ADVOCACY: Food Access

Putting Nutritious Food in Reach

In partnership, United Way Silicon Valley advocates to reduce barriers and increase access to food assistance programs for local residents.

Vision

All Santa Clara County residents will have access to an adequate quantity of quality food.

Problem

More than 14,500 Santa Clara County children suffer from chronic hunger and almost 22,000 children struggle to find enough food to eat (e.g., no food for breakfast)[1]. Over 105,000 Santa Clara County adults report that they regularly struggle to find enough nutritious food.[2] There are several food assistance programs available to individuals and families with low incomes, but due to lack of awareness and barriers like fingerprint requirements, these programs are severely underutilized. Each year, Santa Clara County loses more than $140 million[2] in federal dollars from underutilization of food assistance programs while families struggle to make ends meet.

Advocacy Actions

United Way Silicon Valley has joined forces with local leader Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties and other partners to reduce barriers and increase access to food assistance programs by advocating for policies that:

- Modernize and simplify access to food stamps
- Increase investments in the reauthorization of Child Nutrition Programs (e.g. National School Lunch Program, Breakfast Program and Summer Meals Program)

United Way Silicon Valley will also support partners to increase community awareness of food access issues and resources.

Benefit to the Community

Here's how increased participation in food assistance programs will help:

- CHILDREN: Improve academic performance and decrease risk of behavior problems, obesity, illness and infection
- FAMILIES/ADULTS: Redistribute household income to other basic needs like housing, utilities, and transportation
- ECONOMY: Generate $1.84 in local/state economic activity for every $1 spent with food stamps[3]. In addition, with 100% food stamp participation for qualified residents, an extra $100 million would be added to California's General Fund through additional sales tax revenues generated from participants redistributing their incomes[2].

1 Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, 2005
2 California Food Policy Advocates, 2009–2010
3 USDA, 2006

TO GET INVOLVED OR LEARN MORE

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ADVANCING THE COMMON GOOD THROUGH PUBLIC POLICY

Advocacy is one strategy United Way uses to advance its goals. United Way also changes community conditions by:

- Delivering United Way Silicon Valley programs
- Investing strategically in agency-run programs
- Leading and partnering in coalitions
- Mobilizing volunteers

Why United Way Silicon Valley Advocates

Money alone cannot solve Silicon Valley's most pressing community needs. Public policy can be a significant catalyst for change and that is why advocacy is one strategy that United Way Silicon Valley employs in its ongoing efforts to improve the lives of local people. United Way's advocacy work is focused on **improving the systems that shape community conditions** to help individuals and families achieve financial stability and independence.

How United Way Silicon Valley Advocates

United Way is non-partisan in its advocacy and knows that systemic change requires partnership among non-profit organizations, government, business, labor, faith-based groups, and community members.

Working in partnership, United Way Silicon Valley takes the following approach in using public policy advocacy to advance the common good:

- Educate community members on the policy issues
- Connect advocates with elected officials and media outlets to champion causes
- Engage policymakers in solutions that meet community needs

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