

Community Resilience During COVID-19

In the months since COVID-19 arrived in Southern California, local community organizations have continued to support our most heavily impacted populations in many inspiring ways. In this newsletter, we highlight three community partners who describe in their own words how they've adjusted their efforts to meet their communities' needs during a time of crisis.



Celebrate Life Cancer Ministry

For people living with cancer in South LA, as with cancer patients everywhere, the safer-at-home mandate issued 6 months ago created isolation, anxiety, and stress.

Follow-up and chemotherapy appointments were put on hold or postponed for months. Even when they resumed, patients had to face these appointments alone. Life was changing, and [Celebrate Life Cancer Ministry](#) had to change as well.

At Celebrate Life Cancer Ministry, our mission is to support those who've been touched by cancer. In the first weeks of the lockdown, we set-up video calls so volunteers could "be" with patients during their chemotherapy sessions. It eased patients' anxiety to see the face of someone who cares, on their mobile phones in their hands.

In March, we began hosting two monthly support group meetings on Zoom. We started a bilingual cancer support group. We added a virtual chair exercise class, providing an outlet for stress and a way to stay active.

With the help of Dr. Sharon Cobb, Director RN-BSN at Charles Drew University, we trained three nursing students and ten community volunteers to be Care Ambassadors.



Celebrate Life Cancer Ministry

Aug 1 at 10:14 AM · 231 views

We launched our Wellness Check program, reaching more than 200 cancer survivors in six months. It was fun and relaxing for many of our families to take part in our online Family Trivia Night, another addition to our program.

In addition to adding new psycho-social resources, we delivered packages of frozen food to our patients, along with COVID-19 kits: masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and water. The packets also included adult coloring books and gift cards.

Our motto at Celebrate Life Cancer Ministry is, “a community conquering cancer *together*,” and we believe that “together” is truly the only way that we can get through these times.

St. Joseph Center

[St. Joseph Center](#) has been serving low-income families and individuals experiencing homelessness in LA County and surrounding areas for over 40 years. We're now seeing a drastic need for help like never before. Before COVID-19 we served about 570 households a month. After COVID-19 this rose to about 860 households, a nearly 70% increase.



Despite all the challenges, our commitment to building real connections to our clients hasn't wavered. Thanks to the help of our benefactors, volunteers, and non-profit neighbors like UCLA, we've been able to provide resources such as shelter, school supplies, homeschooling, and assistance with insurance/health-related issues.

Through our SOLA Open Air: A Safe Landing for Families program, we're currently offering family therapy sessions, including discussions around the havoc caused by COVID-19 and parenting skills. We also offer a Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) service and mental health support for SOLA families during these stressful times.

Our Project Roomkey (PRK) program is a collaborative effort by the State, County, and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) to secure hotel and motel rooms for vulnerable people experiencing homelessness. It's been a long journey to help protect the spread of the deadly virus in our communities and provide a place for individuals to isolate safely. In this period of economic downturn and unemployment, we're happy to see that Project Roomkey is also helping keep local businesses open and members of our community employed.



With our daily "boots on the ground" efforts, our frontline workers have been encouraged to see people come into one of our temporary hotels, and find a new path to safety and housing stability. One of the greatest impacts we see in our community work is helping people get a sense of shelter – safety, food, and wraparound client service support.

BreastfeedLA

Supporting and informing mothers about the benefits of breastfeeding is important, especially in times of crisis. [BreastfeedLA](#) is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of infants and families through education, outreach, and advocacy to promote and support breastfeeding.



In 2017, we founded the [API Breastfeeding Task Force](#), which recognizes the unique cultural and educational needs of Asian, Pacific Islander and API-American parents and seeks to decrease inequities and normalize breastfeeding in Los Angeles County's API communities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, our task force has addressed the language barriers API families face which hinder their access to lactation support. While 11% of LA County residents speak an API language at home, only 4.5% of lactation support providers in the county speak one of these languages. To help remove these barriers, BreastfeedLA initiated an API scholarship for a comprehensive lactation consultant education program, which supports a new generation of lactation education specialists from Samoan, Filipino, Cambodian, Chinese and other traditionally underrepresented communities. We're grateful to the UCLA Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Equity and UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center for supporting this program and enabling us to achieve more equitable breastfeeding support representation.



We also successfully lobbied for an Asian Pacific Islander (API) Breastfeeding Week in LA County. Just in time for August, which is National Breastfeeding Month, Los Angeles County's Board of Supervisors voted to approve the designation of the third week of August as API Breastfeeding Week, which this year was from August 16-22. Our efforts will support community advocates, policy makers, hospital and health care workers, and government officials to better understand and address barriers and other social determinants of health

facing the API community in LA County. We hope to push the API Breastfeeding Week to a statewide designation.

COVID-19 Resources for Community Groups

Please see the list of COVID-19 related resources for diverse and vulnerable communities we've compiled and continue to update here: <https://healthequity.ucla.edu/news/covid-19-resources-community-groups>.