Santa Barbara County Food Rescue, a program of the Community Environmental Council, includes multiple collaborations to support countywide efforts to feed those in need during the COVID-19 crisis. The program matches donors that have excess, nutritious food with organizations serving food insecure populations.

"Since 2018, this CEC-led effort has coordinated the rescue of nearly 60,000 pounds of edible prepared food for distribution through more than a dozen agencies, including the Buellton Senior Center, Casa Serena, PATH and the Salvation Army Hospitality House," said Julia Blanton, Santa Barbara County Food Rescue coordinator. "Beyond helping people, Food Rescue mitigates climate impacts by keeping high-quality excess prepared food out of landfills, where it decomposes and emits methane, a potent greenhouse gas."

In March, the CEC saw that widespread unemployment coupled with extended stay-at-home orders would leave an unprecedented number of Santa Barbara residents without the ability to feed themselves or their families. Ms. Blanton told the News-Press.

"We immediately recognized that the distribution channels, relationships and networking already in place for food recovery efforts could be quickly scaled up to get donated prepared food to those in need," said Ms. Blanton.

The Santa Barbara Foundation, with its funding partners, stepped in to help this rapid expansion through its COVID-19 Joint Response Effort for Santa Barbara County. Scaling up these efforts includes the development of a COVID-19 Response Food Resources and Collaboration Information Hub.

"Food Rescue is now compiling and managing a centralized database that identifies what is being done already, where gaps in service exist and which groups might be able to fill the gaps. This includes matching chefs and caterers who create prepared meals with agencies that serve seniors, unsheltered populations and others dealing with increased need due to COVID-19," Ms. Blanton said.

All organizations supporting charitable food donation, delivery or distribution during this time are encouraged to share what they are doing and where they need help through this countywide database: www.sbfoodrescue.org/join-hub. The collected information is available for other organizations to view and can be filtered to focus on an agency’s area of interest.

"By playing matchmaker and relaying information to nonprofit, business and government groups, we’ve been able to work together to solve problems for short- and long-term food needs and more efficiently use resources throughout the county," said Ms. Blanton.

Sigrid Wright, CEO of the Community Environmental Council, noted how protecting the resilience of the food system is part of the nonprofit’s broader strategic goals.

"It’s become very clear the past couple months that the food system needs to be able to weather significant disruptions as COVID-19 will definitely not be our last crisis. CEC’s food recovery network helps ensure that there is a more continual supply of safe, accessible food for all residents of the Central Coast."

Innovative projects such as the...
‘The collaborative is currently serving unsheltered populations’

Dear Abby: I had a high school girlfriend (name deleted) for a few years. After a breakup, she decided she didn’t want to be just another ex-girlfriend. She declared, “Adam,” April is now 3 weeks old. I thought everything would be OK as co-parents because, even though we’re not together, we get along and almost never fight. Six weeks before April was born, Adam began seeing a girl we both knew from high school. The girl, Jenny, and I have a horrible past. She used to bully me. My problem with Jenny being around is she’s disrespectful. She and one of her friends will insult my family just because she forces them to be a problem into becoming a family problem.

When I visited Adam in April, Jenny often interprets her own opinions as if my baby is as if she knows better than I do. I recently found out that Adam is planning to marry Jenny. We were recently engaged, but I don’t want her around my daughter. Adam believes it’s not fair for Jenny to push her out of the room when April is around, and that Jenny’s mother should be a part of any family events reserved for only parents and the child, like taking formal pictures and such.

Am I irrational or crazy? I care about Adam because of our long history of friendship. I did a lot to help him get off drugs and keep his life together; and now here she is messing it up. I told him he’s happy with her, then fine, but I don’t want Jenny around my baby. We cannot seem to come to an agreement unless I fold.

Dear Abby: My name is Dr. Jack. My ex-wife and I are heading up a new nonprofit called the Disability Rights Foundation. We’ve been working on a large project that will allow us to help more people in our community.

Jenny, my ex-wife, has been a constant thorn in my side since we broke up. She’s always been jealous of my success and has been trying to sabotage me at every turn. I’ve tried to reason with her, but she won’t listen. I’m not sure what to do next.

Best regards,
Dr. Jack

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**Plans for happy future are upset**

I’m thinking about buying a new car. I’ve been thinking about it for a while now, and I’ve finally made up my mind. I’ve decided to go with a hybrid because they’re better for the environment. I’m really excited about it, but my fiancé is being so negative about it. She says it’s not a good idea because hybrids are expensive and they don’t go as far as regular cars. I don’t know what to do. I really want to buy the car, but I don’t want to upset her.

Dear Abby: My fiancé and I are planning to get married. We’ve been together for a few years now and have decided to take the next step in our relationship. However, my fiancé’s parents are not happy about the idea of us getting married. They think we’re too young and that we should wait a few more years. I’m really upset about it and don’t know what to do.

Best regards,
Jenny

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**Community Food Collaborative**

The collaborative is currently serving unsheltered populations in southern Santa Barbara County but will expand as additional funding becomes available.

Initial funders are the Julia Child Food Foundation for Gastronomy and the Culinary Arts, Social Venture Partners and the Natalie Ortko Foundation.

Some of the collaborative successes include:

— CFC’s Food Rescue program connected Lunch Box Catering and wholesale distributor Slyco with local nonprofits St. Vincent’s and New Beginnings. More than 100 meals were distributed to veterans and unsheltered people in mid-March with hundreds more following over the course of the past month.

— Since April 28, ACME Hospitality (owners of Santa Barbara restaurants The Lark, L’Oca d’Oro and others) have prepared more than 500 meals for the unsheltered populations through City Net and New Beginnings Counseling Center.

Those who wish to support CFC’s Food Rescue efforts can donate at cfc.org. All donations made through June 30 will be doubled by CFC’s Leadership Match Fund,” said Ms. Blyton.

Email: mmcmahon@newspress.com

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**TV LISTINGS**

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**FUNDING BECOMES AVAILABLE**

Collaborative is currently serving meals, packaged and ready to be served. Some of the collaborative’s Food Rescue efforts can be seen at the Tuscan Sun” (2003) (N) (TVPG)

**CONSIDER THIS**

Lessons from a community food rescue program

**CONTACT DEAR ABBY AT**

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069-9440.