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**SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER**

[WWW.FOODSHARE.COM](http://WWW.FOODSHARE.COM)

# FOOD SHARE

ventura county



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# A note from your CEO

I love our front cover image of the Food Share team. Every day, I think to myself how honored I am to lead this amazing organization of hard-working staff, dedicated volunteers, and a supportive board of directors. It's the best feeling in the world to be immersed in a community that cares about helping those less fortunate and seeing firsthand, the basic human nature of caring. This is a truth that Jewel Pedi, Food Share's extraordinary founder, understood too. As she says in the interview she gave to us recently that you can read on pages 3 - 4, "You absolutely have to do for others in order for yourself to be happy."

For the past 14 months, the organizational structure of Food Share has been tested, stretched, and challenged in a manner that has only made our food bank stronger and more resilient. In a matter of weeks starting in March 2020, our entire operation had to be re-engineered in the face of COVID-19. Direct distributions were launched. Offsite space was secured. PPE, COVID safety practices and travel policies were mandated. Communications with our community partners, our clients, our donors and the media went into overdrive. Financial support was solidified. Our hunger-relief work was in the spotlight like never before. What was revealed was a mission-driven organization with a team of hunger-relief responders ready and willing to face this disaster on the frontline.

## **We distributed \$70M worth of food to people in need.**

As a food bank, the single most important measure of our performance and the greatest challenge we face is the amount of food we are able to distribute. We regularly use our annual poundage of 26M lbs to track our output but I've found that sometimes "poundage" doesn't quite register with people outside of food banking. We could convert the pounds to "meals" using 1.2 lbs of food = 1 meal which equates to 21 million meals, but even then it's still hard to grasp the scope of our work. However, when we put a "retail value" on all the food distributed — meaning how much would it cost us to purchase 26M lbs of groceries — the price tag of \$70 million is staggering and impactful.

## **We maintained an operation that was both effective and efficient.**

Even with a nearly 50% increase in the amount of food we distributed this year, it was important that we remain efficient and use our donor dollars as effectively as possible. I'm proud to say that despite our increased workload, Food Share has maintained a ratio of 96 cents of every dollar going towards programs and services to feed our community. It takes a team. It takes a village. It takes a county like Ventura County to fill a need we all have a responsibility to solve.



*Monica White*

**Monica White**  
President & CEO

## GLEANNING GOODNESS!

We are so lucky to live in an area of such natural beauty and abundance, and even luckier to have a community of amazing supporters. Thank you to Ingrid & Christopher Loh for their generosity and to everyone who helped pick 11,800 lbs of delicious, ripe oranges! For more on our gleaning program visit: [foodshare.com/gleaning](http://foodshare.com/gleaning).



One of our youngest gleaning volunteers!



Families from across the county came to help pick the huge crop of oranges generously donated by the Loh family.



(l-r) Volunteer, Kyle Jorgensen; Food Share's Director of Volunteers, Christina Forino; Ingrid Loh, and Food Share's Chief Development Officer, Jennifer Caldwell



## WE'RE A CENTRAL COAST Best place to work

Food Share is honored and proud to have been recognized as one of the Central Coast's Best Places to Work 2021 by the Pacific Coast Business Times. The focus of the awards this year was how employers across the region adapted to the new realities of the workplace under the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In an interview with the Pacific Coast Times, Monica White, Food Share's President and CEO said, "We really wanted to make sure that our employees were safe first so that we could keep serving Ventura. It's the oxygen mask theory. You have to put your mask on first so you can help

others on the plane." Keeping employees safe included requiring strict compliance with safety measures from masks and gloves, to temperature checks, to the acquisition of more warehousing space to enable employees and volunteers to maintain social distancing.

One of the most important measures was finding ways to bring staff together, safely. Food Share installed a big screen TV in its warehouse for presentations and held socially-distanced staff meetings every month. "It was very important to us to be able to continue getting together to celebrate our wins, encourage people, celebrate birthdays and anniversaries and share what the plans were," White concluded. "Having that team camaraderie of tackling the mission all together — there was nobody not rowing."



### Welcome NEW BOARD MEMBER

**Ian Thompson,  
Senior VP**

*We're delighted to welcome Ian Thompson, Senior Vice President, General Manager of Amgen's U.S. General Medicine Business to Food Share's Board of Directors.*

Ian was born in the U.K. and completed his undergraduate degree at Leeds Beckett University before earning an MBA from Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. He joined the pharmaceutical industry in Australia, commencing a 14-year international career with Eli Lilly & Company prior to joining Amgen. In his spare time he is an accomplished cyclist, representing Great Britain on the National Track Cycling team. He enjoys combining his competitive spirit with philanthropy, competing in the Ironman Championship and winning the Simpson Desert Mountain Bike Classic to raise money for a range of nonprofit organizations.

**Amgen has had a long relationship with Food Share and I'm pleased to be continuing that association," commented Thompson. "I'm looking forward to working with Monica and the rest of the Board to help ensure Food Share has the support it needs to continue to serve the community."**

*- Ian Thompson*



### STAFF spotlight

**Angela Aparicio,  
CSFP Coordinator**

*Angela has been with Food Share for just over two years. She works as the coordinator for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program which provides monthly, shelf-stable food packages to income-eligible seniors aged 60 and over.*

#### **Why do you work at Food Share?**

I work at Food Share because I love using my skills to help the community in its fight against hunger.

#### **What's the best part of your job?**

The best part of my job is being able to witness, first hand, the gratitude our seniors have for the food we provide them, and see how it has helped them.

#### **Tell us something we don't know about you.**

I am an avid horror fan. Most of the time, you'll catch me watching reruns of classic horror movies late at night.



**Angela, dressed as Regan MacNeil in the horror film The Exorcist, won our 2020 Halloween contest!**





# The Jewel of Food Share

## JEWEL PEDI'S LEGACY SHINES BRIGHT IN VENTURA COUNTY

The origin story of Food Share begins in the 1970s, when a remarkable group of friends came together to help feed seniors struggling with poverty, and the increasing number of homeless veterans returning from the Vietnam War. Jewel Pedi, Food Share's indomitable, 93-year-old founder, spoke to us from her home in Arizona about those early days and her legacy of fighting hunger in Ventura County.

### How did Food Share come into existence?

In the start there wasn't a food bank. It was my husband, John Pedi, Jr., Virgil and Lynn Nelson, and Dan Wakelee and myself. We used to get together in the morning and go out and pick an orchard. And then my husband's friends next door, and people down the street and across the street, and just about everybody wanted to get out and glean fields. I have a beautiful picture of all the gleaners out in the field hanging on my wall, because it reminds me of everybody that I loved so much. That first year we gleaned 34,000 lbs of produce.

We had the food in our garage for all the veterans from Vietnam we used to see, not having anything to really enjoy as far as a meal. It grew quite quickly from there. We called it F.O.O.D. Share at the beginning — Food on our Doorsteps. It was Virgil Nelson who applied for help from the federal government to help us feed more people. He was a visionary and is still in ministry. And then the fire department gave us a disused fire station in Saticoy to run things from. It was right across from the golf course and we had a lot of golf balls come over at us. You never knew whether you'd get hit! My desk was the fire chief's old desk. Suddenly we had a lot more space for food.

### What's your strongest memory of that time?

Probably the strength of people. They had nothing. They had no home, they had nothing to support them. A lot were veterans. There were many seniors in need. It never stopped. Every day that I was there, there was somebody that needed help. I really enjoyed doing my job. It wasn't a job. To me it was a blessing. It made me feel good, it made the people feel good. And I've had people in my family that have needed help. Things are not easy for people. You want to extend your hand with love and say — can I help you? I feel like the food bank is such a blessing to people in Ventura County.

**Things are not easy for people. You want to extend your hand with love and say — can I help you?**

- Jewel Pedi



Jewel Pedi with  
a Food Share  
bumper sticker



Food Share's first official home —  
an old fire station in Saticoy



## **Food Share moved into its current location in Oxnard in 1984. What was that like?**

Oh my, I was walking on air. It was so wonderful to think, here's a big place where I can have people bring food, and I can have people come and pick it up. But my first thought was I have to get somebody to give me some racks, because all I had was the huge, empty building!

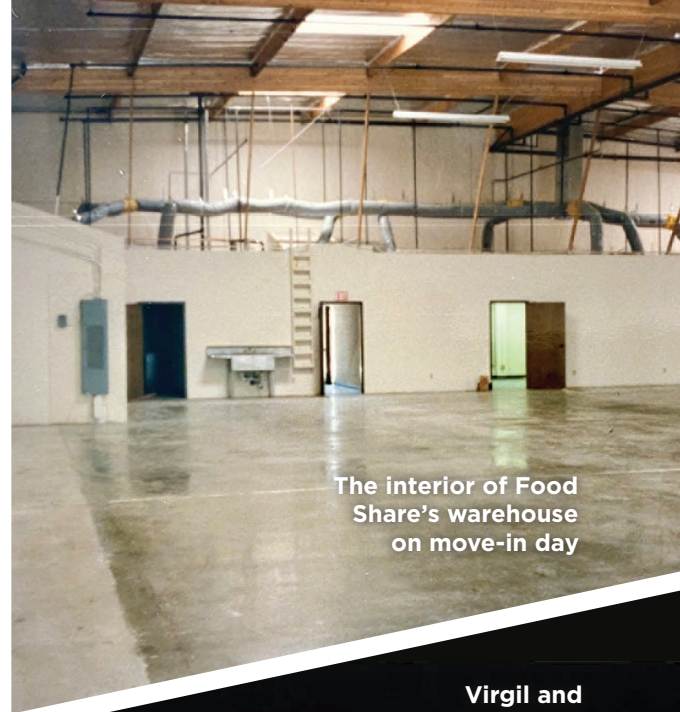
## **Food Share expanded rapidly from there. Can you talk about that?**

We really worked hard. Lots of long hours, but it didn't matter, because we got so many people involved. I finally got connected with the Ventura County Fair, which was huge, because then we were able to get fresh meat. The food banking system started to build across the country too, and so we joined what's now known as Feeding America, and that was wonderful. We visited other food banks, which gave great ideas on how we could do more.

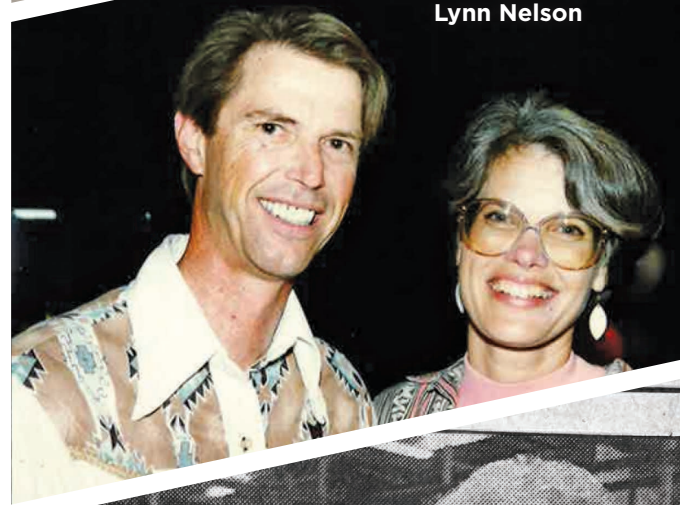
Virgil Nelson was very involved with the community in Ventura, and with the people involved in local churches and government. And then I went to Washington, D.C. so that I could get with people in power and talk about what we needed to help support people in Ventura County. It was after talking to the Congressman, Bob Lagomarsino, that I got a million dollar grant. That enabled us to pay off our mortgage on the building and have a mortgage burning party!

## **You're leaving an enduring legacy in Ventura County. What are your thoughts on that?**

God always showed me, especially in my ministry work, that you absolutely have to do for others in order for yourself to be happy. The food bank? It was like a baby to me. It was something that needed care, love and attention. And, most importantly, prayer. It wasn't me. It was Him. He put me right where I should have been.



The interior of Food Share's warehouse on move-in day



Virgil and Lynn Nelson



Jewel at the mortgage burning party.



By 1994, Food Share gleaners were salvaging 4 million lbs of produce a year





# Pantry Partners in Action!

## SAFE PASSAGE YOUTH FOUNDATION



Food Share is partnered with a network of 190 pantry partners and agencies that operate across the county. One is Safe Passage Youth Foundation, founded in 2012 by Tim Hagel, an educator and the Former Chief of Police for Thousand Oaks and Fillmore. Safe Passage provides youth mentoring and hunger-relief programs for K-12 grade kids and their families. The organization is committed to providing equal access to education and to helping ensure that vulnerable kids avoid the lure of gang recruitment.

We spoke with Tim Hagel as he led a Saturday morning food distribution and vaccination drive in Newbury Park.

### What does Safe Passage do?

Safe Passage is a youth mentoring program. Gangs begin recruiting kids in elementary school, but the paradigm for community policing for nearly all community anti-gang programs was high school kids. There was a huge uptick in gang activity and gang warfare between different sides of town, and this neighborhood was the epicenter of gang recruitment in Newbury Park. There were multiple murders right here, as recent as five years ago. I realized that whatever we were doing for the last 30 years in policing didn't work. You can't keep locking up 16-year-old boys, because then they go to prison and that becomes their finishing school. So we incorporated a lot of great minds and we came up with the idea to use the gang business model, not a policing model. The gang business model has survived longer than nearly all fortune 500 companies. Why? They provide security, friendship, self esteem, and affirmation. They

distract young children away from early education, keeping them illiterate and dependent on the gang for knowledge. So, we realized that if we're going to change anything, we've got to replace what the gang provides and give these kids a place to go and a sense of belonging.

We currently have 370 kids enrolled in the program, which is totally free for them and their families. We've operated seven days a week even through COVID. The kids are walked to Safe Passage every day by volunteers, and then we offer them two hours of getting all their homework done, enrichment activities, physical play outside, and then around 5pm we provide what we call "lunner" — a cross between lunch and dinner. We also provide eight weeks of summer camp. Thanks to partners like Food Share, the Kiwanis, the Conejo Recreation & Park District and many others, the total cost per year to serve a child is just \$1,250, which comes entirely from donations from community supporters. No child is ever charged a penny to attend.

### What's happening here today?

We're out here every Saturday in Newbury Park, feeding around 250 families. We're able to provide each family with a week's worth of groceries. Each child also receives a hot meal, donated by a local restaurant. And today, we also have a vaccination center. We hope to vaccinate about 500 people.

### Is hunger an issue for this community?

Just look at the lines! These are farm workers and food service workers. They work really hard. Why would you stand in line on Saturday, your one day off, if you didn't have food insecurity? They're getting groceries and a hot lunch for their children. That's allowing them to pay their rent and utility bills for the month — and helping many people avoid a slide into homelessness.

We've always had food insecurity. It's just been one of those things that society has never wanted to talk about much. The pandemic has shone a light on it, but it's not going away any time soon.



**To learn more about Safe Passage Youth Foundation visit: [safepassageyouth.org](https://safepassageyouth.org)**



# Covid - Heroes!

*There have been so many individuals and organizations that have helped us rise to the challenge of the past year and a half. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed to our mission in ways big and small. There are a few though, that have helped support our community in ways above and beyond our wildest expectations and, for that reason, we have singled them out here for special mention.*

**Businessman, Lawrence Joss**, for the donation of warehousing space that allowed us to expand our operation and maintain social distancing during the height of the pandemic.

**The County of Ventura**, for more than 14 consecutive months of funding to enable the distribution of more than 200,000 emergency food boxes at 385 drive-thru events across the county.

**The City of Oxnard**, for the logistical support since the start of the pandemic at our largest drive-thru food distribution serving an average of 1,500 families each week.

**Our volunteers**, including the men and women of the CA Air National Guard, for providing 76,000 hours of service packing emergency food boxes, assembling kitchen-free bags for the unhoused, and sorting thousands of pounds of rescued food.

**The Gene Haas Foundation and the Anderson Stewart Family Foundation** for the generous support that enabled us to expand our capacity to serve those in need throughout the pandemic.

**Mission Church Ventura** for the FEED805 campaign, rallying more than 60 Ventura County businesses as drop-off points for food donations and collecting a staggering 45,000 lbs of shelf-stable food from the community.

**Rick Torres of Ventura Coastal, LLC and Lyons Magnus** for the donation of truckloads of orange juice to bring our community some sunshine during the long, dark tunnel of COVID-19.

**And last, but by no means least, THANK YOU! to Food Share's frontline, hunger-relief team** who've worked tirelessly since the start of the pandemic to keep food flowing to our community. We value them for their dedication to our mission to lead the fight against hunger in Ventura County.



Brandon



Annabel



Chelsea



Iris



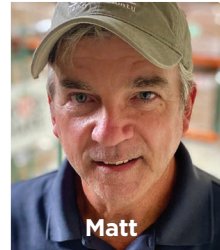
Jenny



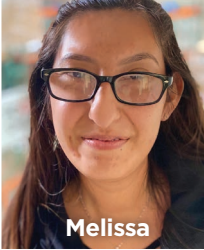
Jesus



Maria



Matt



Melissa



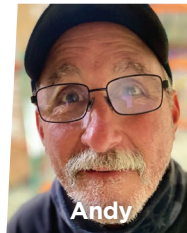
Chris



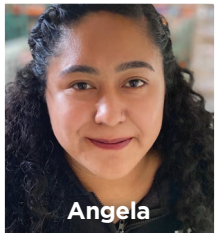
Aaron



Senon



Andy



Angela



Francisco



Christina



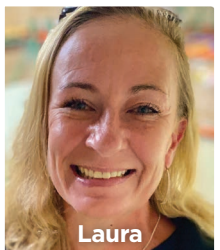
Edgar



Steve



Kevin



Laura



Luther



Michelle



Moises



Pam



Richard

# Thank You!

# THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT!



## SUSTAINING DONOR

Become a sustaining donor with a monthly or quarterly donation. Becoming a sustaining donor helps us establish a reliable revenue stream throughout the year. Having income we can rely on allows us to plan ahead and spend more time developing programs to reach those hardest hit by hunger.



## VOLUNTEER

Join our family of volunteers. Volunteers are the backbone of our work. We can't operate without the thousands of people who give their time to us each year.



## HOST OR DONATE TO A FOOD DRIVE

Donate canned food at a food drive. Donated cans are critical to our operation. They help reduce the amount of food we need to purchase and enable us to provide variety to those we serve.

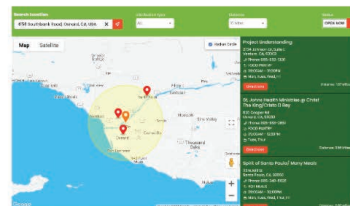
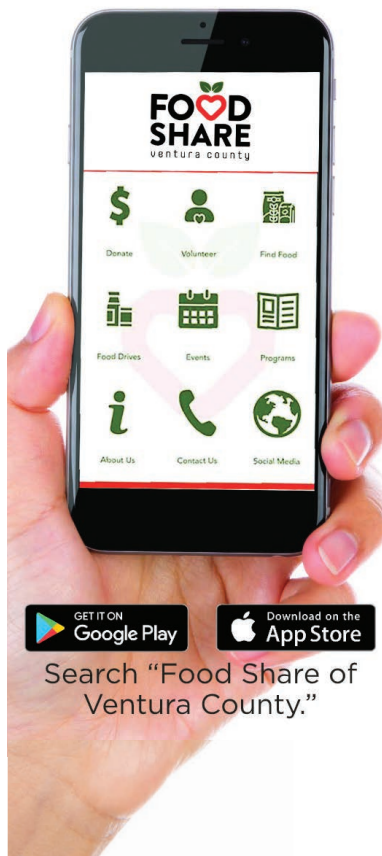
Find us online!



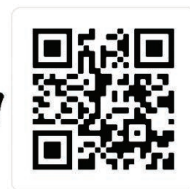
# Download OUR NEW SMARTPHONE APP!

## NEW FEATURE!

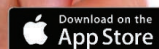
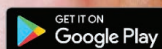
Find the nearest pantry, meal, or drive-thru distribution open NOW! with the Find Food Now map.



- Find food NOW!
- Sign up to volunteer
- Host a food drive
- Make a donation



Scan me  
to download the app.



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## CONTACT US

**Food Share of Ventura County**  
4156 Southbank Road  
Oxnard, CA 93036

TEL: 805-983-7100  
FAX: 805-983-2326  
[www.foodshare.com](http://www.foodshare.com)  
[info@foodshare.com](mailto:info@foodshare.com)

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