

UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

BAYSIDE

Community Center

COMMUNITY PARTNER BRIEF

A CLOSER LOOK AT OUR 2021 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

USING INFORMATION COLLECTED FROM OUR 2021 CHANGEMAKER CHALLENGE COMMUNITY PARTNERS WE HAVE COMPILED FINDINGS ABOUT EACH PARTNER'S MISSION, VISION, PURPOSE, HISTORY, PROGRAMS, CHALLENGES, ASPIRATIONS AND TESTIMONIALS FOR USE IN YOUR CLASSROOM.

FRAMING THE ISSUE OF FOOD JUSTICE

The Changemaker Challenge topic of *food justice* is especially relevant and timely for our USD community and the San Diego community more broadly. *Food justice* highlights the importance of creating and maintaining a food system where everyone has access to healthy and fresh foods, while also acknowledging the impact our food choices have on those around us. Food is central to our daily lives - it helps to define our cultures, our families, and our communities. Because of this, it is critical that we think about the structure of our food system and its consequences for our individual health and the quality of life in our communities. While it is more common today for us to consider where our food comes from and how it affects our own health, *food justice* intersects with many of today's most urgent challenges, such as structural racism, climate change, and economic inequality.



FRAMING THE ISSUE OF FOOD JUSTICE

Food justice highlights many of the issues that the environmental justice movement and the anti-Black racism movement have been addressing for decades. For example, many factory farms and meatpacking plants pollute the water and air of the communities in which they are located - which are most often communities of color and low-income communities ([Food is Power](#)). In the United States, people of color are also more likely to suffer from hunger, food insecurity, and diet-related illnesses. It is clear that a more detailed focus on the food system requires that we consider issues of the living conditions and wages of those who are employed in the system as well as the ways in which communities can control the food system itself. This year's Changemaker Challenge invites the USD campus community to think about ways to address and change the inequities that exist in our current food system - both on and off campus.



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While Bayside provides a number of services and programs, for the purposes of this year's Changemaker Challenge's topic on Food Justice we have selected to focus only on food-related initiatives and information on this Community Partner Brief.

The following sections were taken with permission from Bayside's Website, for more information, please visit <https://www.baysidecc.org>

OVERVIEW

Bayside is an independent 89 year old, non-profit, neighborhood-based organization that serves the whole person and community. Located at 2202 Comstock Street in the heart of Linda Vista, our facility is visited daily by many San Diegans. Social services, educational opportunities and advocacy efforts all exist under one roof, through which we encourage and empower members of the community to create abundant lives.

MISSION

To empower our diverse community to improve its quality of life through services, education, and advocacy. Our vision is a city where every neighborhood has access to abundant resources that promote community connection and economic self-sufficiency, expand educational and cultural opportunities; and facilitate healthy living and general well-being. It is extremely important to our organization that this is accomplished while preserving the cultural identity and moving the economic needle in one of San Diego's most diverse communities – Linda Vista.

HISTORY & BACKGROUND

- In 1932, Bayside Settlement House was founded by the Sisters of Social Service in the tradition of their reformist movement that began in the 1880s. These one-stop assistance centers were established to empower and meet the needs of lower-income immigrants and native-born residents in urban settings.
- In the 1970s, in response to the changing financial landscape of the non-profit sector, our organization became a 501(C)(3) primarily supported by private and public funding sources. This era of Bayside's history also saw our expansion into other parts of the city, opening the door to serving larger and more diverse populations.
- Since then, our organization has outgrown the settlement house model and consolidated its efforts in Linda Vista under the name Bayside Community Center. Our ability to continuously empower individuals and families for generations is testimony to the strength, resilience, and commitment of the organization.
- Social services, educational opportunities and advocacy efforts all exist under one roof, through which we encourage and empower members of the community to create abundant lives.

ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE

- We feed those most in need: Linda Vista residents live in a Federally defined food desert with limited access to fresh produce.
- We close English literacy gaps: Our after-school Academic Club students eliminate or reduce literacy gaps by an average of 28%.
- We advocate side by side: We have trained over 100 Linda Vista residents including youth and seniors to become leaders.

FOOD-RELATED PROGRAMS & SERVICES OFFERED

Bayside Environmental Learning Center (BELC)-

BELC continues to serve residents today by meeting immediate food security and nutritional needs. Additionally, our Environmental Learning Center teaches practical skills related to urban agriculture and sustainability. BELC also advocates for long-term systemic change throughout the region in pursuit of food justice and environmental sustainability.

Food Production and Recovery

For the last 10 years, BELC has produced fresh, locally grown produce in Linda Vista, a federally defined Food Desert. Our Environmental Learning Center is also a hub that empowers others to produce and recover fresh produce. We are proud to work with partners like San Diego Co-Harvest, Produce Good, Mesa College, Francis Parker, as well as individual farmers and gardeners throughout the county to make free and fresh food available in Linda Vista.

Tiny Gardens

Tiny Gardens is a holistic and intergenerational approach that engages parents and kids to grow and learn together with hands-on gardening activities and healthy eating launched in December 2020. Bayside's Tiny Gardens program provides 'grow bags' to low-income families in Linda Vista who have school-aged children. Our team offers monthly bilingual workshops to participating families to help them learn how to grow their own produce from seed through harvest based on San Diego's year-long growing season. Tiny Garden families also learn creative ways to cook the produce they've grown, the importance of healthy eating, and how financial and environmental sustainability relates to growing your own food.

Linda Vista Community Garden

Over the past 10 years, BELC has helped spearhead and support legislation that has resulted in the increase of urban agriculture throughout our region. Our team has helped support and develop more than a dozen community, backyard, and school gardens throughout the region. BELC's latest project is to reestablish the Linda Vista Community Garden to be located at the Linda Vista Community Park, 7064 Levant Street, San Diego, CA 92111. This 6,500 square-foot public use space will feature community rental plots, an outdoor classroom to support enrichment learning, and a native-plant pollinator garden.

IMPACT

- For the last 10 years, BELC has produced fresh, locally grown produce in Linda Vista, a federally defined Food Desert.
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- BELC's latest project is to reestablish the Linda Vista Community Garden to be located at the Linda Vista Community Park, 7064 Levant Street, San Diego, CA 92111. This 6,500 square-foot public use space will feature community rental plots, an outdoor classroom to support enrichment learning, and a native-plant pollinator garden
- During the July 2020 - June 2021 Fiscal year Bayside distributed through its various channels the following:
 - 32,717.5 pounds of produce (from Bayside's garden, recovered at Mesa College's distribution, and from several partners including but not limited to Co-Harvest Foundation and Produce Good)
 - 5,375 pounds of donated bread (Charlie's Best Breads)

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In an interview with the Changemaker Hub, Kim Heinle ('11), Executive Director of Bayside Community Center, provided specific information about the challenges they are currently facing. In the sections below, we provide direct quotes from this interview.

WHAT IS A FOOD JUSTICE CHALLENGE YOUR ORGANIZATION IS FACING THAT UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO STUDENTS COULD HELP YOU TO ADDRESS?

One of the challenges that the students can help us think through or ideate on is connected to distribution points for food. We grow a lot of food and we receive a lot of food from various partners across San Diego. We have a pretty good process in place for processing the donated food. But we would like to start thinking more about what are some alternative ways that food - whether perishable or non-perishable - could get out in Linda Vista?

WHY IS FOOD DISTRIBUTION A PROBLEM YOU WANT TO FOCUS ON RIGHT NOW?

The key issue is that there are many Linda Vista residents who currently live in a food desert, which means they do not have access to affordable and nutritious food. There are many reasons why our residents do not have this access: the lack of income, lack of distribution channels, and/or transportation. Whatever the reasons, they don't have the access to the healthy food options that they deserve and we believe that all people deserve this. At Bayside, we see a lot of the same people, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. We have been able to support approximately several hundred or so community members really well with food security over the past year. We have been doing this for decades, so it is nothing new. But in the past year, it's really been put at the forefront. For example, we know that even though we have 75 families come through for weekly food distribution, there are many more countless families in Linda Vista who aren't getting access to these resources for a variety of reasons. We assume that many might not even know about these programs, they might not have a ride to Bayside, or they might not be able to walk the two miles from the Northeast part of Linda Vista to get here. Some of the families we are not serving may have another distribution site closer to them that they're accessing, which is great. And while we fully support that, it is possible that they are receiving different quality food. One thing that sets Bayside's food security programs apart is our focus on getting fresh produce from local gardens to residents. When folks come to pick up food once a week, they basically get the equivalent of what is referred to as a Community Supported Agriculture Box. This is the equivalent of a box of food every week worth \$20 to \$25 at a local farmers market. We are providing this produce free to families in need. The families that we're not currently engaging with would probably benefit from having this type of fresh, locally grown produce, too. It is important for students to understand the limitations we have as an organization. We are confined by our physical boundaries and we are currently unable to grow as much as we would like. Our lack of physical space affects the ability for us to distribute food and because we are zoned as a commercial property, we cannot sell produce on our premises. So, one of our main challenges is how we can expand the work that we're doing within our current physical boundaries? How do we work with what we have or think outside the box in terms of distribution channels for this division? In addition, we need to do a better job at letting

Linda Vista residents know about our services. For example, sometimes when we do have something set up someone walks by and says, "Oh, I walk by here every day. I didn't notice you guys were giving out food." We let them know that we do it every week and that they should come back and in some cases, this person returns the following week. But this happens only because the bus dropped them off at the same time we are delivering food and they see us.

FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, WHAT ARE SOME OF THE REASONS WHY PEOPLE ARE FOOD INSECURE IN THE LINDA VISTA COMMUNITY?

Food security is just one part of poverty that is a compounding factor that many Linda Vista residents are facing, along with battling housing insecurity, over-crowdedness, access to transportation, etc. For example, we know that some of the families we serve consist 10 to 11 people who are living in a two-bedroom house or apartment. So, for many families, they're juggling housing insecurity, food insecurity, unemployment, underemployment, minimum wage jobs, etc. And when they're dealing with a host of challenges, traveling to Little Italy or North Park to frequent a farmers market is not an option. It's easier and far more affordable to go to McDonald's than to hop the bus to go to a farmers market. There's a Linda Vista Farmers Market, but it's been closed since the start of the pandemic. Similarly, the community has a great grocery store, Thuan Phat, an Asian / Vietnamese grocery store, but it doesn't necessarily culturally appeal to everybody in the neighborhood. Linda Vista is, after all, one of the most diverse communities in San Diego with estimates of over 25 dialects spoken. I think the community is facing a whole mix of issues. I don't have one singular answer, but food insecurity is one of many symptoms of poverty that residents in Linda Vista are dealing with.

WHAT IS AN IDEAL OUTCOME FOR YOU REGARDING THIS PROBLEM?

I would say it's a tangible solution that is realistic and provides feasible steps Bayside could take to make happen in terms of either creating, supporting, or expanding channels of distribution in Linda Vista. And again, this would be a good solution whether it is one institution involved, or preferably, a collaboration of community partners. This is a community challenge, so it should be a community solution. Whatever cool ideas and solutions students come up with, at the end of the day, we hope the ideas provide a dignified experience for the community members.

I think what we are asking students to explore is not just "how does Bayside distribute more food in the community?" There are already many great organizations and people doing great work in the community. Instead, the question is, how could we as a community better support existing efforts that are already going on so that more folks can access more food and resources? There are so many opportunities to get more food distributed, such as, supporting small local businesses, whether it is a tamale or lumpia stand, or a store selling local foods and local produce. Many Linda Vista residents come from countries where they were farmers. For example, some of our residents have grown up on ranches in Mexico, but so often, these families do not have the resources to do it here.

HOW DOES BAYSIDE DISTRIBUTE FOOD RIGHT NOW?

Currently, we have the following four programs: 1) onsite weekly distributions; 2) twice month home delivery; 3) daily senior lunch; 4) and once a month onsite distribution. We do weekly food distributions onsite where we get out food, a mix of perishable and non-perishable food between, generally between 60 and 70 clients a week. So families of four would be 240 to 280 clients a week, basically. We do this in partnership with several different agencies, including the County Office of Education, Co-Harvest Foundation, the San Diego Food Bank, Jewish Family Service, Produce Good, and others.

We also started home deliveries of food to senior citizens during the pandemic. We deliver the same food items, basically perishable and non-perishable. We actually are in a process of transitioning away from this program except for a few seniors who may still need food delivered to them. We want to encourage our seniors to come back to Bayside, should they feel comfortable with it. We want them to be in the community again and to fight social isolation because we all know this past year has been really hard, especially for our homebound seniors.

We do a daily, Monday through Friday, senior lunch onsite at Bayside that will serve about 30 seniors when social distancing restrictions are lifted. Right now, we're limited to about 15 seniors because of the county's social distancing requirements that they've got in place and because our space is small, we just can't accommodate that many more seniors.

And then lastly, we do a once a month distribution on the third Friday of the month where we basically recover and recycle produce and food from Mesa College. They do mass distributions once a month and when they have extra food, they call Bayside, and we pick it up. We bring back what we can and then the next day we get it out the door. And if we still have leftover food from that, Bayside staff drive through the apartment complexes in Linda Vista, call a client inside who tells their neighbors, and a handful of residents will come out and load up on the produce.

To share a bit about our impact in numbers, in last year's fiscal year, July to June '21, Bayside distributed 28,917 pounds of fresh produce, a mix of harvested produce from our garden and produce that was donated from a whole host of partners like Co-Harvest, Mesa College, etc. Charlie's Best Breads, donations last year allowed us to give out almost 5,400 pounds of bread. Every week for a year, families have been getting fresh bread, good bread, not just food that's expired or low-quality food, but food that has dignity. These numbers are on the conservative side, too.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE, EITHER BY BAYSIDE OR BY COMMUNITY PARTNERS BEFORE TO ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM?.

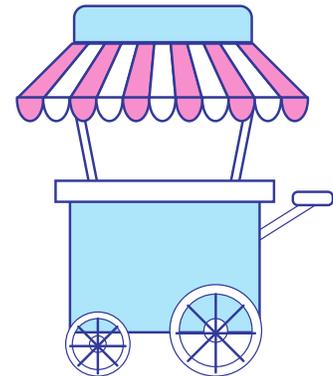


Farmers Market. Something we've learned over the past couple of months in conversations to help bring back the Linda Vista Farmers Market (which closed at the start of the pandemic) is that farmers markets are very costly for everyone involved. One of the reasons is because it's hard to sustain customers. One thing the Linda Vista Farmers Market did well, which I know a lot of other markets do, is make EBT accessible there. So folks who receive benefits from SNAP can shop at the market. Actually, a senior citizen recently inquired if Bayside was helping residents file for EBT renewals so they could use their benefits at the market. The answer is yes, we are, but the market isn't up and running yet. And he was disappointed to hear the news. The point is that people are still asking about the market and while I know this just one person, there were many community members using it before it closed. The Linda Vista Farmers Market was also culturally sensitive to the neighborhood, so vendors reflected the diverse community here in Linda Vista. We're learning a lot about farmers markets in this exploration that we're doing to try to reopen the Linda Vista market. It's not a moneymaker and it's hard to keep clients.



Farm Stand. We used to put a food stand in front of Bayside and just have it there for folks who were walking by. They were free to take any of the food items there. Because we can't sell produce on our property, we would ask them to make a donation if they could. This initiative was successful but it never was able to become self-sustaining. We did this right up until the pandemic and we just haven't started back up yet. It required a lot of staff time to get people's attention to bring them to the stand. The farm stand was different than the Solar Cart because we would put out the produce and just ask for donations. Because of this, it qualified as a "Good Samaritan" type policy, where we weren't putting out any hot or cold or prepared food. Instead, it just was just produce from the garden. With the Solar Cart, the minute it leaves our property, it becomes a different category.

Solar Cart. We purchased a mobile solar-powered cart from Solar Cart to turn it into a coffee shop and food stand. It had so much potential but it never got off the ground because of permitting and capacity. We are in the process now of selling it. Bayside just doesn't have the capacity or the wherewithal to know how to use something like that. I think a big part of that is because of the permitting. For us to sell food off of that cart, for example, first you have to figure out and get the proper permit. The easiest permit to get are for pre-packaged items - whether it is cold or hot item. There were several different levels of permitting you to have to go through to get from the County Department of Health to get your food processing permit if you're going to be cooking on site. So, if we wanted to just use the cart as a display case from which people could purchase the lettuce from our garden, that was fine. But as soon as we started chopping the lettuce, then it becomes a prepared food. And if it's prepared food, that triggers these other things that you have to deal with. In addition, if you're going to do hot or cold food you have to have a site to store the cart and a three-compartment sink to do all of the proper washing, prepping. There were other things that complicated using the cart as well. For example, where are you putting your waste and your recycling? How close is that to the nearest dumpster? When you store the cart, what's the security? Is it a mobile cart versus a stationary cart? All of these issues trigger different complex processes that we do not have the capacity to manage at the moment.





Veggie Van. We had the idea of a Veggie Van for a while. It's interesting because during the pandemic, whenever we had extra produce or bread or something that's going to go bad, we had staff actually load up one of our cars and drive together through Linda Vista through the back alleys. One of our local staff members calls one person and 20 people from the complex come out and we just unload the car and it's gone just like that. So it's like, if you bring it to the people, it's gone in a heartbeat. And that was the concept of the veggie van. And this isn't new. People are doing this in other ways throughout the country. We just need a type of vehicle that has that old cooling ability to keep the produce fresh in there. We have looked into it. We've applied for funding, have not been successful yet. I do think at some point we'll probably find the funding, especially since Bayside's food security work continues to grow and has been getting more attention. The community garden will help with this as well. So while I think we're moving in the direction of establishing a veggie van program, it's just on hold right now and we are not putting a ton of resources or energy towards it while we get some other stuff off the ground.

WHAT IS AN EXAMPLE OF AN IDEA/INITIATIVE THAT HAD AN UNEXPECTED POSITIVE IMPACT?

In terms of a couple of specific stories, we have some clients who are not only recipients of the food programs and the services we provide but they also then are part of our educational programs where they're learning how to grow food on their property, where they can then harvest their own spinach at night to make a salad with their kids. We hear great stories where their kids can learn how to grow an onion and then they actually like eating onions because they saw it from seed to plant. We have quite a few clients who not only come every week and get the food distributions but that they're also learning how to do it themselves, too. And that's where I think Bayside's empowerment model is: people are hungry today and we provide some food. We know it's a bandaid, but we also know they need it. But let's also get them involved in some of our other programs where they can learn how to grow their own food or advocate in the city so that we can create sustainable policies that support food security.

Another example is when the San Diego Food Bank gave Bayside \$50 gift cards to Luna Grill during the holiday season in 2020. We were able to just put those into the bags of produce and non-perishables that went out to community members. While this was great, I understand there were still some hardships for some community members in terms of getting to Luna Grill, or not knowing the restaurant. Overall, it was so cool to have a huge number of those folks who received the gift cards to be able to get food from a very good restaurant in a fast, casual way for their family. People so often just need the capital to go do something beneficial for themselves and their families. Once they get it, they know what to do with it.

WHAT LANGUAGE SHOULD STUDENTS CONSIDER WHEN THINKING OR SPEAKING ABOUT THE ISSUE?

I want students to tackle this challenge with an asset-based approach rather than a deficit-based one. Linda Vista residents are the hardest working people I've ever met. I find that many people have a negative misconception of low-income communities. There's a narrative that stigmatizes these communities and stereotypes people as lazy but this is not the case. The folks in Linda Vista that we work with and who we serve, and who serve us, and who empower us just as much as we empower them, break their backs working every single day. And so I would not want students to come in thinking this is a "pity me community," and they're just lazy, or they don't care, or they don't try. It is the broader systemic issues that are keeping them in poverty. I want the students to know it's not an individual choice. There are systemic issues that cause Linda Vista to be one of the hardest-hit socioeconomically distressed census tracts in San Diego - one of the country's most beautiful and affluent cities.



WHAT QUESTION CAN USD STUDENTS HELP EXPLORE SOLUTIONS FOR?

How might we create ways of getting food to families and seniors in the Linda Vista community so that it increases Bayside's outreach and supports local businesses?