Board Chairman’s Corner

I can’t thank you enough, faithful friends, for your continued support of Santa Maria. We are still faced with a dramatic increase of clients needing food. In one week, we now serve the number of families that we used to serve in a month!

I am thrilled that we will sponsor ten campers at Camp St. Andrew’s in the Sierra this summer. This well-established week-long camp is a fantastic and unique opportunity for the students. We will also be having our own Summer Camp in San Jose for 1st through 4th graders.

Our VITA tax program has completed another successful tax preparation season. Thank you volunteers! As of May, our Studio after-school program is ending. We thank everyone who has helped with Studio over many years.

Grateful and thankful. That’s how I feel about all of you who support us in every way. Your support keeps our doors open and our community fed. Thank you!

Unprecedented Demand for Food Support Continues

Never in forty years of service has Santa Maria been called to help so many people cope with food insecurity. On peak days the client line now snakes through our parking lot and out onto the sidewalk.

Santa Maria provides groceries for more than 1,500 families each month. (A year ago we served 800 families/month.) And we’ve been registering twenty new families a day, including folks from as far away as Sunnyvale, Fremont and even Hayward!

Keeping up with the extraordinary demand is hard on our staff and volunteers. Volunteers now assemble as many as 120 boxes of food each weekday morning. It’s both physically and emotionally demanding, since clients often share their frustrations.

Demand is such that we have reluctantly suspended our Clothes Closet as we need all volunteers to help in the food pantry. We will consider restarting this

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Willingness of volunteers to make a difference in the lives of others has everything to do with what happens at Santa Maria.

This year fourteen volunteers staffed the IRS VITA – Volunteer Income Tax Assistance – program at Santa Maria on eleven Saturdays from 9:00–1:00 for a total of 456 volunteer hours. Their language capabilities included Spanish, English, Vietnamese and Korean.

The tremendous commitment of time and skills of these volunteers helped more than 200 clients file their taxes. The VITA clients, whose average adjusted gross income for 2022 was just over $30,000, were so grateful for this free service!

Santa Maria’s clients have the advantage of a compassionate, skilled and knowledgeable VITA team. Our volunteer team leader for the last two years works as an IRS employee during the week. Our lead Spanish-speaking volunteer, a businesswoman from Menlo Park, has come for more than 20 years to help clients navigate their rights and obligations as taxpayers.

With the extensions available this year the Santa Maria VITA program plans an additional three Saturdays between August and October. We appreciate our VITA volunteers so much!

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**Santa Maria Contact Info**

**Alfonso Mendez**

alfonso.mendez@santamariasj.org

Ph: (408) 292-3314

Visit our website: [www.santamariasj.org](http://www.santamariasj.org) and “Like” us on Facebook!

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**Pajaro Flood Outreach**

Thousands of families found themselves flooded out of their homes in Pajaro (Monterey County) after a levee was breached. In response to the tragedy, Santa Maria delivered a van-load of household items and supplies for young children to the Salinas offices of All-In Monterey County to contribute to their efforts to help Pajaro flood victims rebuild their lives.

Santa Maria delivered diapers, car seats, strollers, playpens, cleaning supplies and other household goods that it receives from Target stores. As a program of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of El Camino Real, Santa Maria, at times of special need, does what it can to help beyond its immediate community of San Jose. The supplies were distributed to families who had lost everything in the floods.
Two Summer Camps for Kids!

Young Campers San Jose Camp
Santa Maria’s own Summer Camp 2023 offers twenty-five young campers from the neighborhood a four-week camp beginning in July.

The camp, located at the nearby San Jose Youth Community Center, provides fun and educational activities each day. Donor support allows us to hire a camp director and assistant and to charter buses for the weekly field trips to great places such as the Lawrence Hall of Science at UC Berkeley and the San Francisco Zoo.

Teens Sponsored to Camp St. Andrew’s
Santa Maria is sponsoring ten teens from its community of client families for a very special week at Camp St. Andrew’s. A first such adventure for most, they will experience camping, hiking, swimming, sports, games and fun at a beautiful lakeside campground in the Sierra.

Since 1978, Camp St. Andrew’s has provided youth of diverse social and economic backgrounds with a wonderful camp experience that provides opportunities for personal and spiritual growth while enjoying the wonders of nature.

Earth Day Workshop

To celebrate Earth Day, Santa Maria hosted a workshop on sustainable leadership led by Migdalia Rodriguez.

Ms. Rodriguez shared ideas with families in the community about how to start their own small businesses by reusing recyclables and discarded items.

It was a fun and informative workshop for all!

Thank you, Migdalia!
service, but not until we are confident that it won’t take away from our primary role as a reliable food pantry.

In the face of this food crisis, we at Santa Maria offer huge thanks to you, our committed donor community, for your support.

Our objective is to provide a balanced collection of grocery items. Financial support from our donors enables Santa Maria to purchase items in short supply such as cooking oil and low-sugar breakfast cereals.

Thankfully, Second Harvest of Silicon Valley, our primary partner, has increased their deliveries of produce and other food items to as many as ten pallets each week. It is a sad reality that the need for food remains so high in the bay area. But we are here to help!

Be A Part of It: The Joy of Volunteering

Our need for on-site volunteers has risen dramatically this year. Would you be able to help? Volunteering just one morning a week between 8:30 and noon as part of our food distribution team can make a big difference for Santa Maria. Or if you prefer to greet clients, we always need help at the front desk. Contact our operations manager Alfonso Mendez (left) to learn how you can really lend a hand: (408) 292-3314.

Not only will volunteering help us out, it will put you in touch with our wonderful staff and other great volunteers who make up our Santa Maria community and keep Santa Maria a happy, hopping place. You will feel a great sense of satisfaction for having helped your community in a meaningful, hands-on way.

As a volunteer, you’ll meet and work with Fernando Torres, below, who started as a client, then became a volunteer, and now is a valued member of our staff. Fernando’s oldest child attended our ABC preschool years ago and his wife, a counselor, has helped our community as well. Fernando always has a smile on his face and has never met a stranger! We are blessed to have him on staff running our busy Food Pantry.

Come join the warm and welcoming place that is Santa Maria Urban Ministry. We need you here and will welcome you with open arms!

Santa Maria Urban Ministry is supported by individual donors who make possible our work to help families with groceries from our food pantry, income tax filings, education and other services.

Please consider making a donation to Santa Maria to help us lift up our clients during the summer, and carry us into fall with our shelves full.

Santa Maria Urban Ministry . 778 S. Almaden Ave . San Jose, CA  95110 . (408) 292-3314 . www.santamariasj.org