



# COMMUNITY THROUGH HOPE.ORG

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**SUBJECT: Supplemental Funding Request, COVID-19 Crisis Emergency Response**

Gary Halbert, City Manager  
City of Chula Vista  
City Hall  
276 Fourth Ave.  
Chula Vista, CA 91910

March 23, 2020

Dear Mr. Halbert:

This letter is to formally request an emergency funding allocation from the City of Chula Vista for Community Through Hope (CTH) to respond to the dramatically increased demand for nutrition in the South Bay for vulnerable, food insecure and homeless populations during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) crisis response.

CTH is one of the last lines of providing nutrition in South Bay, amid a major and unprecedented increase in need and the closing of other options for vulnerable and homeless populations. CTH is ready and willing to rise to this challenge, with its staff on the front lines remaining open as other teams providing food assistance have shut down. Partners including San Diego Food Bank and Feeding San Diego are prepared to provide additional food commodities for distribution and CTH is the only agency that can effectively distribute them at this time. However, as is described below, CTH faces severe staffing impacts related to the COVID-19 risk and ripple effects through the economy.

CTH's existing budget and resources have allowed it to provide nutrition support to an estimated 5,010 individuals per month. Based on current statistics of those served, CTH is serving at a rate of 28,408 individuals per month – an over 500% increase – and that does not include the estimated 4,050 seeking nutrition but not being served due to capacity limitations. At the same time, CTH faces a perfect storm of a smaller volunteer pool and reduced ability to generate funding through its thrift shop. The current rate of service by CTH is not sustainable. **Without supplemental funding during this crisis, CTH will be forced to operate on a limited basis to the best of its ability but will be unable to meet demand, resulting in up to 23,000 Chula Vista and South Bay residents being denied nutrition each month.**

This crisis has rippled through the San Diego County region and especially South Bay, home to a higher proportion of low-income individuals than other areas.

On March 9, 2020, as school districts publicly discussed the possibility of closures, the San Diego Food Bank and Feeding San Diego immediately contacted CTH and requested that it remain open as the South Bay's nutrition distribution hub.

On March 12, 2020, Governor Newsom issued an executive order canceling gatherings of more than 250 people. This severely impacted nutrition distribution through churches, because many closed due to the order. Several faith-based organizations including EastLake Church contacted CTH, requesting that CTH remain open to provide food for their families.

During the weeks of March 9 and March 16, schools announced closures of their campuses and Governor Newsom issued further executive orders and guidelines including calling for all dine-in restaurants to close. CTH was contacted by numerous partnering social services agencies in San Diego County including the City of Chula Vista's Deputy Mayor, the City of Chula Vista Emergency Services, San Diego County Health & Human Services Agency, the San Diego County District Attorney's Office and others. The question asked by each partner of CTH was: "Will CTH remain open so that we can refer people to you?" CTH's response was: "If we can stay open, we will."

CTH is committed to serving and filling the dire need in our community. Due to the special and extreme circumstances described below, which could not have been envisioned in the last funding cycle, CTH has evaluated its budget and has determined that a significant gap exists in funding to provide the requested services. CTH has identified a need for a total of \$67,920 in supplemental emergency funding over the next four months. To help meet that need, CTH requests an allocation of \$67,920 from the City of Chula Vista to help in closing this gap. CTH will also be approaching other partners to assess the availability of funds.

### **Background of CTH Nutrition Programs**

Community Through Hope is a 501(c)3 nonprofit in Chula Vista, which focuses on serving food insecure and homeless populations in the South Bay. As one part of its mission, CTH provides the South Bay Nutrition Redistribution Hub in partnership with San Diego Food Bank. We operate a 6,000-square-foot warehouse that consolidates food resources and allows smaller South Bay food pantries to access a much wider array of nutrition than they would otherwise be able to obtain. In addition to serving as a nutrition hub for these food pantries, Community Through Hope directly distributes food at multiple events including a farmers market-style distribution in partnership with the San Diego County District Attorney's Office at the CARE Center in National City, monthly Day of Hope events, and serving clients directly at our facility as part of case management. CTH works with 42 different nutrition and service providers including the San Diego Food Bank and Feeding San Diego. In 2019, CTH served 61,147 clients – an average of 167 individuals each day of the year – with distribution of 135 tons of nutrition. As mentioned, this is just one aspect of the services provided by CTH to these vulnerable members of our community; others include housing navigation and trauma-informed case management.

## Impact of COVID-19 on CTH Nutrition Programs

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis has impacted our organization severely to the point where we are struggling to provide the needed nutrition to our food pantries and clients. The three ways that COVID-19 affects us are: higher demand for nutrition, closure of other food distribution centers, dramatically reduced availability of volunteers, and the need for special protective measures while distributing food.

1. Higher demand: First, the COVID-19 crisis has greatly increased demand for nutrition due to people out of work, children out of school and seniors who are struggling financially.

CTH receives referrals from 2-1-1, the San Diego Food Bank, the City of Chula Vista and Chula Vista Police Department Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), the media, word-of-mouth and other service providers. Typically, CTH receives approximately 17 calls from 2-1-1 per day. This past week, CTH received at least 50 calls from 2-1-1 per day, greater than a 300% increase. The good news is that there will be an increased supply of nutrition thanks to shipments from San Diego Food Bank and Feeding San Diego. As described below, a major challenge is that CTH lacks adequate staffing to distribute this nutrition to those in need.

Based on this trend, the number of individuals served by CTH's nutrition program is already much higher than normal. In normal times CTH serves an average of 167 people per day with nutrition. During this crisis, demand has swelled to unprecedented heights. CTH has been forced to end food distributions early and turn away people seeking nutrition.

Based on advice from the County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency, San Diego Food Bank and Feeding San Diego, CTH began drive-through food distribution on Tuesday, March 17 and the number of people served increased exponentially day-by-day as word of the service spreads via referrals from 2-1-1, the County of San Diego, the City of Chula Vista and the news media. Each day, the distribution was forced to end early due to running out of food and the need to restock. All told, during a four-day period CTH provided nutrition to groups and individuals in 1,348 cars, representing 6,313 individuals including 190 homeless people. These recipients received a total of 59,256 pounds of nutrition and 822 diapers. Based on these statistics, CTH is serving at a rate of 28,408 individuals per month – an over 500% increase.

Sadly, another estimated 900 cars were unable to be served due to the need to restock and staffing and capacity limitations. This was based on estimates from the Chula Vista Police Department of cars remaining in line at the time the distribution ended. Based on these statistics, that is conservatively a rate of at least 4,050 people seeking nutrition and not receiving it on a monthly basis. In addition, numerous cars were in line and continued to circle the parking lot once the distribution ended. It should be noted that the weather was cold and rainy and so many homeless people who typically seek services from CTH did not appear. The number of homeless is expected to increase substantially as the weather becomes warmer, based on trends.

2. Closure of Other Food Distribution Centers: Sadly, at the time when demand for nutrition is as high as ever, other food distribution centers are closing, resulting in CTH filling the gap. Church-

based food distribution centers such as St. Rose of Lima and EastLake Church are among those now directing nutrition recipients to CTH. Other agencies and organizations serving the homeless that remain operating such as the Alpha Project do not provide nutrition, nor do they have infrastructure, staff or training for this.

3. Reduced volunteers: Third, CTH is struggling with unprecedented impacts to its volunteer force because of COVID-19. CTH is well known and has been lauded for harnessing the power of volunteerism, with over 50,000 volunteer hours recorded in 2019. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 crisis has resulted in a loss of available volunteers because many of the volunteers are considered high-risk for the virus. CTH has lost approximately 33% of the pool of existing volunteers due to their age, immune deficiencies or other health issues and the risk of contracting COVID-19. These volunteers are following public health advisories to self-isolate and are therefore unavailable to serve at CTH.

New volunteers require onboarding, which entails screening, TB testing, training in food handling protocols and other steps. This challenge is compounded with CTH's existing volunteers who are not high-risk, but who are suffering financially due to the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on the economy. Specifically, within the past week two of our most active volunteers were laid off from part-time jobs they had been holding. These volunteers face the difficult question of whether they will be able to continue their unpaid service with CTH and still pay their household bills.

Further exacerbating the staffing challenge, CTH has been contacted by agencies that wish CTH to continue food distributions – but without the staffing they typically provide to support our efforts. For example, the San Diego County District Attorney's Office typically provides security and check-in services at their CARE Center for a food distribution, but this office has been closed due to the crisis. Despite the office closure, the District Attorney's Office has requested that the distribution take place as scheduled. This requires CTH to provide additional staff to handle both security and check-in.

4. Special protective measures: Fourth, CTH faces the new and unprecedented challenge of continuing to provide services while also protecting its volunteers from potentially contracting COVID-19. Working in partnership with the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency and the San Diego Food Bank, CTH developed a new framework for providing services with new procedures and protocols. CTH is now providing drive-through nutrition, with the bulk of its services provided in the parking lot outside the office/warehouse building. CTH is utilizing a new protocol in which recipients drive up and volunteers provide nutrition bundles directly into their vehicle trunks. Volunteers are protected with gloves and masks and adhere to a six-foot social distancing protocol when possible. CTH continues to provide case management via phone and provides additional services such as distribution of emergency personal care products on a case-by-case basis in its building utilizing a six-foot social distancing protocol.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the City of Chula Vista has closed its public parks, including one across the street from CTH, where the bathrooms were utilized by the homeless for basic hygiene. This places additional risk on CTH volunteers because clients are less likely to have had access to running water and hygiene to wash their hands per public safety recommendations. As a result, these individuals could be more likely to be infected with the virus or other pathogens and transmit them to those serving as volunteers with CTH.

Seeking to find solutions, CTH has worked with the City of Chula Vista and requested a port-a-john for individuals seeking assistance from CTH. The City of Chula Vista has agreed to provide the port-a-john on-site at the park across from CTH. Additionally, the County of San Diego has provided CTH with two hand-washing stations.

CTH has implemented a new cleaning protocol which requires a rotation in which sanitation of the building interior and exterior takes place every 1-1.5 hours. However, this also adds a need for staffing to handling the cleaning responsibilities.

Recently, CTH recently was contacted by the City of Chula Vista Emergency Services and asked to provide a list of needed items; a list was submitted on March 16, 2020 of various items including gloves, masks, tarps and trash bags. While CTH looks forward to receiving these important items, that does not address the need for staffing for cleaning and nutrition distribution which creates the funding gap.

### **Emergency Funding Request for CTH Nutrition Programs**

CTH's expenses during the COVID-19 crisis have risen and are expected to continue to grow. CTH requires funding in order to ensure that its team of staff and volunteers are on hand to distribute nutrition, staff food distribution events, implement hygiene and cleaning protocols and meet the overwhelming need for nutrition while filling the gap left by the sudden closure of other alternative food distribution centers in South Bay. While CTH has been able to deploy its limited resources over the first week of drive-through food distribution to serve an unprecedented number of individuals with nutrition, this was achieved through CTH spending beyond its budgeted resources and will not be sustainable.

In addition to the expense impacts, the COVID-19 crisis has had revenue impacts to CTH. CTH typically raises approximately \$800 per month through its thrift shop and due to deploying all volunteers to food distribution, CTH is not currently operating the thrift shop, thereby reducing its revenue.

The standard costs of operating CTH include approximately \$7,000 in building/facility costs including rent, electricity for refrigeration, insurance, water and sewer and other costs. These costs have risen substantially due to meeting the need during this crisis. CTH building/facility costs have more than doubled due to increased use of the facility. This has resulted in increased usage of electricity and water, among other utilities.

In addition, CTH costs have risen due to the need for renting additional semi-trucks to deliver food, an expense of \$3,600 per month. Also, CTH expects to rent additional storage space due to space limitations within its warehouse, an additional \$475 per month. CTH is purchasing more personal

protective equipment, paper supplies, cleaning supplies and office supplies and is utilizing administrative and technical support.

**Supplemental Funding Required to Meet Extreme Need**

CTH is requesting Supplemental Funding for the COVID-19 Crisis Emergency Response in the amount of \$67,920 to cover the four-month period from March 16 – July 16, 2020, a time period which is expected to yield heavy demand for CTH services. In addition to this funding, CTH requests a commitment for dedicated law enforcement support for traffic control during food distributions. To date, Chula Vista Police Department has responded to this need and CTH wishes to ensure that this important service continues.

<b>Supplemental Funding Request, COVID-19 Crisis Emergency Response</b>				
Line item	CTH Normal Monthly Cost	Crisis monthly cost	Difference/Gap	Difference/Gap Over Four Months
Personal Protective Equipment	120	3400	3280	13120
Paper Supplies	300	600	300	1200
Semi-Truck Rental	375	3600	3225	12900
Gas	800	1800	1000	4000
Outreach/office Supplies	200	400	200	800
Staff Overtime	0	4500	4500	18000
Storage	0	475	475	1900
Temporary Program Manager	0	2000	2000	8000
Temporary Volunteer Coordinator		1000	1000	4000
Contingency	0	1000	1000	4000
<b>Total Supplemental Funding Requested</b>				<b>\$67,920</b>

Please instruct me on how we may provide additional information or structure this request so that it may be considered in a timely manner by your administration. We thank you for your consideration of this important and fundamental public service and look forward to your continuing support in meeting our community’s needs.

Sincerely,

Rosy Vasquez  
Executive Director