



A LEGACY OF GENEROSITY





TENACITY



COMPASSION



TRUST



AUTHENTIC CONNECTION





EQUITY



TRANSPARENCY



EXCELLENCE





*Angelina Leaños,
Youth Poet Laureate,
Ventura County*

“Rise and Shine with Me”

**Where does one go to reach their potential?
Wouldn't you like to know there's a place for you
To find belonging and pursue your calling?
Open your eyes and you will find opportunities
Laid out for people of all backgrounds and careers
You and your colleagues are welcome here
Because I am your community - foundation -
Created to encourage the population
Rest your shoulders on me and I'll help you rise
From birth, you were made for greatness
So let me be the one to get you there
Trust in my power to help you find yours
In every opportunity I extend
Take each one just like my hand
Because my support will never falter
You are the one this foundation was built for
And every generation beyond mine will find
Connections that last a lifetime here
Filled with equity and compassion
For everyone's lives and passions
Are equally important in this world
And while diamonds are formed under pressure
I will teach you that you don't have to do it alone
Because you are valuable and beautiful
No matter what stone you are now or will shape into
All you have to do is come to me when you're in need
I will not turn my back on you
Instead, I will do everything I can
To help you see that you can shine too**

By Angelina Leaños

LETTER FROM BOARD CHAIR AND CEO

Dear Ventura County Community Foundation Family,

At the heart of our work lies a shared commitment to a core set of values: trust, transparency, compassion, equity, tenacity, excellence and authentic connection. These are the principles that bind us together and shape our community.

Every day, you remind us that Ventura County is a generous and resilient community, capable of overcoming even the most significant hurdles together. Through your actions, you have shown that we can and will do hard things together, and that we are not a community that succumbs to fear but one that instead turns to optimism, to hope and to one another no matter the challenge at hand.

As Mahatma Gandhi reminds us, “Our values become our destiny.” We firmly believe this to be true, even more so as we reflect on these past several years and what we have all accomplished together, including:

- Your collective efforts during the 2020 Census, where we activated hundreds of organizations and raised funds, ultimately moving the county from the bottom 2% most at-risk of an undercount to being in the top 95th percentile in the nation for an accurate one, ensuring close to \$2 billion for the community’s social safety net.
- Mobilizing response and relief efforts to numerous wildfires and other tragedies, including a global pandemic, collectively touching the lives of hundreds of thousands and raising over \$50 million for our community’s nonprofit sector.
- Participating in and donating to local vaccine outreach and education efforts, resulting in 150,000 hard-to-reach individuals being vaccinated, saving approximately 300 lives.
- Addressing the lack of early childhood education opportunities, where 12,000 children in Ventura County have no access, by launching the Ventura County Highest-Quality Early Childhood Education Initiative, involving leadership by more than 75 nonprofits, faith-based organizations, government and other agencies.

***“Somos vecinos y todos contamos” –
We are all neighbors and everyone counts.***

This shared spirit has guided us and will continue to do so. We invite you to dream with us, to serve alongside us, as together we do all we can to connect people, resources and solutions to create lasting impact in our shared world.

In deepest appreciation and gratitude, we thank you.

Yours sincerely,



Sean Leonard
Board Chair



Vanessa Bechtel
President & CEO



YOUR COMMUNITY FOUNDATION ●

Philanthropic Consulting

Since its founding in 1987, the Ventura County Community Foundation has believed that everyone has something of value to contribute. With more than 22,000 donors from every corner of our community and across the nation, we specialize in connecting people, resources and solutions to create lasting impact in our shared world.

Because of our generous donors we have granted more than \$111 million since 2015 to support our community, with most of these dollars specifically allocated for Ventura County. These grants have supported 9,500 unique nonprofit organizations and local businesses as well as supporting the dreams of hundreds of local students as they pursue higher education and career training through the VCCF Scholarship Program.

VCCF's Philanthropic Consulting Office helps individuals, families and businesses on their philanthropic journey. Our services are tailored and include identifying causes, developing a strategy for impact, engaging future generations, researching pressing community issues, conducting due diligence on nonprofits, designing competitive grantmaking strategies, as well as providing education on how to maximize the benefits associated with charitable giving—this is what VCCF can do for you!

Our expertise in planned giving provides us with meaningful opportunities to support donors and their professional advisors, and our experience in designing giving strategies provides for a wide range of benefits, including helping to provide for immediate income, reducing taxes and creating lasting legacies that exist in perpetuity. VCCF accepts gifts of various types, including cash, real estate, investments and certain personal property.

BY THE NUMBERS



711 philanthropic funds totaling over \$179,250,000 (September 30, 2022).

BREAKDOWN OF THESE ASSETS ARE AS FOLLOWS:



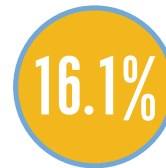
14.4% are scholarships.



32.6% are to benefit over 150 individual nonprofit organizations.



20.4% are donor advised funds.



16.1% are field of interest funds.



16.5% are legacy funds to benefit specific charitable purposes.



100% of VCCF Board of Directors and the majority of VCCF Staff and Committee Members are certified in the Fiduciary Essentials® for Foundations & Endowments.



VCCF's team includes five Certified Specialists in Planned Giving and two Accredited Investment Fiduciary Analysts® on staff.

● OUR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

Community Leadership

The Ventura County Community Foundation is part of a network of more than 800 community foundations nationwide and so many more around the world. Together, we work to create a better future for all by pursuing our community's greatest opportunities and addressing the most critical challenges, inclusively uniting people, institutions and resources from throughout our communities and providing significant, widely shared and lasting results.

As your community foundation, we've partnered with hundreds of local nonprofits, in addition to government agencies, economic development organizations, faith-based organizations, local service clubs and thousands of community members to make a difference on a wide range of pressing community issues.

We hear your hopes for our future. The possibilities of what we can accomplish together are endless and we are here to do all we can to help.

Some of these most recent community efforts include:

- Complete Count Committee, 2020 Census
- Caregiver Initiative
- Wildfire and Disaster Recovery Efforts
- Farmworker Household Assistance Program
- Animal Welfare Initiative
- Highest-Quality Early Childhood Education Initiative
- Environmental Initiative
- Transfer of Wealth Initiative
- 805 UndocuFund
- Ventura County Journalism Initiative
- Gun Violence Prevention
- Advancing Affordable Housing
- Digital Equity Coalition

These are just a few of the many ways your community foundation has been supporting Ventura County.



MARTIN V. “BUD” AND MARTHA K. SMITH FOUNDATION’S LEGACY AND VCCF’S HISTORY

VCCF’s legacy story rests largely on the shoulders of our founding supporters. We are proud to steward the legacies of families, like Martin V. and Martha K. Smith and their family’s foundation, who continue to inspire generosity throughout Ventura County.

Developer Martin V. “Bud” Smith was the epitome of the American success tale. He parlayed the purchase of a failing Oxnard drive-in restaurant into a real estate empire that spanned from Calabasas to Santa Maria.

The crown jewel of his holdings that included hotels, office buildings, restaurants and apartments was the Topa Financial Plaza twin towers. The Oxnard icons are the tallest buildings between Los Angeles and San Jose at 22 and 15 floors, respectively. Smith founded Commercial and Farmers National banks, owned the Ventura County Railroad, which connected Hueneme to the Southern Pacific main line in Oxnard, and built the Channel Islands Peninsula and other Ventura County landmarks.



Martin and his beloved wife Martha shaped Ventura County's economy, and their lifelong support of many causes and community priorities underscored the value of giving. In 1984, the Smiths founded the Martin V. and Martha K. Smith Foundation to support the community they loved. They donated \$8 million to California State University, Channel Islands to construct the Martin V. Smith School of Business & Economics, the Professorship in Land Use Studies and the Center for Integrative Decision Making. They also built up the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Oxnard and Port Hueneme. The Smith family personally supported the Ventura County Community Foundation's formative activities and became major contributors to the VCCF Cornerstone Campaign.

Martin joined the VCCF Board in 1988 where his position as a high profile and successful businessman validated the importance of supporting a community foundation for sustainable philanthropy in Ventura County. The Smith Foundation became a supporting organization of VCCF in 1994, ensuring their philanthropic legacy, and has given more than \$25.7 million to local nonprofits in over 28 years.

Vickie Pozzi, the Smiths' daughter, recently shared about her father and the family's philanthropy, "Investing at CSUCI was one of the best things our family and foundation did. Since Dad's bequest and the foundation's donations to name the Martin V. Smith School of Business & Economics, the institution has diligently managed our contributions. The MVS School has distinguished itself through its growth, the excellence of its professors and its innovative programs."

Vickie added, "My father strongly believed in having a four-year institution in the county. The Smith Family Foundation is proud to support CSUCI and the Martin V. Smith School's growth by sponsoring the Martin V. Smith Hall's next phase and endowment. The donation honors my father and develops future business leaders who will keep the region strong and vital."



\$8,317,857

Final grants by the Smith Family Foundation in 2022 – \$8,317,857.

MISSION

Meenal and Kris Kelkar ●

At VCCF, we, along with our donors, share the same mission: connecting people, resources and solutions to create lasting impact in our shared world.

We work closely with donors to create the ideal framework to carry their personal missions into the community and around the globe.

Donor clients Meenal and Kris Kelkar wholeheartedly embody VCCF's mission through their grantmaking. Meenal likes to describe this process as a puzzle. "All of us hold a piece of the puzzle, so it's not that one piece of the puzzle is any bigger or more valuable than the rest, and it all needs to come together," she said.

Meenal and Kris moved to the United States as children from India. After college, they married and moved to Ventura County. With no children of their own, they were motivated to work with their community foundation as one of the ways they could positively impact the world and leave a legacy in Ventura County.

The couple created the Kelkar Endowment Fund in 2012 with the help of VCCF's team, and since then, they have supported nonprofits championing social, environmental and economic justice, as well as youth engagement. The two share a desire to address root causes of society's problems through their grantmaking, supporting nonprofits that, as Kris said, "teach people to fish rather than only give them fish." Meenal believes that Ventura County is uniquely poised to address these root-causes given past success with local organizations and community members coming together during wildfire recovery and the COVID-19 pandemic.

“ All of us hold a piece of the puzzle, so it's not that one piece of the puzzle is any bigger or more valuable than the rest, and it all needs to come together, ”

Through their grantmaking, the Kelkars have helped VCCF serve as one of the essential puzzle pieces to connect the community and its nonprofit organizations. One nonprofit they support is CAUSE, the Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy. CAUSE is "a base-building organization committed to social, economic and environmental justice for working-class and immigrant communities in California's Central Coast." The Kelkars hold great respect for CAUSE for empowering community members to advocate for themselves. Meenal shared what she finds most compelling is CAUSE's "long history of community organizing and teaching people who have been left out of the process, how to participate in the process and see profound results."

Through connecting resources and community-based groups, VCCF helps donor clients like the Kelkars create a brighter future. "What inspires me is looking at new ways to do things that open new possibilities to create the kind of world that I want to live in," Kris said. "How do we work better together? How do we work across organizations? Because the problems we have are not only structural; they're larger than any one nonprofit."

9,500

In the past five years alone, VCCF has granted to over 9,500 unique nonprofit organizations and local businesses.





MISSION

Christine Dale ●

Shortly before the pandemic, VCCF received \$15.8 million from the California Attorney General with 75% allocated for animal welfare. The animal welfare fund was to be available to benefit all animals, large and small. To assure responsible stewardship of these funds, VCCF organized a task force of local animal welfare leaders, donors, animal rescuers and nonprofit leaders, as well as expert advisors from the Humane Society of the United States. The task force embarked on a comprehensive and ambitious listening tour, which included hearing from nonprofits serving a wide range of animals here in Ventura County, as well as reviewing the results of a regional report conducted by the Humane Society of the United States. The committee laid the groundwork for what will be a deeply impactful series of grants.

Christine Dale, a local animal rights and wellness advocate, led the committee. She brought years of experience working with national and international humane groups and navigating local animal shelters and sanctuaries from her own philanthropy to the group. "It took about a year for the dust to settle and for the group to be able to see where the greatest needs were," explained Christine. "What became very clear to us was there are many Ventura County families with pets who are experiencing hardships in keeping their animals. A change in employment, an animal's veterinary needs or a move to a new home that won't allow pets are some of the issues families have faced, especially during COVID. We feel so strongly that a pet is integral to a family and, if anything, is an asset to the family's mental and physical well-being. We felt it was imperative to find a local solution to this issue."

The idea of pet retention is something that the Humane Society of the United States has been tackling with a program called Pets for Life. Oxnard needed a Pets for Life program, according to a needs assessment funded by the foundation. Pets for



“ We don’t want any socioeconomic barriers to stand in the way of someone loving their pets, ”

Life, with about 50 locations nationwide, examines local pet care barriers and partners with a local organization to implement a community-based pet support program. Christine brought the concept to the Animal Welfare Task Force at VCCF, which quickly mobilized to fund the program.

Ventura County Animal Services, which sees 10,000 animals a year in its veterinary clinic and provides humane officers and shelter services, will host the Pets for Life chapter. The Humane Society of the United States received financial support for the Pets for Life Program in Ventura County.

Rafael Castellanos will be coordinating no-cost services for families, including pet food and veterinary care for their pets, even if that means picking them up and driving them and their furry friends to the clinic. “We don’t want any socioeconomic barriers to stand in the way of someone loving their pets,” said Raf.

“Organizations that received assistance in the first round of grantmaking included, in addition to shelters and pet rescues, a butterfly sanctuary and a raptor center. Next year it is planned to include marine mammal rescues, to fulfill the donor’s mission statement,” shared Christine.

\$1.4M

The VCCF Animal Welfare Fund has awarded over \$1.4 million to local programs like Pets for Life since its inception.

MISSION

Denise & Keith Landenberger ●

VCCF works closely with donors to support needs in the community and also in our shared world. The foundation facilitates donations to organizations worldwide with the same oversight and stewardship as is applied to community philanthropy, ensuring maximum confidence and impact.

Detroit-born childhood sweethearts Denise and Keith Landenberger came to Ventura County 30 years ago. In preparation for Keith's retirement, their financial advisor suggested meeting with Vanessa Bechtel, President & CEO of VCCF, to set up a donor advised fund.

Denise and Keith were impressed by Vanessa's and Chief Philanthropic Counsel Jim Rivera's insights into philanthropy and VCCF's mission to effectively support Ventura County's nonprofits. Since opening their

fund in 2016, they've leaned into the organization's experience to support the community through recent disasters. VCCF identifies local groups with the greatest need for the Landenbergers to consider for donation, ones they would never have known about without the foundation. "There are so many places to contribute money after a disaster," Keith described. "Giving through VCCF, there's a level of confidence that it's being spread to the places that need it most."

Outside of Ventura County, the Landenbergers sponsor the Ebenezer Foundation, a Zambian orphanage that began as a single woman beneath a tree handing out lunches to children whose parents had died of HIV. Denise and Keith first learned about the Ebenezer Foundation through a trip organized by their travel agency that had a strong relationship with the orphanage. Despite the program being almost



“ Giving through VCCF, there’s a level of confidence that it’s being spread to the places that need it most. ”

9,900 miles away, VCCF facilitates donations to this international charity through their fund, as well as for other donors whose philanthropy extends beyond the county into our shared world.

Denise and Keith were able to see firsthand the impact of the Ebenezer Foundation’s work, while also meeting the founder and the children living there. “Once you know there’s a need, it gives you a vested interest to help globally like that in an impoverished area,” Denise said. “It gives us great comfort to know that VCCF advises us on urgent needs close to home and supports us in the work that is equally close to our hearts with the Ebenezer Foundation.”



150

VCCF manages approximately 150 Donor Advised Funds like the Landenberger Family Fund, supporting domestic and international causes.

VISION

Kimberly J. Engberg ●



“I’m going to leave a legacy, something that leaves the world a little bit better off than if I hadn’t been here.”

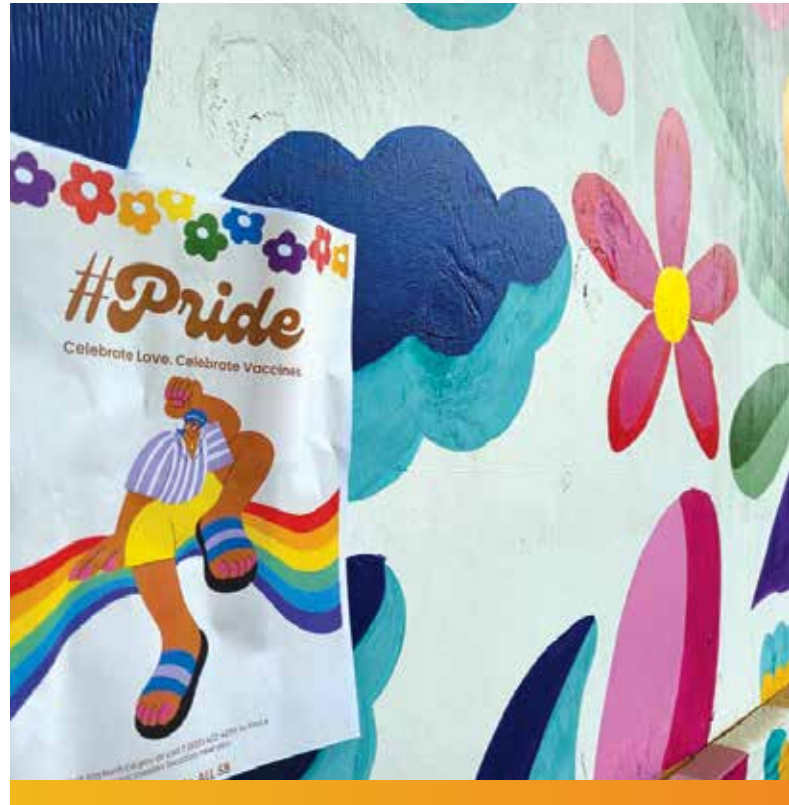
At VCCF, our vision is to foster an engaged and thriving community inspired by growing generosity. When we heard Kim Engberg’s wish to support the same community that was there for her in her time of need, we were inspired to create a unique and lasting legacy together.

Kim retired and came out around 2016. The LGBTQ2IA+ activist relied on several organizations and activities to live an authentic and connected life. She joined Conejo Valley Pride’s board and volunteered at Diversity Collective, Family Pride and the local Get Loud event, and saw these organizations’ various needs. Kim knew she wanted to do more for these organizations, but she wasn’t sure of the most effective way.

Narissa Jimenez-Petchumrus was a Conejo Valley Pride collaborator. They advised Kim to contact VCCF because they could help her with her vision of supporting numerous groups. Kim worked with Calleen Pardinias in VCCF’s Philanthropic Consulting office, who helped Kim in her first round of grantmaking to connect with nonprofits that would best meet her need for oversight, selective grantmaking and fiscal stewardship.

711

VCCF manages 711 philanthropic funds totaling \$179,250,000.



Today, Kim has an open application period where various organizations are invited to request funding. Kim reviews each application, a process she thoroughly enjoys. The challenge, at times, is that the needs of the LGBTQ2IA+ are many and her fund can only do so much. “I like to concentrate on the glass being half full, versus half empty,” shared Kim with a wide smile. “Right now, I am doing all that I can.” VCCF continues to support Kim with her yearly grant cycles.

Kim finished her second grant cycle and looks forward to learning and growing with her supported organizations. “I’m always impressed when these organizations show me what they would do with the funding. Their visions are wonderful, and I want to support those possibilities,” said Kim. “I’m going to leave a legacy, something that leaves the world a little bit better off than if I hadn’t been here.”

TRUST

Miller Trustees

At VCCF, we apply sound financial principles and invest wisely to steward the assets entrusted to us and as a result, are often called upon to guide foundations, groups and trustees in their philanthropy. We are uniquely positioned to understand the region's needs and have trusting relationships with the people and organizations working to create lasting, positive change.

Longtime Camarillo residents Bill and Joanne Miller built several successful local businesses and donated regularly to local nonprofits, focusing on organizations that helped women and families in difficult times. Joanne passed away in December 2018, and months later, Bill passed away in April 2019, but prior to his passing, Bill entrusted three of his key employees, Mark Gilliam, John Crawford and Louis Buldain, to manage his philanthropy. The Millers had also enlisted their son Mark as an original trustee, but, very sadly, Mark passed away shortly after the trust was established, leaving the three employees to manage the trust.

"It was personal with Bill; he cared about you and your family. It's an honor to be able to do this," shared John. The trio was connected to VCCF's philanthropic team via a charitable trust attorney. Since then, they have leaned into VCCF's expertise to help them navigate the multitude of Ventura County organizations in need of support. They are now spearheading an impactful philanthropic effort as the Miller Trustees.

Louis worked as CFO with Bill and learned what inspired Bill and Joanne, but the three trustees needed help creating a way forward. "We knew we would continue to support the same organizations that Bill and Joanne did but there was still so much we could do," said Mark. Louis added, "It was truly eye-opening to see how much need there is in the community. We worked with Vanessa and the VCCF team to chart a way forward that would bring the most return on the investment."

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The trustees visited several organizations in their first year. "We began to understand that we wanted to fund organizations that had a solid business plan and were already achieving results, but that we could amplify through financial support," said Louis. Food Share, Casa Pacifica, the Arc of Ventura County and the Boys & Girls Club of Camarillo received significant donations.

Their support of Sarah's House, which helps expectant mothers and domestic violence victims, touched them deeply. "This organization was doing all the right things and could grow exponentially with financial support. When we brought them a check, the program director had tears in her eyes, and frankly, so did we," John said.

The trio is not interested in just sending along money. They have become deeply involved in their roles. "We visit many sites and spend days with organizations, getting to know them and understanding how they work and what their needs are," said John. In fact, the trio became part of VCCF's Donor Peer Network and have benefited from the interconnectedness and exposure this group provides. They have come to know the community's key players who are working to alleviate homelessness and are weighing supporting these and other salient issues. "We are looking for opportunities to create long-term solutions in the community because that is what Bill and Joanne would have wanted," said Louis.



The VCCF Philanthropic Consulting Office creates giving strategies that can help provide for immediate income, reduce taxes and create lasting legacies that exist in perpetuity.

“It will be amazing to see what VCCF does over the next 10 years,” said John. “We still have a lot to learn but we know we are in good hands,” affirmed Mark.”

The three men see their new roles as a gift from Bill and Joanne. “We were brought into a world that we knew nothing about and at the same time, it has kept us connected to Bill and Joanne,” shared Louis. For John, his gift is that Bill had seen their passion, strengths and weaknesses and knew this work would create an exciting chapter for his three employees. “I work on a global scale, so to be able to bring my focus to the community around me is something I appreciate; that and the fact that this has opened my eyes to the incredible work that nonprofits are doing every day. That is a gift,” added Mark.

The three are looking ahead at their partnership with VCCF with excitement, “It will be amazing to see what VCCF does over the next 10 years,” said John. “We still have a lot to learn but we know we are in good hands,” affirmed Mark.

TRUST

Epic Lemonade

VCCF has, over the past eight years, become the trusted go-to organization for the management and distribution of private and public disaster related funds ensuring that much-needed donations get distributed into the community quickly, effectively and with transparency. VCCF granted over \$10.1 million in wildfire recovery support in response to the Thomas, Hill and Woolsey wildfires, including raising funds to support our undocumented neighbors.

On November 8, 2018, Ventura County awoke to the devastating news that a gunman killed 12 and injured 16 young people at the Borderline Bar and Grill in Thousand Oaks. As the community grappled with the tragedy, the massive Hill and Woolsey fires began to engulf the hillsides in the surrounding areas. Some of the same families who were mourning the loss of loved ones were now forced to flee rapidly advancing wildfires.

Stay-at-home moms Shannon Atkins and Diana Judovits spent days on friends' couches and used the school phone tree to communicate and keep families safe while mourning the heartbreaking losses. Shannon brainstormed ways to engage their children and give back to the community after learning that the local schools would be closed for two weeks. More parents joined in and soon, an Epic Lemonade stand was born.

The Epic Lemonade logo, Facebook group, event, hashtag and perfect location in the parking lot of a local real estate office were created in days. "We thought we would have a little lemonade stand, maybe collect a few hundred dollars and do something meaningful. I saw that 2,000 people were interested in the event the night before and thought, uh oh, this might be a bit bigger than that," said Shannon.

Nobody was prepared for what happened on Friday, November 16, 2018.

The firefighters who were fighting the Hill and Woolsey fires donated. FedEx delivery drivers donated. Local high school cheerleaders cheered on as the steady stream of cars and donors looped through the driveway. Children made and sold #805Strong artwork. Community members put monetary donations into any bucket or container they could find. It was truly an epic event. All the while a committee of parents neatly organized and bundled the donations. Hourly tallies were shared across the bustling parking lot: \$2,000; \$10,000; \$18,000. By mid-day, every local news station was on hand to cover the Epic Lemonade Stand. By the end of the day, Shannon, Diana, the core group of parents, the countless volunteers and the community had gathered a total of \$55,000; \$38,000 of that in cash.

Shannon's goal was to split proceeds 50/50 between Borderline shooting and wildfire victims. The group approached VCCF to support them in creating a fund that would ensure the money got into the right hands in a timely and effective manner. VCCF was already dispatched to coordinate and distribute funds for the tandem disasters and the Epic Lemonade Stand funds were going to provide much additional relief in the community.

“ Because of VCCF, people trusted us more and we were able to be completely transparent with everyone who gave. ”



“At the end of the day I was sitting down with a backpack containing \$38,000 in cash and I was stunned. I was so relieved that VCCF already had two funds set up. VCCF ensured the money was put into the hands of people who needed it most. We heard of people who had lost everything in the fires, and of young people who couldn’t retrieve their handbags, wallets, ATM cards or phones from the Borderline Bar and Grill and needed money for gas or other basic needs. These are the things we don’t think about when a tragedy strikes. Sometimes it is the little things that make a huge difference,” shared Shannon. Diana added, “Because of VCCF, people trusted us more and we were able to be completely transparent with everyone who gave. Shannon still has people who Venmo her money for various needs because they trust that it will get into the right hands.”

Fast forward to today: the group continues to respond to immediate needs in the community. “Today, we still have \$10,000 that we use for emergency needs in our community. This family needs bunk beds, that person needs a refrigerator. When we hear about a need, we reach out to the community and they respond so generously,” said Shannon.

Both Diana and Shannon have a bigger vision for the Epic Lemonade Stands of the future. “Unfortunately, there will be more tragedies in our communities. We would love to be able to share the Epic Lemonade playbook with other people who need it, as a ‘grab and go’ model for group fundraising. We would also love to grow the concept of our own community giving days: 805 days. They would fall on August 5 every year and would directly benefit the community. Both these efforts would require some community investment,” conceded Diana. But the moms show no signs of slowing down. As long as there are needs in the community, their cell phones will be on and ready to take the call to make something magical happen.

To support Epic Lemonade in creating its group fundraising playbook and continuing to meet the emerging needs of the community, please contact info@EpicLemonade.com

COMPASSION

Jack Edelstein ●

Compassion is our ability to share in the emotion of another, and it drives so much of what we do at VCCF. People are moved by the events around them and are compelled to act. We are here to ensure that those actions have the greatest impact. We, together with our donors, bring empathy, respect and heart to all our interactions.

Jack Edelstein moved to Ventura 30 years ago and never imagined he would be deeply involved in efforts to provide secure housing for domestic violence victims and adolescents aging out of foster care in his retirement. Jack's passion and commitment are improving outcomes for these two vulnerable populations today.

Jack joined VCCF by establishing a donor advised fund in 2015 upon the sale of his company. With this fund, Jack chooses where and how his donations will flow into the community and can give spontaneously through his donor portal, or he can become more closely involved with projects in the community. His partnership with VCCF gives him direct access to vetted nonprofits that are aligned with his vision of supporting vulnerable populations today, and long into the future.

Jack called VCCF after reading about modular homes being built in Los Angeles to reduce homelessness and was connected to Mike Jump of the Ventura County District Attorney's office. He then learned that Ventura County has just 24 acute beds for domestic abuse victims who are homeless. Mike wanted modular homes on the Ventura County Family Justice Center site to enable the organization to safely shelter victims and their families.



It was then time to raise funds. Jack engaged with other VCCF donors to help them understand the needs and exchange best practices. A core group of supporters emerged, and the project will break ground in 2023. The VCFJC campus will now feature four modular homes and a total of 10 rooms, each with multiple beds to accommodate victims and their families.

"There aren't a whole lot of family justice centers that have shelter space on site. One of the magical things that I anticipate happening will be when we talk to somebody who's in crisis and we just walk them across the parking lot and say, 'This room is yours,'" shared Mike.

“Working with VCCF means that we get to convene around an issue, pool our resources and get things done. Nobody can go it alone.”



The effort has been a learning experience for all involved, but it promises to be a financially responsible and scalable model that will be able to be rolled out into more of Ventura County's cities.

With this project moving forward, Jack turned his attention to the crisis of foster youth aging out of the system. "I have seen statistics that show 50% of foster youth will be either addicted, pregnant or homeless within two to five years of aging out of the system," he shared. Once again, VCCF connected Jack with a group that is looking to provide stable and supportive housing to this community. A housing project for young adults aged 18 to 26 in Ojai called Mesa Farm is a beneficiary of VCCF support and funded by the state's Homekey fund. Projects like Mesa Farm will once again be an important blueprint for how such community-based solutions can happen when the right people with the right intentions come together to collectively solve a societal issue.

"Working with VCCF means that we get to convene around an issue, pool our resources and get things done. Nobody can go it alone," shared Jack.

Jack is already looking down the road at more ways to create lasting change in his beloved home, Ventura County, no doubt invigorated by the potential for positive change that these projects are promising.

2,441

According to the 2023 Ventura County Homeless Count, there were 1,633 unsheltered individuals, compared to 1,356 in 2022. The total homeless counted (sheltered and unsheltered) was 2,441 in 2023 compared to 2,238 in 2022.

COMPASSION

Caregiver Initiative ●

When Jovy Michael's mom Cora was no longer able to care for herself, Jovy didn't hesitate for a second to become her primary caregiver. The fact that her mom had diabetes, Parkinson's disease, dementia and a recent hip replacement didn't faze Jovy, a Certified Nurse Assistant. "She's my mom, I would do anything for her. She had a hard life and if I can make it a bit better, that's what I will do," shared Jovy.

With the blessing of her family, Jovy quit her full-time job to care for her mom. The role soon became a 24-hour per day commitment and Jovy began to experience the exhaustion, sadness and frustration that many of the county's unpaid caregivers experience. "I knew I needed help, but I didn't know where to go to get it," lamented Jovy. An unexpected hospitalization for Cora placed them on the path to receiving the support they so desperately needed through the Family Caregiver Support Program, a Caregiver Initiative Pilot Program at Dignity Health's St. John's Regional Medical Center.

“ This program is helping patients and caregivers experience a better quality of life and, perhaps more importantly, it is keeping people healthier and at home, where they would rather be. ”

When Cora was hospitalized, she was connected to Mayra Lopez, the Caregiver Navigator at St. John's Regional Medical Center. Mayra listened to Jovy's needs and connected her to additional supportive programs that included services from a nurse and a social worker who assisted her in obtaining key supplies—most notably a hospital bed. More importantly, Jovy received the support she needed in understanding what her mom was experiencing, how it would progress and how she could best care for herself through the process.

For Mayra, the caregiver navigator role has been deeply satisfying. She works closely with the caregiver for a period of three months via phone check-ins or Zoom calls. "I believe the program makes a HUGE difference. I am always so pleased when I see that people are using the services out there and I am grateful that hospital leadership is so supportive as well," said Mayra.

Two years into the pilot program, the data on the program's impact is already compelling and all the organizations involved are hoping the program will be extended. "This program is helping patients and caregivers experience a better quality of life and, perhaps more importantly, it is keeping people healthier and at home, where they would rather be," concluded Mayra.





185

Out of the three hospitals and healthcare system, more than 185 people have been served across the two Dignity Health locations in Ventura County.

\$627,440

VCCF granted \$627,440 to the VCCF Caregiver Initiative.

VCCF also supported the pre- and post-assessment of participants with funding to California State University, Channel Islands.

EQUITY

805 UndocuFund



The impact of COVID-19 was felt around Ventura County with many of our neighbors experiencing health, housing and employment insecurity. For VCCF, the pandemic strengthened our resolve to seek equitable solutions to these many challenges. One of our key strategies was to convene and support organizations that could create meaningful impact. VCCF raised and granted over \$50 million in response to COVID-19, keeping families in homes, supporting thousands of small businesses and helping local nonprofit organizations such as 805 UndocuFund that continue to serve those most in need during this challenging time. VCCF also granted \$1.4 million from the Farmworker Household Assistance Program and the Ventura County Fund for Farmworker Housing. These funds, along with significant contributions from the County of Ventura, have supported over 6,000 families in Ventura County. We listened to and elevated diverse voices and experiences to advance fair and just opportunities.

Imagine your community is being ravaged by one of the largest wildfires and mudslides in California, and that your home and livelihood have been decimated. Then imagine that you have no access to aid because you do not qualify due to lack of documentation. This has been the plight of many of our neighbors, and the numerous wildfires and global pandemic amplified these disparate experiences.

For VCCF, coordinating financial relief during and in the aftermath of disasters is one of our core competencies. In listening to those impacted by these events, and through our treasured partnerships with government, nonprofits and faith-based organizations, we become clear on what is needed most and do all we can to marshal resources to help. “What we have learned over the years is that people experiencing disasters need the essentials, such as access to accurate information, cash, shelter, food and medical care,” shared Scott Hansen, VCCF’s Board Chair at the time of the Thomas Fire.

Disaster aid from the state and federal governments is a critical part of the recovery process, and yet, undocumented residents—who are estimated at 10% of the population in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties—are ineligible for millions of dollars in support that are made available to everyone else.

Future Leaders of America, CAUSE (Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy) and MICOP (Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project) were the three local organizations who first gathered to strategize ways of supporting the undocumented residents who had lost their homes and incomes and who were not eligible for government support. They looked to a similar group of organizations that had formed in Santa Rosa following devastating fires there. But where would they get the necessary funding?



Together, these three organizations and their incredible leadership, alongside philanthropic partners like the McCune Foundation, Weingart Foundation and VCCF, raised, case-managed and distributed millions of dollars in direct aid.

VCCF did not hesitate to leverage their infrastructure and connections to support the 805 UndocuFund that had already created a confidential intake process and secured tri-lingual volunteers (Spanish, Mixteco and Zapoteco) to support impacted families. The first 2,500 donations came in from all over the United States. Families who could do so were donating what they could. “The outcome far exceeded our expectations and showed me once again that Ventura County is a deeply generous community,” affirmed Scott.

Today, 805 UndocuFund is formally established as a nonprofit that mobilizes valuable partner organizations to deliver the right aid at the right time.

800

800 bilingual and trilingual volunteers from the community logged over 7,000 volunteer hours.

\$8M

CAUSE, MICOP and Future Leaders of America distributed over \$8 million in disaster relief to over 6,000 households, more than 17,000 Central Coast residents.

If you are interested in learning about ways in which you can support 805 UndocuFund's important work in our community, kindly connect with info@805undocufund.org.



EQUITY

Food Share, ● Monica White

Food Share addresses the most essential and universal need: access to nutritious food. As such, the organization is an important gateway for individuals and organizations to explore philanthropy and is one of thousands of nonprofit organizations VCCF is very proud to support. On any given day, Food Share is a hub of volunteer activity, as well as a testament to what can be achieved when donors, grantors, organizations and fearless leadership come together around a single goal: to ensure everyone in our community has access to nourishing food.

Monica White, the President & CEO of Food Share, describes a feeling many of us have felt: “At 6 p.m., we may think we know what hunger feels like, but that struggle is very real every day to those we serve.” Food Share is a food bank that has been in the heart of our community since 1978 whose mission is simple—to ensure that no one in Ventura County goes hungry.

The organization “banks” food from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, surplus from supermarkets, fresh fruit and vegetable donations from farmers and neighbors and by purchasing food in bulk. The food is then distributed through local pantries, shelters, after school programs, drive-through distributions, congregate meal sites and senior nutrition kits. Monica is clear that Food Share’s intention is to supplement the nutritional needs of individuals and families, while food stamps and other programs provide access to people’s daily needs. “When someone has an accident, or loses their job, or if they are undocumented and therefore don’t qualify for federal aid, we are here.”

“ *At 6 p.m., we may think we know what hunger feels like, but that struggle is very real every day to those we serve.* ”

When COVID hit, many in our community lost their jobs or were forced to reduce their hours. As many partner pantries were forced to shutter, Food Share pivoted to create drive-through distribution sites. With the help of the California Air National Guard, the organization held 320 pop-up distributions in one year. Against all odds, in 2021, Food Share distributed just under 26 million pounds of food, providing more than 21.6 million meals to people in Ventura County, double the amount of food that was distributed in 2019.

Monica is quick to praise the community that came together to make it all happen. A generous donation of 37,000 square feet of warehouse space meant that the organization could store more food. Financial donations helped to offset the harsh reality that Food Share had to buy an average of \$500,000 of food per month, an increase of 600% to offset reduced surplus from grocery stores and the cancellation of numerous food drives.

Financial contributions from donors remain an important part of the organization's revenue stream. More than 12.7% of the total revenue is from public contributions and 4.1% more is from foundation and organization grants. "When we have cash in hand, we are able to leverage those dollars to purchase more food at better prices. In the long-run, this means more of our community is served with nutrition-dense and shelf-stable foods," shared Monica.

As the immediacy of the COVID-19 pandemic recedes, Ventura County communities can look back with immense pride for having supported Food Share and helped meet its mission of ensuring no one in Ventura County goes hungry. Looking ahead, Monica is seeing to it that the organization remains nimble and responsive. She beams as she points to her personal motto that emblazons her office wall: "If Not You, Then Who?" This reads as much as a credo as it does an invitation to all members of Ventura County communities to do what they can to help their neighbors.



170

Since 2000, VCCF has made more than 170 grants through its funds, totaling more than \$3 million to Food Share.

3,538

In 2022, more than 3,538 volunteers gave 42,207 hours of their time to ensure food kits were assembled and distributed right where the needs were most acute.

If you would like to learn more about Food Share, please visit their website at [foodshare.com](https://www.foodshare.com). To contribute to Food Share's important mission, please contact Monica White at mwhite@foodshare.com

TENACITY

2020 Census & COVID-19, Dr. Gabino Aguirre

At no time in our history was our value of tenacity more on display than the 2020 Census effort and during the COVID-19 pandemic. For Dr. Gabino Aguirre, Complete Count Committee Co-Chair and Region 5 coordinator, the hill to climb was high. Ventura County was in the highest risk category for an incomplete count and that meant a potential loss of \$2 billion in federal allocations for the county over the next 10 years. We responded to the dynamic challenges with immediacy, and persevered until sustainable success was achieved.

The 2020 Census was a pivotal moment for VCCF and Ventura County. The journey to a complete count began in 2017 after learning that Ventura County was rated 59th in the nation most at-risk of an undercount. VCCF was acutely aware of the need to protect federal, state and local funding and congressional representation in the face of increased needs and a history of poor performance in the vital count. In response to the threat of an

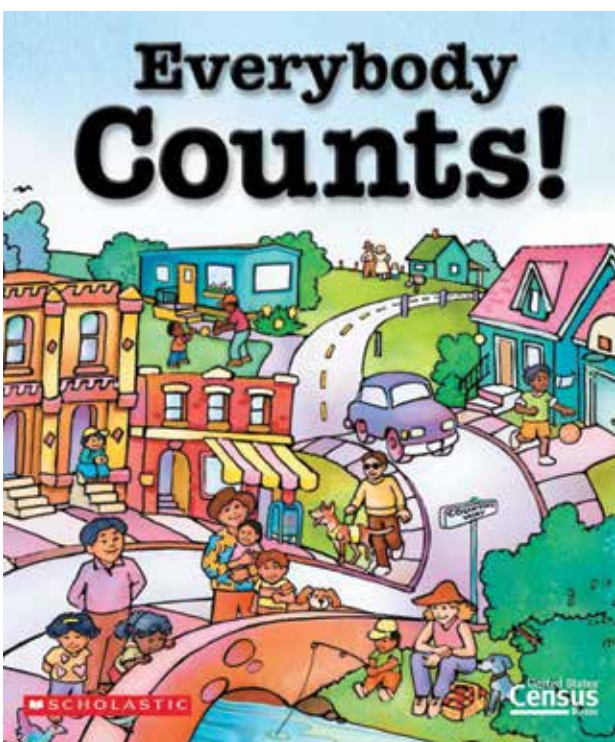
inaccurate count, VCCF gathered an expansive group of more than 300 partners and hundreds of volunteers and sought funding support for partner organizations to be able to tackle the task of reaching every person in the community.

The group created an ambitious plan called “*Somos Vecinos y Todos Contamos*” which translates to “We are ALL neighbors and we ALL count.” The goals of the plan included the development of a county-wide education and outreach program targeting hard-to-count populations, working collaboratively with other agencies, supporting participating organizations through grantmaking, avoiding duplication of outreach efforts to maximize limited resources and building a robust and meaningful network with diverse leaders from all corners of the community.

Using the theme of *vecinos* (neighbors), organizers encouraged *promotores*, or census volunteers, to reach out to their neighbors, then to people with whom they have daily interactions in their neighborhood, and then to their digital friends and neighbors. The goal was to “touch” each person three times. The strategy proved fruitful.

The organizers were very clear on what was at stake: roughly \$2,000 in allocations per person per year, for 10 years. In Ventura County, a complete count would bring an additional \$2 billion into the community, impacting funding for small businesses, employment programs, healthcare for infants and toddlers, childcare, waste disposal, policing agencies and civil rights. The census also impacts political representation, and our county’s representation is directly tied to the census; the fewer people counted, the less representation in government.

continued





\$3M

VCCF raised and granted \$3 million to support 2020 Census outreach efforts.

300

The Ventura County Complete Count Committee convened more than 300 organizations from around the county and involved the participation of hundreds of additional volunteers to raise awareness and reach our hardest-to-count communities.

95th %

Ventura County went from being 59th in the nation most at risk of an undercount (bottom 2%) to being in the top 95th percentile out of 3,215 counties nationwide.

60M

Number of views by Complete Count Committee marketing efforts related to the census.

\$2B

Amount of additional social safety net dollars for Ventura County over the next 10 years due to collective efforts by the Complete Count Committee.

The Complete Count Committee employed both a “ground” and an “air” game approach. Interactive plays and informational exhibits were brought to all corners of the county by caravans and person-to-person canvassing. We visited churches, community groups, and went door-to-door. The air game utilized radio, television and social media campaigns to counter misinformation and to garner support for a complete count.

In the final report to the state in November 2020, VCCF was proud to announce that it had achieved the impossible: Ventura County ranked in the top 95th percentile in the nation (157th out of 3,215 counties nationwide) for an accurate count! For Gabino, the victory is still fresh in his mind. “In Santa Paula, we have a population of 30,000 residents. The successful count means that each of our residents will have access to the kind of support needed to live an engaged, safe, connected, dignified and healthy life. And this for the next 10 years!” he shared. “But more importantly, the seeds of positive information around the census have been sown and future generations will already know the value of a complete count and the role they have to play in it.”

For Rigo Vargas, Public Health Director with the County of Ventura and Co-Chair of the Complete Count Committee, the team’s success has translated into a greater connectivity in the region that has continued to benefit the community. “The same engaged and motivated people and organizations came together again for the COVID-19 vaccination campaign. We employed the same playbook and were able to dispel misinformation and ensure that many more people took advantage of COVID vaccines available to them. I am forever grateful to this group for ensuring a healthy and vibrant future for all.”

VCCF is grateful for its partnership with the County of Ventura and its leadership for its heroic actions throughout the pandemic. Because of the County’s tenacity and commitment to equity, our community is stronger.



Shape
Your Future

\$55.8M

Total COVID-19 related funds.

\$930K

Granted out for Vaccine Outreach & Education.

3,879

Business supported by Rapid Response Fund grants in the first round.

300

An estimated number of lives saved through outreach to more than 150,000 Ventura County residents.

IMMEASURABLE

What we can accomplish in the years ahead!

EXCELLENCE

Education, Leah Lacayo ●

Internally, we value excellence by consistently investing in education, operations, technology and our human capital to ensure the highest quality of service and support to our donor clients and those we serve. This same value drives our commitment to educational excellence in our community from the earliest education of our 0- to 5-year-olds to those who have their sights set on college education or career training.

The Lacayos have long valued education and excellence. Leah and Hank realized that Ventura County's future depended on a local, educated workforce. This belief inspired a lifetime dedication to higher and early childhood education.

In 1996, 70 families founded the VCCF Destino Hispanic Legacy Fund and in 2006, the VCCF Destino Scholarship Fund was created for Ventura County Latino or Latina students. First-generation college students were prioritized. Leah and Hank were among the founding families.

"My husband used to go around in the community and sit at people's kitchen tables and explain the concept of the scholarship program. He shared why it mattered and how people could help map out a brighter future for many local teens, and more often than not, they got on board!" shared Leah. Hank's Latino heritage meant that he knew firsthand the challenges faced by first-generation students. "We believed that high performing kids would end up finding their way. Our focus was on helping the 2.0 to 3.0 GPA kids who are often overlooked by the scholarship system. In our minds, these are the very kids that need this kind of support the most," said Leah. "These are the kids who are probably working while going to school, watching out for younger siblings or they may even be students who are experiencing homelessness. We just didn't believe that these kids should be passed over. In many cases, their experiences and resiliency makes them very successful at navigating the challenges of college," shared Leah.



“Our focus was on helping the 2.0 to 3.0 GPA kids who are often overlooked by the scholarship system. In our minds, these are the very kids that need this kind of support the most.”

The fund has supported 40 Ventura County college students since 2006. “I am always delighted when I meet a student who has graduated from college and they tell just how helpful the scholarship was,” said Leah.

VCCF has been managing the fund and scholarship application process since its beginning. The VCCF Scholarship team oversees a three-month application season and reviews applications from nearly 1,000 applicants for donor-funded scholarships designed to promote student success in the region. The program awards hundreds of scholarships per year. “The VCCF Destino Scholarship fund has done exactly what it has set out to accomplish. By having 40 more college educated Ventura County students, we are paving the way to a more engaged and prosperous citizenry,” affirmed Jeffrey Lambert, VCCF supporter.

Leah joined the VCCF Board of Directors following Hank’s passing and has since become a leader in the effort to advance highest-quality early childhood education for all families in Ventura County. She was thrilled when VCCF received a transformational grant from the William and Joanne Miller Charitable Trust to support the Isabella Project, a pilot program of the Ventura County Highest-Quality Early Childhood Education Initiative, where Santa Paula is leading the way to become the first community in California where 100% of children will have access to full-time, highest-quality early childhood education opportunities. “In the area, most all of the school-aged children are receiving



continued ●



free breakfast and lunch. We know family resources are stretched very thin,” shared Leah. “One way to help families is to establish a nurturing, educational space for 3- to 4-year-olds to be engaged and cared for while the families, mostly agricultural workers, can work to provide for their families.”

The Isabella Project Steering Committee includes over 70 partner organizations, including the school district, local nonprofits, faith-based organizations, economic development organizations, healthcare workers and childcare providers. It also involves leadership of local families and other engaged community members. Before the Isabella Project was formed, two-thirds of children in Santa Paula had no access to early childhood education.

In fact, of the 22,000 children ages 3 and 4, over half are unable to access the life-changing opportunity of early childhood education. Leah knows that the Isabella Project will change that.

This pilot program will be the first phase of a larger effort so that all children in Ventura County are able to access the most effective and promising anti-poverty strategy—education!

As of early 2023, there are a total of 200 students enrolled among the Santa Paula Unified School District, Head Start with Child Development Resources, First 5 Ventura County and the Mexican American Opportunity Foundation, with more slots to open before the end of 2023. Promotora committee members have partnered with the school district to help outreach to families as well.

The community is enthusiastic about the opportunity. One Santa Paula mother said of the initiative, “My son is very intelligent, but I know he’d be more successful in school if he could have attended an early childhood education program, but this opportunity has never been available to us.

It looks like this is going to change with the help of the Isabella Project. This project has shown us that a child's brain and understanding develops rapidly and intensely. Children are like sponges taking everything in and learning how to dominate and work with their physical and social environments. Early childhood education will help them learn basic concepts necessary for success in Kindergarten and beyond, to develop a positive sense of self and an appreciation for learning and education. At last, early childhood education experiences will become available for all our children." VCCF's work in early childhood education has benefited from the deep knowledge and community connection of Dr. Gabino Aguirre, who is serving as a Co-Chair.

For Leah, the work of ensuring the education of all children in the community has been a rich and joyful experience. "Being able to support higher education and early childhood education has been an incredible opportunity for me and my family. This is one way that we are sure to leave a legacy that is impactful and will be impactful for generations to come. This is money and time well spent," beamed Leah.



980

In the 2022-2023 cycle we had 980 applications completed, with over 6,000 submissions for the different scholarship opportunities available.

458

458 scholarships were awarded in the 2022 cycle totaling \$1,373,650.

515

In 2023 we had 515 scholarship opportunities available to students from 114 individual scholarship funds.

22,040

Number of children in Ventura County ages 3 to 4 – 22,040.

12,000

Number of children in Ventura County not accessing early childhood education opportunities – Approximately 12,000.

EXCELLENCE

Limoneira Scholarship Fund ●

When Nicholle Azpera was 15 years old, she had a vision of attending college—something she never thought possible before—and instantly knew that's where she was meant to be. How to get there was the first obstacle Nicholle encountered in her higher education journey as she was faced with the tough question: how will I be able to afford college?

Nicholle first heard of VCCF when reviewing scholarship options with her guidance counselor in her senior year at Santa Paula High School. She was amazed to learn VCCF offered a multitude of scholarships based on merit, demographics and personal interests. VCCF's straightforward application process allowed Nicholle to complete the general application. Ultimately, Nicholle was awarded the Limoneira Scholarship, a scholarship that is awarded to residents of Santa Paula or Oxnard who will go on to achieve excellence and want to give back to their communities. The specific criterion for this scholarship requires that a parent or legal guardian work in the agricultural industry.

In 2023, the VCCF Scholarship application process gave students access to more than 515 scholarships available in the region. Furthermore, VCCF's close relationship with local high schools and colleges ensures that any students looking for a scholarship can access every opportunity available to them.

Nicholle, a junior at California State University, Channel Islands and a first-generation college student, says, "One of the major things I appreciate about VCCF is that you get to know who the donor is to your scholarship fund. They feel invested in your education not only because they're donating financially, but they also believe you're worthy of their fund and willing to take what they're donating and do something positive with it."

For many first-generation college students like Nicholle, scholarships not only provide a meaningful source of financial support, but also boost self-confidence and show that young students are valued in their communities and deserve a chance for a successful future.

"I always say that opportunities are rarely given and when they are, take them," shared Nicholle. "Getting into and starting college was a challenge itself, that at one point, I didn't think was going to happen. And now that I'm almost done with my undergrad education, I can look back and say wow, I did that, and I did that with the support and generosity from donors through VCCF."

The Limoneira Scholarship Fund encourages graduates to invest in their communities. For Nicholle, she has made this her mission post-college. "I want to return back to my community as an educator because as a first-generation college student, I've always made it my goal that I wanted to give back to those who are in the position I once was—the uncertainty of a future in college. I want to be the one giving students the pathway to college because that's exactly what VCCF gave me."

The VCCF Scholarship Program helps young students achieve excellence in their lives by giving students that important boost as they work towards finishing their degrees. And in an overwhelming college environment for first-generation scholars, that extra boost is crucial. "My scholarship was like a warm hug when you need it the most," Nicholle shared. "Knowing that not only does your family support you, but other individuals who got to know you through a general application—that really gives me the motivation to persevere and graduate. This scholarship means everything to me."



“ They also believe you’re worthy of their fund and willing to take what they’re donating and do something positive with it. ”

\$6.7M

VCCF has provided \$6.7 million in scholarships to 1,000 students since 2017.

AUTHENTIC CONNECTION

The Merewether Family ●

At VCCF, we cherish authentic connections and recognize the value in bringing together individuals and organizations to share, to develop community bonds and to envision a way forward through challenges large and small. We engage all partnerships with open collaboration and forthright communication, co-creating impactful solutions.

Loretta and Mike Merewether distinctly remember the moment they fell in love with Ventura County. The couple and three of their children were visiting Pierpoint Beach when Loretta and Mike turned to each other at the exact same moment and said, “We should live here!” They moved to the area less than three months later.

The Merewethers have been candid about their good fortune and their desire to give back to the community that has meant so much to them. The couple has leaned into VCCF’s Donor Peer Network for the shared wisdom and camaraderie it offers. The Donor Peer Network was established in response to donor clients’ desire to engage with one another and to explore best practices and learn about the needs of our community. Seventy-six percent of donors share that their most trusted source of information is their peers.

The Merewethers have joined forces with other VCCF donors to support local affordable housing, homelessness and educational initiatives, including the construction of the Ventura County Family Justice Center. Their collective impact has brought multiple projects to light that might have otherwise stalled due to lack of funding. “Vanessa, VCCF and the Donor Peer Network have been invaluable resources for us. They have brought important local needs and opportunities to us that we have been proud to support. These projects have proven to be impactful in our community and that is a key motivator for us,” concurred the couple.

Loretta and Mike have taken this “strength in numbers” concept back to their own family to establish a novel philanthropic structure that has given each member a role in the family’s giving. “In addition to our yearly giving as a couple, each of our children and grandchildren are given a budget to donate towards causes of their choosing. It has been very interesting for us because the younger generations are bringing to light different and urgent needs such as environmental causes,” shared Mike, “So once again we are learning and reflecting on needs through the lens of this younger collective.”

The couple has been deeply connected with the Rubicon Theatre Company in Ventura. As a major contributor to the company, the Merewethers again found themselves in a community of like-minded individuals seeking to make a significant impact in the region through the arts and natural beauty.

This connection has given rise to the conception and creation of the Ventura Botanical Gardens. The unique terraced garden overlooks the Pacific Ocean and offers an opportunity to explore vibrant collections of plants from California and all five Mediterranean climate regions. Just a few steps from Ventura’s urban core, the gardens enhance tourism

“...VCCF and the Donor Peer Network have been invaluable resources for us. They have brought important local needs and opportunities to us that we have been proud to support.”



while providing a few moments of respite from the busy world. Docents offer educational tours to enrich visitors' understanding of sustainability, biodiversity and conservation of endangered species.

"The process was inspiring and deeply personal to us. It has been a 10-year narrative arc that included extensive research and coordination with various entities and experts in the field. We are thrilled to have had a hand in creating this lasting beauty in our community," shared Loretta and Mike.

The couple are vibrant and committed Venturans who have found numerous connections and communities to share their passions and create lasting impact through their philanthropy. It is this community aspect that VCCF and the Donor Peer Network invite you to explore.

“We are thrilled to have had a hand in creating this lasting beauty in our community.”

54

The Donor Peer Network hosts three in-person socials a year for 54 members.

DONOR PEER NETWORK STEERING COMMITTEE LETTER

Throughout the VCCF donor focus group process that concluded prior to the pandemic, the number one thing heard was the need and desire for a VCCF Donor Peer Network that would encourage donors to build and strengthen their relationships with each other and our nonprofit community. VCCF donor clients clearly stated their longing to develop a sense of community with other local philanthropists and to learn and share about each other's personal philanthropy to lift up vital community needs by partnering together.

Why this group is so important:

1. There is an opportunity to share ideas and passions regarding giving with the group.
2. Collaborations have an opportunity where donors can do more.
3. Scheduled Lunch & Learns, Coffee & Connections and site visits provide the opportunity to hear from our nonprofits and learn about the great work in Ventura County.
4. The DPN Calendar of Events provides the opportunity to have social interaction to foster authentic connection by networking and sharing passions.

Before this peer group was formed, there was often little sharing of ideas among donors. The DPN has created an infrastructure of authentic connection with donors, the community and with the foundation.

Together we improve and lift our community, in this collective service we have the power to make the change we focus on making.

Sincerely,
Co-chairs

Catherine Sepulveda
Catherine Sepulveda

Jack Edelstein
Jack Edelstein



VCCF NONPROFIT CENTER (VCNC)

The VCCF Nonprofit Center is a place of belonging, purpose and action designed to make Ventura County a better place for all. Home to 11 local nonprofit organizations, the VCNC has fostered collaboration, innovative problem solving and idea exchanges since first opening in 2012.

If you visit the VCNC, you will likely walk through the doors beside a veteran seeking assistance from Gold Coast Veterans Foundation on navigating their benefits or in need of stable housing. You will almost definitely meet one of so many volunteers searching our center's directory for their first training with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Ventura County, or a family seeking support at Interface Children & Family Services. You will likely see one of the many local small business owners walking through the lobby on their way to the Economic Development Collaborative for help and strategic consulting.

Whether it's early morning, mid-day or late at night, odds are you will find nonprofit fundraisers, community convenings, employment fairs, disaster training, blood drives, Rotary meetings, educational events and other retreats and trainings in one of the many on-site conference rooms.

VCCF's Nonprofit Center brings our community together where connections are made, and partnerships are strengthened. Under one roof, our nonprofits have space to collaborate and sustain our work together to serve Ventura County.



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IN MEMORIAM

Our beloved founders, donors and volunteers of the Ventura County Community Foundation envision a better, brighter Ventura County for all of us. Over the last several years, we have sadly lost several of our dearest friends, and we honor their memories by stewarding their legacies consistent with their wishes. Though these community advocates are no longer with us, each will live on through the lives they touched and through the impactful differences they have made. Join us in celebrating their lives and their passions for making our shared world a better place.

Those we have recently lost

Gary Anderson	Maudette Finck	Manuel Lopez	Virginia Rogalsky
Jose Arredondo	Evelyn Florence	Ida Malki	Robert Schroeder
Roberta Ann Baptiste	Ruth Fowler	Roz McGrath	Mary Schwabauer
Barbara Barnard Smith	Nadia Freed	Mark Miller	Rodney Simonds
Katherine Bauer	Rozell Gaines	Hanne Mintz	Harriet Rae Stork
Don Belless	Efren Gorre	Charmaine Mitchell	David Stork
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Joan Bush	John Harris	Wayne Nelson	Raymond Swift
Louise Calhoun	Charles Hashbarger	Mary Alice Orcutt Henderson	Jon Sypher
Julia Campbell Namba	Irene Hofer	Robert Pedraglia	Chris Taylor
James Chamberlain	Marion Jeffrey	Bruno Pozzi	George Tillquist
Bill Corkins	Dan Johnson	Bona Press	Leslie Vielbig
Richard Daskais	Gordon Johnson	Larry Press	Maureen Volland
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Denis Dupuis	Mary Lewis	Roxie Ray	Bill Wilson
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