart," she says. This thoughtful CommUnify employee certainly has.

OVER

300

HEALTH, EDUCATION
AND SOCIAL SERVICE
WORKERS

are employed by
CommUnify in
Santa Barbara County.

2-1-1 SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

is a helpline connecting people to health and human services, disaster relief and public information.



YANERIS MUÑIZ, OEM EMERGENCY MANAGER

The information and helpline for all county residents, 2-1-1 Santa Barbara County counts on community partnerships for its accuracy and reliability. Available 24/7 and at no cost to the user, the call service has strong relationships with health and human service agencies, disaster relief organizations, public utilities, law enforcement, fire and rescue, and other departments of local and state government. There is perhaps no better example of the importance of these partnerships than the one that 2-1-1 has with the **Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Management (OEM)**.

Though the relationship began in 2005 when 2-1-1 was first implemented in the county, it was the **2017 Thomas Fire** and **1/9 Debris Flow** in 2018 that forged the strong bond that exists between OEM and 2-1-1 today, and successfully continues through the 2020/21 pandemic.

Yaneris Muñiz, OEM Emergency Manager, has been working with 2-1-1 since her first days with the county's emergency management office. Her specialty is communications, public education and outreach, including alerts and warnings. As a bilingual employee, Yaneris coordinates the English/Spanish translations of alerts and messaging, ensuring that language is not a barrier during emergencies. She also works closely with organizations serving individuals with access and functional needs and other disabilities – supporting accessibility to disaster preparedness and response resources. These are just two on an impressive list of her responsibilities in communications and coordination for emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

Yaneris has been a Santa Barbara County employee for nearly ten years – her previous eight years with the Behavioral Wellness Department uniquely prepared her to assist and advocate for vulnerable populations impacted by the pandemic. Working closely with 2-1-1 Program Manager **Elisa Pardo**, the OEM manager supported the helpline callers' need for information around COVID health guidelines. "Using 2-1-1 as our centralized hub, we developed a system of "press options" that transfers callers directly to the best information source," said Yaneris. "So if the caller has questions about symptoms or vaccines, they select the option which transfers them to a knowledgeable person at the County Call Center; if they are experiencing food insecurity or need housing help, they can connect to a 2-1-1 operator versed in that area."

"The public had a variety of needs, and a whole lot of questions about the pandemic," said Elisa. "They weren't always about health." In 2020, there were 10,832 calls to 2-1-1 specifically about COVID-19, plus an additional 7,780 calls for information and referrals related to housing, food, health care, mental health, consumer issues, public safety, and utility assistance, plus various support for individuals and families. It is estimated that, last year, 2-1-1 call center specialists assisted more than 6,000 seniors, 62 years and older.

Yaneris tells us that just before the COVID-19 crisis began here in March 2020, her department was still busy with after-action, recovery and contingency planning for the **Conception Dive Boat incident** and the **Cave Fire**. "Our work and responsibilities can go on for months, and even years, with a single incident, at times overlapping with new emergencies," says Yaneris.

Always busy "putting out fires" – both literally and figuratively, Yaneris and Elisa are also part of the team executing an initiative called **Disaster Recovery Information Exchange or DRIE**. "In the future, people who need disaster recovery can call 2-1-1 and their information will be captured in the DRIE system," said Yaneris. "This system will support disaster case management and a coordinated, holistic approach to serving impacted individuals." Elisa summed it up, "DRIE will elevate 2-1-1 to the next level of personalized service for those in need in Santa Barbara County."

"The public had a variety of needs, and a whole lot of questions about the pandemic. They weren't always about health."

Elisa Pardo, 2-1-1 Manager

22,863
CALLS
AND
33,214
WEBSITE
VISITORS
in 2020

CommUnify is a private non-profit agency that leverages support for Santa Barbara County residents through private funding as well as government contracts and grants.

ORGANIZATIONS

Allan Hancock College

American Riviera Bank

Anchor Point

Ann Jackson

Family Foundation

Arthur J. Gallagher & Co.

Bank of the Sierra

BB & H Benefit Designs

The Blackbaud Giving Fund

CenCal Health

Coast Hills Credit Union

Coastal Copy

Cottage Health

Dr. Hildegard H. Balin
Charitable Foundation

Edward & Sons Trading Co, Inc.

Edwin and Jeanne Woods Family
Foundation

Fidelity Charitable

HUB International

HUB International Limited

Hutton Parker Foundation

Latkin Charitable Foundation

Lifetouch National School Studios

Macy's

Mark & Dorothy Smith Family Foundation

Mechanics Bank

Montecito Bank & Trust

Mr. & Mrs. William & Mona Wise

Northern Trust

Price, Postel & Parma LLP

Realtors Village Properties

Santa Barbara City College
Foundation

Santa Barbara Foundation

Santa Ynez Band of
Chumash Indians

Santa Ynez Band of
Chumash Indians Fund

Siena at Westgate LP

Smart & Final Charitable Foundation

The Crawford Idema
Family Foundation

The Towbes Foundation

The Towbes Group Inc.

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Mark and Paula Bottiani

Helga Carden

Clarice Couey

Jim Crook

Keith Emmons

Allan Ghitlerman & Susan Rose

Cary Grant

Ron and Andrea Hein

Mr. & Mrs. Gregory Johnson

David Krier

Joyce Ellen Lippman

Sophia McGibben

Ol Middleton

Councilmember Michael Moats

Sheri Mobley

Lois Moore

Dana Newquist

Melinda Nishimori

Dianne Reasner

Jo Lynn Scott

Elizabeth Snyder

Mona and William Wise

Nicolette Worley Marselian



**Bold names indicate
donors who gave
\$20,000 to \$200,000.**



Pre-film festivities featured a vintage car show organized by the Antique Automobile Club.



DJ Darla Bea provided nostalgic music from the 1950's.



CommUnify Board Member Phylene Wiggins and her sister Earla Griggs participated in the unique fundraising event that raised over \$350,000 for Senior Nutrition.



Isabel Marselian and her brother Nicolas get ready to enjoy a classic film at the drive-in movie fundraiser.

2020 CHAMPIONS AWARDS CELEBRATION

Due to the coronavirus public health crisis, CommUnify chose not to produce its usual Champions fundraising dinner and presentation. Instead the non-profit hosted a family-friendly celebration with built-in social distancing – an evening at the local drive-in movie theater. “Movie Night at the West Wind Drive-In” in Goleta, held October 14, was a nostalgic affair featuring the classic Hitchcock film *North by Northwest* starring screen idol Cary Grant. Santa Barbara Catering prepared a 1950's-style meal that was delivered by volunteer “carhops.” The 2020 CommUnify Champions - **Rona Barrett, Jim Glines** and **The Towbes Group** - were feted with a video created in their honor and shown on the big screen.

At check-in, each car received a tote bag filled with candy and other goodies, including a pass to the “Open (Snack) Bar”. Pre-film festivities featured a vintage car show organized by the **Antique Automobile Club**, and blast-from-the-past music by **DJ Darla Bea**. A live auction was conducted by Jim Glines, offering a Santa Maria-style steak BBQ for 20 guests donated by **Community Bank of Santa Maria**. This annual Champions event raises funds to support CommUnify's Senior Nutrition program. Since the COVID-19 health crisis began, requests for senior meals – primarily home deliveries – more than doubled.

CenCal Health was the events' \$100,000 Diamond Sponsor. For every dollar raised, CenCal Health matched the amount up to an additional \$100,000 contribution. Additional sponsors were **Santa Barbara Foundation, Hutton Parker Foundation, Yardi, The Towbes Group, Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, Towbes Foundation, Deckers Brands, BB&H Benefit Designs** and **Jordano's**, among others. Over \$350,000 was raised through the 2020 Champions award celebration.

2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Mike Cordero



Karin Dominguez



Robert Freeman
Chair



Gabriela Gonzalez
Head Start Representative



Oscar Gutierrez



James Kyriaco



Steve Lavagnino



Sharon Lutz



Jenelle Osborne



Sanford Riggs



Alex Saunders



Elizabeth Snyder



Josephine Torres



Guy Walker



Phylene Wiggins

2020 SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Patricia Keelean,
M.Ed., CCAP, NCRT
CEO

Dr. Leonie H. Mattison,
Ed.D., MBA
COO

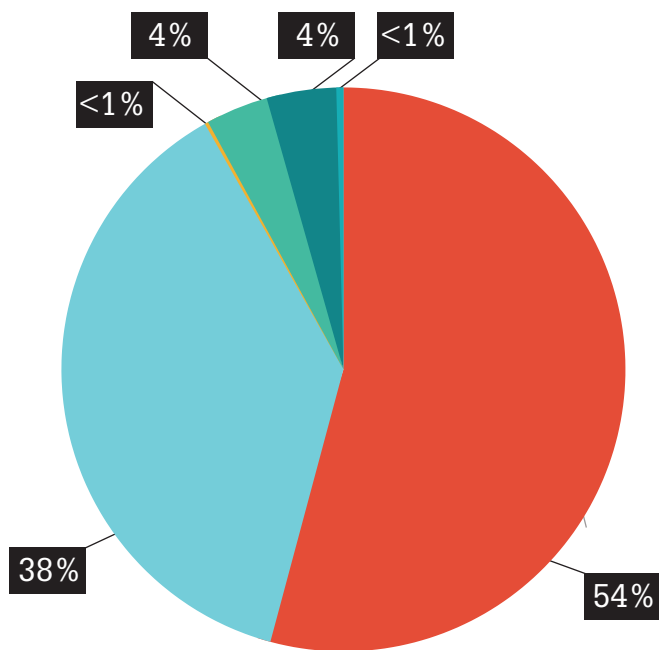
Michael Williams, MBA
CFO

Kemba Lawrence
Director of Community Services

Lorraine R. Neenan
Director of Children's Services

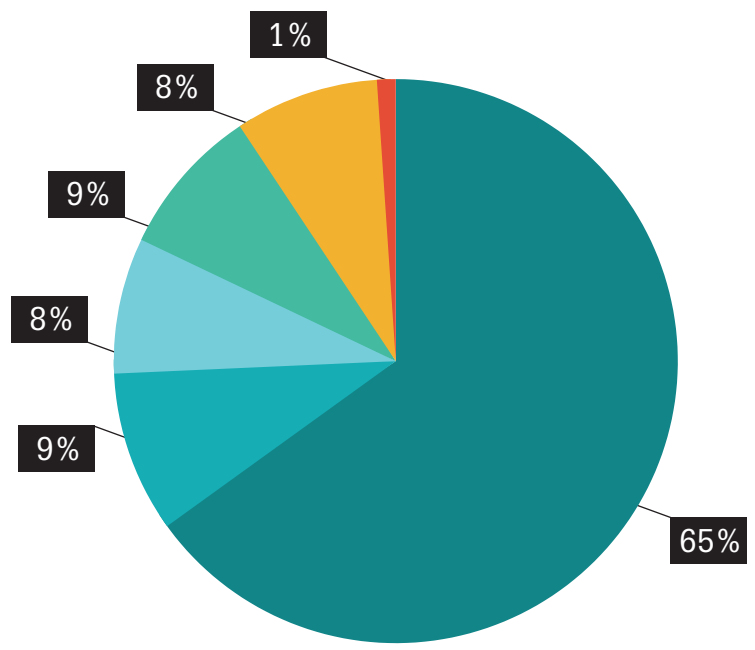
Seth Miller, M.A.
Director of Family & Youth Services

Monica Moreno
Director of Human Services



SOURCES OF FUNDS

- Federal Grants
- State & Local Grants
- Program Income
- Public Support
- In-Kind Donations
- Other



USES OF FUNDS

- Children's Services
- Senior Nutrition
- Family & Youth Services
- Community Services
- Fundraising
- Management and General

REVENUE

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Federal Grants | \$ 12,648,487 |
| State & Local Grants | \$ 8,792,129 |
| Program Income | \$ 46,812 |
| Donations (including In-Kind) | \$ 836,552 |
| Public Support | \$ 929,914 |
| Other | \$ 94,849 |
| Total | \$ 23,348,743 |

EXPENSES

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Children's Services | \$ 15,395,325 |
| Senior Nutrition | \$ 2,187,411 |
| Family & Youth Services | \$ 1,843,692 |
| Community Services | \$ 2,031,528 |
| Management and General | \$ 1,955,170 |
| Fundraising | \$ 253,763 |
| Total | \$ 23,666,889 |

Creating Opportunities for Santa Barbara County Families to Become Self-Sufficient. Since 1967.

Central Administration and South County Office

5638 Hollister Avenue, Suite 230
Goleta, CA 93117
800 655-0617
805 964-8857
FAX 805 683-5872

North County Office

201 West Chapel Street
Santa Maria, CA 93458
805 922-2243
FAX 805 349-8165

Mid-County Office

120 West Chestnut Avenue
Lompoc, CA 93436
805 740-4555
FAX 805 740-4558

www.CommUnifySB.org

Children's Services

Head Start: Preschool Program
Early Head Start: Infants & Toddlers Program
California State Preschool Program
Children's Waiting Room (Courthouse)

Senior Services

Senior Nutrition Program
Healthy at Home/Healthy Table
Wellness Checks

Community Services

Energy/Weatherization Services
Utility Assistance Program
Senior Home Repair Program
Family Self-Sufficiency Program
Economic Empowerment/Financial Literacy Program
2-1-1 Santa Barbara County

Family & Youth Services

California Student Opportunity & Access Program (CalSOAP)
Adolescent Family Life Planning (AFLP)
California Personal Responsibility Education Program (CA PREP)
Information & Education Program (I&E)
Family Wellness
New Heights, Full Service Partnership for Transition Aged Youth (FSP-TAY)
Enhanced Family Reunification Program
Los Compadres Youth Mentoring Program
South Coast Youth Safety Partnership

CommUnify has earned the top rating from **Charity Navigator**, America's largest independent charity and nonprofit evaluator.

In addition, the agency has achieved the highest level of recognition offered by **GuideStar**, the world's largest source of nonprofit information.

