

Having trouble viewing this email? [View it in your web browser](#)



Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative

December 2020 Newsletter

Happy Holidays from Interfaith Food!

Covid Relief Expands to Sonoma County

Prior to the start of the pandemic, Interfaith Food provided low-income seniors incentives of up to \$60 each to supplement local produce purchases through the government Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP). This meant that participants could get four times the amount of free healthy, local produce annually compared to SFMNP. With the Calif. Dep't. Of Food and Agriculture pausing SFMNP in the North Bay, and shelter in place orders in effect, Interfaith Food wanted to ensure clients our partners had been serving were still able to get fresh, farmers market produce while remaining safe. To fill the gap, Interfaith Food began a Covid Relief Program for seniors with our established partners in Marin county (see April newsletter). Feedback from our network and the seniors receiving these benefits have been overwhelmingly positive.

We are excited to announce expansion of this work to Sonoma County beginning in November, thanks to the support of the Community Foundation of Sonoma County. We are partnering with Catholic Charities of Santa Rosa, the Jewish Community Center of Sonoma County, Petaluma Bounty, and for the first time, the Council on Aging. We hope to expand this Covid Relief program to meet the needs of seniors in East Bay pending future funding opportunities.

Bringing Hope for the Holidays

New Hope Baptist Church in Oakland has been offering a breakfast program serving children before the COVID Pandemic, but applied for a mini-grant from Interfaith Food to further develop the program. New Hope received a \$2,000 grant from Interfaith Food in August to expand the program and respond to the changing needs of their community during the pandemic and in-person instruction for school children. New Hope Baptist Church held a community-wide event called "Hope for the Holidays" to provide children and youth with food over the holiday season on November 28.

[Read More](#)



Food Distribution at Hope for the Holidays event in November.

Message from the Executive Director

Friends,

The many challenges of the last year created a great time to be in service to community! In 2020 we were able to greatly increase the impact of our nutrition incentive programs through new and expanded work bridging faith-based agencies, and farmers. We committed over \$45,000 for incentives empowering low-income people to double or even quadruple their purchasing power for local fruits and vegetables from local farmers. We were able to facilitate faith-groups spreading the word to undocumented individuals hit by COVID and the state-wide wildfires about applying for government nutrition resources. We were able to offer more dollars in mini-grants to congregations than ever before; supporting 10 projects in 6 counties.

As we look forward to 2021, Interfaith Food will be growing our efforts on many fronts. We plan to work more on senior and child nutrition policy; we plan to expand programming including renewing work on CSA's; and launching expanded work to identify faith community owned lands that can be used by gardeners and farmers.

I'm so grateful for the opportunity to work with partners like Noele at Ecumenical Housing in West Marin to help people who are in need of healthful food, and farmers who are struggling to make ends meet after their markets disappeared. I am grateful for the hard work and support of our outgoing VISTA volunteers Guadalupe and Morgan, and our Advisory Board who has been especially active this year. I'm excited about our new team, VISTA's Stephanie, Laura and Abby; and our new Outreach and Communications Associate Isai. (Learn more about them [here](#))

We look forward to working with you to grow the local food system.

In the meantime, enjoy the holidays, and if you can contribute to support our work I can assure any contribution makes a difference!

With appreciation, and best wishes during this season!

Steve Schwartz



Donate to Interfaith Food!



L-R Steve Schwartz, Laura Oprisch, Stephanie Felton, Isai Garcia. Not pictured: Abby Runte.

Advocate for Farmworker Priority for COVID Vaccinations

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the fact that farmworkers are some of the most vulnerable essential workers. There must be a concerted effort on the part of California government officials to make sure the factors that put them at-risk most for COVID-19 exposure are addressed. A policy brief released in November by the COVID-19 Farmworker and Rural Immigrant Community Advocacy Coalition, outlines the needs and obstacles farmworkers face in gaining quality health care and makes a case for placing them in the top priority phase in the California Vaccination Plan being implemented soon. Interfaith Food joins the Coalition in recognizing the crucial role farmworkers play in California's economy in the midst of the pandemic. We join the call for the state to prioritize farmworkers as soon COVID-19 vaccinations are available. The Coalitions' briefing, written by California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation (CRLAF) states "given the reticence and inability of California's agricultural workers to access the American healthcare system, work needs to begin now to educate farmworker communities and prepare them for the eventual vaccinations that will keep them and their communities safe."

Join us in advocating to the California COVID-19 Community Advisory Committee for prioritization of the health and safety of Californian farmworkers. Please submit an email with your public comment before the end of December to the California Department of Public Health at covid19outreach@cdph.ca.gov. (If you do submit comments please cc' us at info@interfaithfood.org.)

Points you may want to touch on in your comments include:

- California's 800,000 agricultural workers are an essential workforce responsible for sustaining California's \$50 billion agricultural industry and the production of America's fresh food supply.
- Farmworkers faced higher exposure to COVID-19 than other workers due to exposure in the fields, in the commute to work, and in extremely overcrowded housing.
- Farmworkers fall into many high risk categories for COVID-19 and should be given the highest priority for distribution of a safe vaccine for Phase 1 of the California's plan.

[Read More](#)

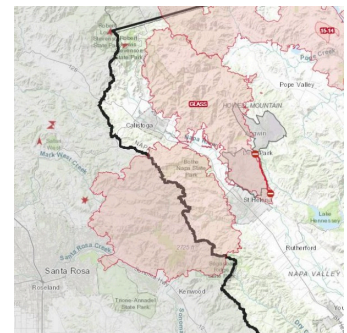


Masks from the organization Farmworker Justice

Fire Victims Receive Food Aid Through Interfaith Food Outreach

This fire season the North Bay area was impacted by two fires: LNU lighting complex fire and Glass fire. Similar disastrous fires broke out around the state. After declaring a national disaster for specific fires the Federal Government offered Disaster CalFresh benefits to help impacted people purchase food.

[Read More](#)



Glass fire map from Napa County GIS map

I want to support Interfaith Food! (Click to Donate)

Contact Us

info@interfaithfood.org | 707-634-4672



[Unsubscribe](#)