

A Lasting Commitment to Silicon Valley's Nonprofit Sector: **Grantee Spotlight**



St. Joseph's Family Center's (St. Joseph's) mission is to alleviate hunger and homelessness in South Santa Clara County by providing food, housing and employment related services, and advocating for system changes to improve the quality of life for the most vulnerable people in the community.



The organization's roots go back to the 1960's when a group of women from St. Mary Parish in Gilroy began securing food and clothing for parish community families in need. Recognizing that local families outside the parish also needed support, the organization formalized in 1981. Marge Albaugh, a long-time leader of the women's group, became St. Joseph's first Executive Director and remained in the position until her retirement in 2001.

St. Joseph's provides a range of essentials services, including food and nutrition, emergency rental and utility assistance, homeless outreach, permanent housing programs, and employment services to residents of San Martin and Gilroy. "The need for these services in South County is high—**Gilroy has the greatest share of homeless and unhoused individuals and families participating in the Federal Food Assistance Program (CalFresh) per capita in Santa Clara County.** Unemployment rates in Gilroy and San Martin are also considerably higher than the county-wide average. The services we provide are a bridge for extremely low income families who add a lot of value and importance to our community but simply are not making a sustainable wage," said Executive Director, David Cox.

While St. Joseph's services have remained consistent, the organization has grown considerably over the past two decades. Between 2000 and 2017, its annual budget grew from just over \$1 million to \$8 million. The number of families served has also grown significantly. "**When I first started here [in 2001], we were serving 20 to 30 families a day through our food programs; that number has swelled to about 150,**" said Cox. Throughout this period of significant growth St. Joseph's staff has remained small. Cox characterizes this as an asset, sharing that its size makes the organization nimble and able to respond to community needs quickly. It has also encouraged the organization to partner with local and Santa Clara County nonprofits and government agencies, including the County Office of Supportive Housing.

Grantee Spotlight

St. Joseph's has been a GOS grantee since 2006. Below is a summary of key grant and organization elements during the period the organization has worked with the Foundation.

Grant Decision Year	Grant Amount	Org. Budget	Full-time Employees	Full-time Volunteers	Total Beneficiaries
2006	\$20,00	\$2.1 million	7	100	4,200
2008	\$51,250	\$2.2 million	6	300	6,293
2010	\$36,900	\$4.4 million	8	300	3,400
2012	\$51,250	\$5.0 million	9	330	7,203
2014	\$55,350	\$7.2 million	8	400	7,601
2016	\$57,400	\$8.3 million	10	400	7,750

GOS grants from Sobrato have played a key role in supporting St. Joseph's mission, providing needed flexibility to respond to community needs. "A lot of the funding that's out there has a box that either the clients or the agency needs to fit into. **[Sobrato's] general operating support is crucial for our organization to keep everything going.**" The organization has used GOS funds to pay staff salaries and benefits and to invest in equipment, like forklifts and refrigeration systems, to sustain and expand its programs and meet the growing need in its community. St. Joseph's is one of the few year-round basic service providers in South County; being able to apply funds to meet immediate housing, nutrition, and employment needs, and to invest in infrastructure to provide services, has been essential to the community.

Historically, St. Joseph's has had a fairly passive approach to fundraising. The organization relies on government funding earmarked for the region, strong relationships with a handful of foundations, and loyal donors for continued support. However, in recent years, **St. Joseph's has focused more attention on building relationships with new donors, especially younger generations.** "Part of what we are seeing and starting to get worried about is that donors we've had for the better part of two decades will not be there forever," Cox said. "We are concerned about connecting with the next generations, hoping to instill the same values, exposure and financial stewardship that their parents have had." The organization has worked with a consulting group to develop a more proactive fundraising plan and created a Director of Community Engagement position on its staff. Sobrato's match challenge has been a great asset in supporting the organization's fundraising efforts. "We've consistently been able to expand the donor base. I would say it's certainly tied to what the Sobrato Family Foundation has challenged us to do," said Cox. He went on to share that "[the match challenge] was a nice kick in the pants a few years ago when this first came out because it was unlike anything that we had done before. The newness, the freshness, for us was invigorating." Cox now characterizes the match challenge as "part of the organization's DNA," and a great way to continue cultivating new donors and securing more funds.

Providing Services in Geographically Isolated Regions of Silicon Valley

Together, Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties span more than 2,000 miles. While much of this vast region's population is concentrated in urban centers like San Jose and Redwood City, need is high in towns and unincorporated areas on the outskirts. Gilroy and San Martin in South Santa Clara County have the highest homelessness rates per capita in the county. Between 2015 and 2017 the number of homeless people in Morgan Hill increased by 379 percent. San Mateo's South Coast is a rural and geographically isolated community. Its unincorporated areas have limited access to public transportation and other infrastructure issues.

In towns where need is high and resources are limited, social service providers act as a one-stop-shop, offering supports ranging from healthcare to food assistance to childcare. While community members might be eligible for services in more central locations, connecting to those services is often burdensome. For example, a grantee serving San Mateo's South Coast noted that although many community members have health insurance, clinics that accept that insurance are far away. Nonprofits in these areas also tend to introduce new programs and services in response to community demand. In the past year, immigration legal services have often been requested.

Nonprofits on the outskirts of the Valley appreciate when funders like Sobrato visit their communities to get a sense of their constituents' specific needs and challenges. In the words of one program director, "A visit in a community, speaking with individuals who are from that community, brings things [to life]. That's very beneficial."

As the largest safety net provider in south Santa Clara County, St. Joseph's is positioned to serve as an advocate for the communities it serves, both locally and in countywide efforts. "I always say we're a small fish in a small pond, but we need to support other agencies with the burden of implementing system changes," said Cox.

While the organization recognizes that its participation in broader efforts is important, it has not been easy. St. Joseph's small staff is primarily focused on service delivery, and taking on additional responsibilities or making time to attend meetings that are often held in cities 30 or more miles away, is challenging. "Sometimes we live behind the garlic curtain" said Cox. "Still, for our well-being as well as wanting to demonstrate how important these countywide issues are, we need to be present and proactive."