



San Francisco Responds to COVID-19

Keeping Older Adults and Adults with Disabilities Engaged and Healthy

The Coalition of Agencies Serving the Elderly, a collaborative of some 40 San Francisco non-profit organizations, and the San Francisco Department of Disability and Aging Services have partnered to illustrate the incredible response by San Francisco non-profits in the face of a global pandemic. The sharp pivots made to keep older adults and adults with disabilities who were sheltered in place healthy, engaged, and connected to their communities was no small feat in the midst of rapidly changing health guidance and community restrictions. With this project, **we profile eight organizations** whose extraordinary efforts provided service, support and community to San Francisco's very vulnerable population of older adults and adults with disabilities.

On March 17, 2020, San Francisco's Mayor London Breed and the Health Department issued the Stay-At-Home Order that required San Franciscan's to shelter in place. Three days later, Governor Gavin Newsom followed with the state order, essentially shutting down all of California. San Francisco's most vulnerable populations were affected because they could not receive the services they depended on to keep them engaged, connected, and healthy; and left to wonder how they might manage in isolation.

Isolation has enormous impacts on one's health and wellbeing and is a leading cause of death for older and frail populations. San Francisco's non-profits, the San Francisco Department of Disability and Aging, and several foundations took note and took action to help alleviate older adults and adults with disabilities of the fear of isolation by innovating new ways to engage and connect. The pivots to provide essential services and care were not easy to plan or implement. However, many agencies and organizations took the leap of faith with strong convictions to keep their clients connected to them and to one another.

Whether the needs were healthcare, socialization activities, nutrition, and/or mental and behavioral health, **San Francisco's public and private partnerships responded by revolutionizing** in such a way as to create new methods of service delivery

that are not only valuable in a pandemic but, as we have learned, may be enormously beneficial in the future.

With these case studies, we hope to demonstrate the commitment, resilience, vision, and incredible spirit of the community of non-profit organizations, funders, and the San Francisco Department of Disability and Aging Services; and just as importantly, describe the advancement of alternative service deliveries. **Creativity, communication, collaboration, and courage made these pivots possible.**

The organizations highlighted in this project were chosen with a focus on equity and the diversity of clientele, services, and language. Many other organizations performed astonishingly during the pandemic to keep older adults and adults with disabilities engaged, connected, and in good health and well-being. We acknowledge and commend them as well, with deep appreciation and gratitude.

As with any innovative response, **there are lessons learned and solutions shared.** We hope to share these lessons and impactful outcomes through these profiles, as many may be beneficial post-pandemic.

Finally, we thank the San Francisco Department of Disability and Aging for their leadership in support of the non-profit community's work to deliver vital services these past 24 months.

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Bayanihan Equity Center receiving a donation of groceries from Slippery Fish Catering. PHOTO: Courtesy of Slippery Fish Catering



“BEC either provided or connected 350+ families to grocery and meal programs.”

In 1999, when Filipinos comprised 30 percent of the population and the largest ethnic group in South of Market, the Bayanihan Equity Center opened at Mission and Seventh as the Veterans Equity Center for Filipino World War II Veterans and Their Families. Twenty years later, reflecting the evolving composition of the low-income immigrant families who were moving into the South of Market, the Center changed its name to the Bayanihan Equity Center (BEC) and expanded its language capacity from Tagalog and English to include Cantonese, Taishanese, Itawes, Pangasinense, Ilocano, and Cebuano.

(continued)

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THE PANDEMIC PIVOT

Prior to the pandemic, 582 families a year visited BEC for case management, support services, activities, classes, meals, groceries, socialization, and a senior choir offered in cooperation with the Community Music Center (CMC).



Mrs. Nanita Gabutina, receiving her Supplemental Grocery Program delivery, and a Census tote bag. The pandemic affected community outreach efforts for the 2020 Census; BEC attempted to engage clients to participate. PHOTO: Courtesy of BEC

The pandemic increased the demands placed on BEC as it sought to meet the needs of their community. Reflecting back, staff credits neighborhood and citywide partnerships for enabling the agency to “address food insecurity, language access, and the digital divide.”

HUNGER

When the pandemic struck and businesses were forced to close, food insecurity, which had always been a reality in the community, increased. More families needed to receive meals from

the SF-Marin Food Bank at a time when many seniors were reluctant to leave their homes. Rather than requiring participants to make a trip to the Center to pick up their food, the Food Bank quickly pivoted to delivering groceries through their Pantry at Home

program. Pre-pandemic, 90 families used the Pantry; 140 families were served during the pandemic.

BEC participant Normandy Nangca worked at the Marriott Hotel before the pandemic. When Nangca lost his job, BEC’s “grocery program helped me save money by feeding my family.”

Food Bank meals, however, were insufficient to meet the need, so BEC initiated the Supplemental Grocery Program (SGP). SGP packaged “culturally appropriate food” — food tailored to Filipino and Asian recipes — for twice-monthly pickup at the Center or home delivery by Tagalog-speaking community volunteers, thus offering another opportunity to build relationships with the families and directly hear their needs.

But even the addition of the SGP did not assuage the hunger brought on by the pandemic.

BEC staff located other sources of meal support, enrolling their participants in the Great Plates meal delivery program, Meals on Wheels, voucher programs, CalFresh and Pandemic EBT (P-EBT). Taken all together, Luisa Antonio, BEC Executive Director, estimates that BEC either provided or connected 350+ families to grocery and meal programs.

ADVOCATE FOR LANGUAGE ACCESS

BEC prioritized weekly wellness calls to address social isolation, and to hear participants’ concerns in real time. The calls helped staff maintain relationships and identify the lack of language-appropriate

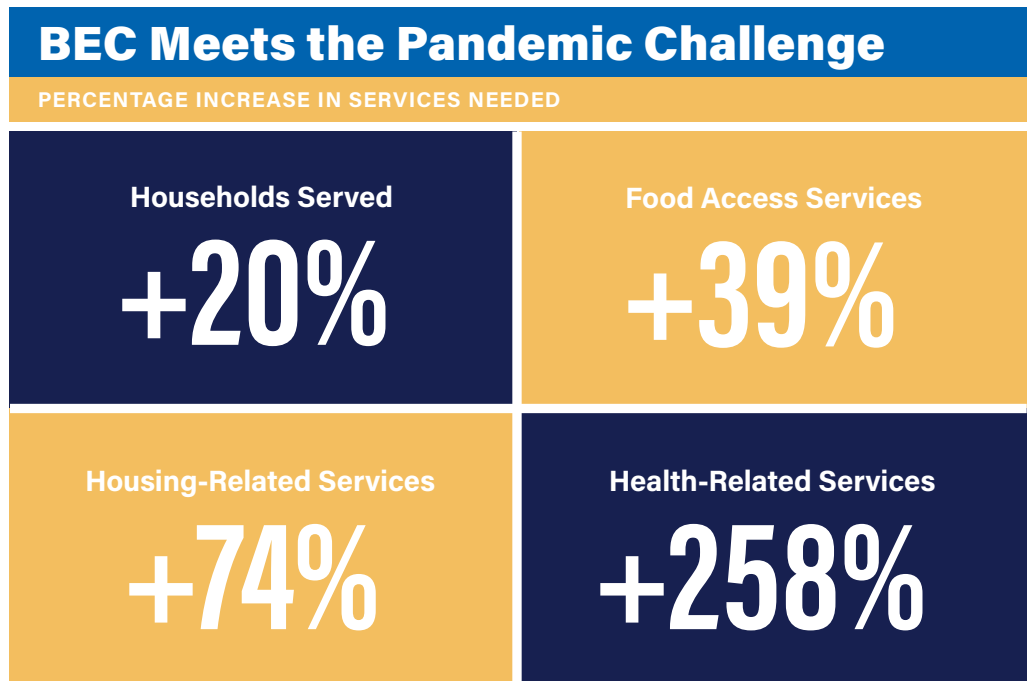
COVID-related information. When these documents proved unintelligible for Tagalog-reading Filipino seniors, staff were called on to translate.

Antonio remembers one six-page document that included a key piece of information: "a social worker will call." That's what we translated," she said — and helped participants make appointments for vaccines at the SoMa Health Center and Moscone Center. BEC also supported the We Can Do This campaign of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, by helping to produce a PSA in Tagalog to encourage the community to get vaccinated.

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Many BEC clients lacked digital literacy or did not have access to the internet at home. In normal times, this was inconvenient; during the pandemic it became disastrous, particularly for clients with no or limited English-language skills. To address the digital divide, BEC partnered with the Community Tech Network to bring the latter's Home Connect to their participants. "With the internet comes connections," said Mary Roque, BEC's administrative assistant.

Valarie George, recently divorced and living on her own for the first time, is a BEC graduate from Home Connect. "I'm a monster now that I have this tablet," she said. George admits she was initially afraid to touch the tablet, but by the third session she overcame that. "The tablet, and learning how to use it, is the best thing I ever had. I had been feeling like a dinosaur, completely out of it." She's learned about



These percentages reflect a comparison of BEC's fiscal year 2019-2020 units with fiscal year 2020-2021.

links, how to recognize scams, send notes to her doctor, check her neighbor's prison records, and most importantly, apply for everything including volunteering at Outside Lands and subsidized housing. "The City should give tablets and training to everyone over 65. It's something to do other than watch TV and I feel so much safer now!"

use Zoom for choir meetings and to record their parts on the Acapella phone app. With time, the CMC-BEC Adult Choir was able to produce a number of virtual programs, including the Fall 2020, and Spring and Summer 2021 BEC celebrations. The choir also participated in community events, like the December 2020 Bindlestiff's Senior Arts

... one six-page document included a key piece of information: "a social worker will call." That's what we translated.

Luisa Antonio

Two weeks before the shelter-in-place order, CMC hired Robin Estrada to lead the BEC Older Adult Choir. That the choir did not join the ranks of cancelled programs is "a testament to the positive results of digital equity efforts for seniors and older adults," said Estrada. Estrada taught members to

Moment Festival, and the celebration at the Annual Mabuhay Health Center Day.

Natee Galinato, a member of the CMC-BEC choir, credits the choir with relieving her pandemic-related depression. "I don't know what I would have done without this choir," she said.

THE RISE OF ANTI-ASIAN SENTIMENT

President Trump's labeling of COVID-19 as the Chinese or Asian flu triggered a wave of anti-Asian sentiment. Name calling, physical threats, and attacks drove the community — particularly its older members — indoors. Community agencies in the South of Market escorted seniors and adults with disabilities to BEC and other community programs. The community hopes this ongoing effort will create a map of sanctuaries in the neighborhood resulting in a safer neighborhood for all.

GOING FORWARD

Staff plans to continue offering both virtual and walk-in services as long as some of their participants are reluctant to leave home.



Mr. Normandy Nangca picking up his SGP groceries from the Center. PHOTO: Maria Baligod

Community Living Campaign

sfcommunityliving.org



Community Living Campaign's Bayview Home Delivered Grocery team packs bags at Meals on Wheels San Francisco. Throughout the pandemic organizations worked together to keep neighbors nourished and connected. PHOTO: Courtesy of CLC



“Neighbors helping each other is at the heart of all we do.”

The Community Living Campaign (CLC) “cultivates connections to help seniors and people with disabilities age and thrive at home.” Although CLC rents an administrative office on the edge of the Mission and offers some computer training classes there, most of its programs are delivered in rented neighborhood spaces. When the pandemic shuttered these spaces, CLC pivoted to offering programs online and outdoors.

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THE PANDEMIC PIVOT

Most of CLC's staff are older adults and/or people with disabilities themselves, making the agency's first concern keeping staff safe, supported and employed in new and sometimes challenging ways. CLC used its website, monthly newsletter, email and phone calls to participants to provide resources about testing and access to vaccines. Dr. Anna Chodos, a geriatrician at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF), offered weekly Zoom updates on COVID and an opportunity for staff and participants to ask questions.

CLC also worked with its partners to create safe, work-from-home opportunities for the ReServists* placed at other nonprofits. Where the partners didn't have these options, CLC developed its own job opportunities for the ReServists so they were not laid off. The Agency also engaged three Encore Fellows** to help with its diversity and planning work. Their leadership, matched by the commitment of the Board and staff, continues to support CLC's commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging.

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

With facilities closed, CLC's computer trainers made wellness calls to assess their students' interest and ability to continue online training. From April 1, 2020, to November 1, 2021, CLC provided around 10,000 hours of computer and technology training: 50 percent in Chinese, 34 percent

in English, and nine percent in Spanish.

"Every day, we teach four tech classes — two in the morning and two in the afternoon — with 30-40 people per class, and every week we add at least two new students," said Wanda Liu, CLC's lead Chinese-language computer trainer.

After some weeks of classes, Liu's students decided to use their new-found skills to organize a virtual Chinese New Year's Celebration filmed from

Liu's students were also part of two virtual celebrations in 2021: a May celebration honoring Mother and Father's Day, and the Autumn Moon Festival in September. Each virtual celebration drew between 120 and 150 people on Zoom.

ISOLATION AS A SOCIAL DETERMINANT OF HEALTH

All CLC programs address isolation: the tech classes help isolated seniors connect with family members, manage

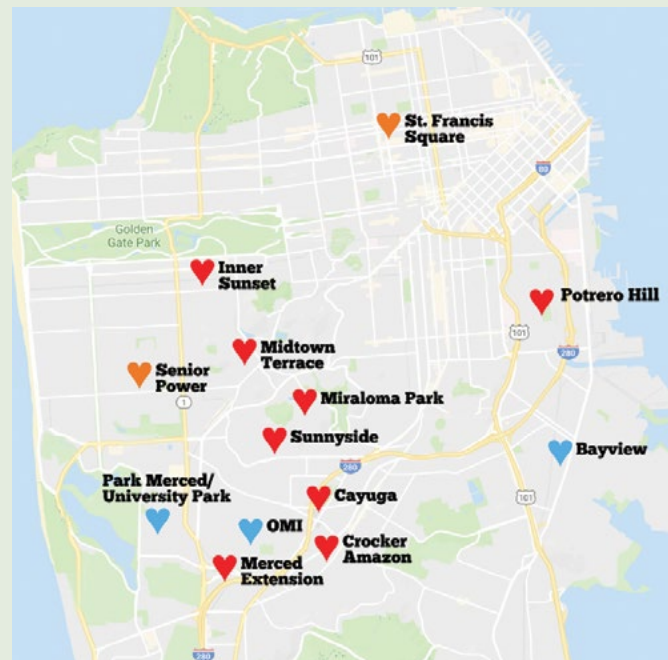
grams strengthen the voices of seniors and people with disabilities.

Pre-pandemic, the Community Connectors Program served 405 seniors and people with disabilities. By the end of the first month of the pandemic, the Connectors created a calendar with 110 hours of diverse virtual activities with classes on exercise, nutrition, writing, art, drama, music, local history, cooking, Medicare, and how to use Zoom and other tech topics. Other programs presented on Zoom specialized in social activities, wellness, and cultural awareness.

But Zoom did not meet everyone's needs, so Connectors organized walking and other outdoor programs, while Connectors and volunteers doubled the number of pre-pandemic check-in and wellness calls, delivered plants and greeting cards to senior shut-ins, initiated walking programs, recommended seniors for free tablets and hotspots, as well as providing information about pantries, transportation, and COVID tests and vaccines.

FOOD SECURITY

The food delivery program continued its weekly deliveries of fresh food and staples to over 225 older adults and people with disabilities. When the space in which they bagged food was designated a childcare center for first responders, staff in the OMI moved the packing function to the parking lot at Catholic Charities. In Bayview, they bagged groceries in numerous outdoor sites until Meals on Wheels provided a safe, indoor packing site. "We were always out there," declared Deb Glen,



Community Living Campaign's Neighborhood Networks

- ♥ Food Networks
- ♥ Community Connector Networks
- ♥ Other Neighborhood Networks

their homes. After the performance, they asked CLC for a Cantonese singing class.

When the sign-up exceeded all expectations, the Agency added two weekly Cantonese singing classes, each serving an average of about 50 students.

their health, learn new skills, and connect to government resources; the food programs deliver neighborly connections along with healthy food; the Community Connectors programs build supportive relationships to enable aging at home; the advocacy pro-

* CLC coordinates the SF ReServe Program which places older adults and people with disabilities with paid part-time work at local nonprofit organizations and other community-based organizations.

** Encore Fellows matches seasoned professionals with social sector organizations in paid positions.



the program manager. “Every week, come rain or shine, we were out there packing food and delivering information about COVID and community resources.”

REFRAMING AGING

CLC offers numerous opportunities for speaking out against the myth that competence lessens with age and disability, including creating SFSeniorBeat.com, whose online website and blog fights ageism through storytelling.

AGENCY OPERATIONS

Prior to the pandemic, CLC committed to converting most staff from independent contractor to employee status. With assistance from the Payroll Protection Program loan (since converted to a grant), virtually all staff now enjoy employee status and increased benefits, including paid vacation, sick leave, and other benefits. Stable city contracts allowed CLC to hire a Director of Operations and other part-time staff to support a growing and more complex organization.

MEET EMERGING NEEDS: PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

When the pandemic limited public transportation, CLC partnered with the San Francisco Municipal Transit Agency (SFMTA) on their Essential Trip Card (ETC), a low-cost taxi service for seniors and people with disabilities: for \$12, residents receive \$60 of taxi credit. For the past year, CLC promoted this program to its participants and also partnered with SFMTA/Paratransit to pay the \$12 fee — thus making ETC free for its members. Since



the program began, CLC has awarded 353 subsidies and 269 Lyft vouchers for a total value of \$45,000 to riders.

Sixty-seven-year-old Dina used to ride Muni (public transportation): “I can attest that it is not always comfortable or safe with people not wearing masks and no social distancing. I am grateful for CLC’s support of the Essential Trip Card so I can get safely around the City.”

Community Living Campaign is also part of the Restore Muni coalition, which is advocating for Muni service to return to pre-pandemic coverage and frequencies.

MOVING FORWARD

Like other agencies, CLC will provide hybrid services as long as requested by the community.





We're All in This Together

We have friends for you to meet (safely!), good neighbors to celebrate, new things to learn, and useful information to keep you secure and healthy.

FREE Virtual Activities by Phone, Tablet, or Computer

Be Creative. Share Stories. Keep Learning. Stay Connected. Stay Active. Stay Healthy.



Transportation Resources & Support

Do you need help figuring out how to get around in San Francisco with all the changes of the pandemic? We have resources to help you figure out which options will work best for you.

San Francisco senior or adult with a disability who needs help using a smartphone (or could you get it)? We offer assistance on a first-come, first-served basis.

The City's new Essential Trip Card provides taxi rides at an affordable rate for seniors aged 65+ or living with a disability. Call 311 during business hours. Taxis are one of the safest ways to travel because they are outdoors from the City and must follow strict cleaning protocols.

Free Workshop: August 20, 2:30-4:00. Learn the latest about all your transportation options including Muni, Paratransit, BART, driving, taxis and Lyft/Uber, and our local walks! Register by phone at 415-821-1003, extension 118 or by email at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88306105509>.

Subscribe to our Postal Mail or Email?

Receive this monthly activity calendar by email. Please provide your Name, Email Address, and Zip Code to info@sfcommunityliving.org.



To keep participants connected, Community Living Campaign delivered thousands of activity calendars, resource guides, and activity packets. CLC encouraged neighbors to support each other and share small gifts, plants, and cards with each other as part of Good Neighbors Summer activities. PHOTO: Courtesy of CLC



CMC Aquatic Park. PHOTO: Courtesy of CMC

“A space where we could bond, easing the stress of the pandemic”



Founded early in 1921 to “be a provider of music that is not for art’s sake, but art for life’s sake,” San Francisco’s Community Music Center (CMC) offers instrument and voice lessons to San Franciscans of all ages, from infants to centenarians. In 2018-2019, the last, full pre-pandemic year, over 3,100 students studied at CMC and thousands attended CMC performances.

The focus of this report is on the Community Music Center Older Adult Choir Program, which grew significantly through a partnership with Principal Investigator Julene Johnson from the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) and the San Francisco Department of

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CMC I.T. Bookman Choir: Taught in English. Sings gospel, jazz, and popular songs.

PHOTO: Courtesy of CMC



CMC Bernal Heights Choir: Taught in English. Sings show tunes and oldies.

PHOTO: Courtesy of CMC



CMC Bayanihan Equity Center Choir: Taught and sung in Tagalog and other languages. PHOTO: Courtesy of CMC

housed in a senior center and CMC worked closely with the host center, recruiting members from the host site and neighborhood and regularly performing at the host center and other community events.

During the five years of the study, 2012–2017, 380 seniors and adults with disabilities participated in 12 Community of Voices (CoV) choirs. The choirs were led by choir directors and accompanists from CMC with music culturally tailored for each choir, appropriate for older adults with various singing abilities, and challenging enough to facilitate growth and mastery over time.

Observers quickly noted that along with teaching singing skills, the choirs were creating community as members chatted together during breaks and exchanged phone numbers and email addresses. Research from the UCSF study confirmed this observation: singing in a choir reduced loneliness and increased interest in life. As a choir member from the Richmond Senior Center Choir said, “The choir has provided the right mix of learning to sing, socializing, and having fun.”

As each of the CoV choirs cycled out of its one year participation in the study, CMC welcomed them into CMC’s Older Adult Choir Program. Now a CMC-funded activity, the choirs continue to partner with neighborhood senior centers and remain tuition-free and open to people 55 and older.

Aging and Adult Services (now the Department of Disability and Aging Services, SF DAS) in a five-year, National Institute of Health-funded study investigating whether singing in a community choir is a cost-effective way to promote health and well-being among culturally diverse older adults. Each choir was

THE PANDEMIC PIVOT



CMC Bayanihan Equity Center and Mission District Choirs 2020 holiday performance.

IMAGE: Courtesy of CMC

The pandemic shuttered senior centers and banned in-person events. During the early phase of the pandemic, when we hoped life might “return to normal” in a few months, each choir director developed a unique series of warm-up vocal exercises and songs for members to practice at home, accessible on CMC’s YouTube channel. Choir directors in partnership with the senior centers called and emailed all choir members to let them know how to access YouTube (and later, choir sessions on Zoom). Out of the 400 choir members who were active pre-pandemic, about half accessed the choirs online.

But while practicing at home might have been adequate initially, it could not substitute for the joy of singing together. Nearly six weeks after launching the YouTube videos, “CMC decided that real-time

connection between members needed to be implemented,” said Martha Rodriguez-Salazar, director of Coro Solero, one of the choirs in the Older Adults Program. As with so many programs, the answer was found in Zoom. Seeing each other on Zoom sparked

random acts of kindness. Each session started with a check-in, where participants shared how they were doing. When one member mentioned they were eating poorly because they could not go out to the store, another responded by offering to shop for her. “This reminded us of the great friendships, solidarity and community that

have been forged through our weekly rehearsals,” said CMC Program Director Sylvia Sherman.

But while the transition to Zoom was simple for choir members who were more at ease with technology, others needed training and tech sup-

port. Fortunately, many of the neighborhood centers were already offering tech training, and choir members were encouraged to take advantage of their center’s training programs. Utilizing the peer-to-peer relationships and CMC’s training teams, these additional supports were provided:

- CMC staff and choir

directors provided one-on-one meetings with choir members to help them learn how to use the platform.

- Choir members were invited to attend CMC’s school-wide Zoom training sessions and to use the skills gained to train their peers.

- CMC partnered with the Community Tech Network’s HomeConnect program for computers and training for the six to eight choir members who desired but did not have access to equipment.

- Within each choir, faculty supported peer-to-peer mentoring, where more experienced choir members helped those who faced challenges navigating Zoom and digital collaborations.

- CMC, along with its partners, made every effort to let all choir members know of

“Without this choir, I don’t know what I would do. We made it in spite of the pandemic.”

Natee Galinato

(continued)

opportunities to participate and how they could receive support. Peer-to-peer outreach was particularly important with community members who had less access to technology. CMC's Choir Program found some good success with engaging folks into technology for the first time with its Mission District and South of Market choirs serving primarily Latino and Filipino community members.

Robin Estrada, director of the CMC choir at the Bayanihan Equity Center (BEC), mastered the Acapella app which allowed performers to record their section at home and send them to Estrada to create a performance. The process is not easy, as Estrada and several members of the CMC BEC Choir noted. "Members would call with problems late at night and early in the morning. I worked with all of them individually." But it had its benefits, and the digital performances were widely celebrated.

Birthdays are always an occasion to celebrate at CMC. On her day, Natee Galinato thanked the group and reflected, "I've always loved singing and now as a senior it relieves depression because of the pandemic. Without this choir, I don't know what I would do. We made it in spite of the pandemic." Fellow choir member Marilen Bonifacio spoke of the choir as "creating a space where we could bond," and "easing the stress of the pandemic."

In Fall 2020, although the delta variant aroused renewed caution, the City's high vaccination rate and new guidelines inspire cautious hope. CMC responded



CMC Solera Singers of Mission Neighborhood Center.

PHOTO: Hasain Rasheed

by polling choir members' interest in meeting in person, following the appropriate safety measures. Indeed, some choirs chose to remain on Zoom while others decided

to return to in-person (with an online option). CMC will continue to be sensitive to in-person and online options as conditions evolve.

"After 18 Months of 'Singing to Yourself,' Adult Choirs Embrace In-person Practice" appeared in Mission Local, an independent news site. Read the story: bit.ly/3qsJBWZ



Josie Boyle (left) demonstrates to Eastern Park Apartment residents how to use the Lenovo tablet. PHOTO: Courtesy of CTN

“Access to the internet is a human right...”

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As society becomes more dependent on internet access for everything from healthcare to maintaining contact with distant friends and family, those without the technology and the skills to take advantage of that technology are at an increasing social and economic disadvantage. [Community Tech Network \(CTN\)](http://Community Tech Network (CTN)) has a 13-year history of providing digital skills training while helping their learners acquire home internet and an internet capable device.

In 2018, the City Administrator’s Committee on Information Technology’s Office of Digital Equity

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Home Connect learner, Baofei Miao, unpacks her Home Connect lesson.

PHOTO: Courtesy of CTN

conducted a citywide Digital Divide Survey, which looked at technology usage, access, skills, barriers, and perceptions among a representative sample of over 1,000 San Franciscans. This study found that low-income residents, seniors, limited English speakers, and people with disabilities, i.e., the most vulnerable residents suffered the most significant and consistent gaps in technology usage, access, and skills: the most vulnerable were the most disadvantaged.

Roughly a quarter of low-income residents and seniors do not use the internet, with 10 to 28 percent of this group lacking access to high-speed home internet or mobile access. Fewer than two-thirds could be characterized as internet users with basic digital skills, compared to 86% of the general population. Significant gaps also existed across racial categories (Black and Latino) and geographies, particularly among communities of color.

Pre-Covid, CTN offered a 12-week training program ([Sunset Tech Connect](#)) at partner agencies to students recruited by that partner. In line with their

goal of eliminating the digital divide, CTN sought partners at senior centers, community centers and other neighborhood sites in low-income, minority communities.



Luis Mascarenhas (right) working at San Francisco's Moscone Center COVID-19 mass vaccination site, invites his CTN instructor, Lauren Woolley (left), to receive her first COVID-19 vaccine dose. PHOTO: Courtesy of CTN

THE PANDEMIC PIVOT

As Covid forced public services and essential information to move online, many people were left without access, exacerbating the long-standing disparities of the digital divide, and making the need for digital equity more urgent than ever. When facilities closed, “desperate seniors started calling CTN. Libraries and training programs closed and they couldn’t get access anywhere,” recalls Stephen Minor, CTN Senior Program Manager.

In response to the shelter-at-home decree, CTN modified its program to offer remote one-on-one training through a new program called [Home Connect](#).

Home Connect is a five-hour program (five one-hour sessions) for seniors and people living with disabilities who have limited or no access to computers and the internet. The program teaches basic computer literacy, how to use telemedicine, order online, communicate with friends and family, and stay safe online. Volunteer digital coaches are available for post-training support.

[Luis Mascarenhas](#) is one of the program graduates. “Before, I was lonely and depressed. The tablet allowed me to connect with my brother in London whom I hadn’t seen in 20 years.” He also uses his tablet for music, games, and exercise. The Chair Yoga class has been so effective he “no longer needs to take medications for aches and pains.” Most importantly, it’s given him a place in the community. When the Moscone Center opened for vaccines, Mascarenhas took his tablet to Boeddeker Park to help people register. That led to work at the Moscone

Volunteers Trained and Active in 2021 91

Supported Languages

Mandarin • Tagalog • English • Spanish • Cantonese • Russian

Learners and Internet Access 2020-2021

With Access 72%

Without Access* 28%

* CTN helped those enrolled without internet service apply for access through low-cost programs offered by Comcast Internet Essentials and AT&T.

vaccination site where he uses his computer skills to help applicants complete forms. Eventually, when CTN begins offering in-person classes, he hopes for a job “teaching how to use the tablet.” It’s changed his life, now he wants to help others change theirs.

Like their Sunset Tech Connect program, CTN loans pre-configured tablets (primarily Lenovo) to students without access to computers; students may keep their tablets once they complete the training.

Because the older buildings in the Tenderloin, SOMA, Bayview, and the Mission, where many Home Connect students live, do not have the bandwidth to connect to the internet, CTN loans hotspots that students can use for the six to eight weeks it takes to complete the program and become comfortable using the equipment, and refers the family

to the federal government’s Broadband Benefit program, fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit for a long-term connection.

Jack Huck lacked internet connection until CTN loaned him a hotspot. “Next thing I know is I have about a dozen people looking for me.” Huck uses the connection to keep in touch with friends and relatives back East, and to read books and watch movies.

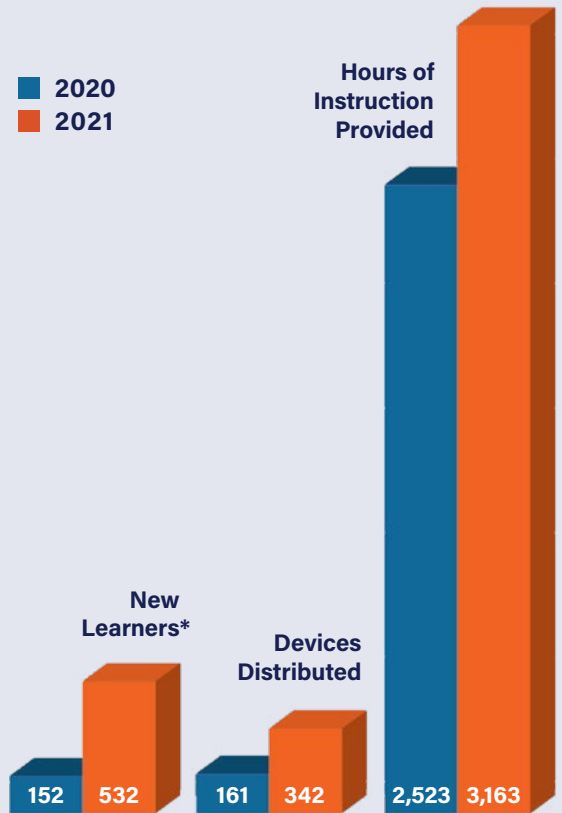
In the months between April 2020 and August 2021, Home Connect received 584 referrals for service and distributed 456 tablets. Seven referrals were from seniors who had their own device but did not know how to use it. These students bypassed Home Connect and were referred directly to a digital coach. 165 learners (28 percent) did not have internet service.

Pre-pandemic, funding was premised on on-site

training. Fortunately, the San Francisco Department of Disability and Aging Services agreed to modify their contract to support Home Connect. AT&T, Metta Fund Newhall Foundation, and individual donors also stepped up.

CTN works with [forty-five partner agencies](#) in San Francisco and “definitely is looking for more referrals from partner agencies.” CTN believes that access to the Internet is a human right and that those without the skills to use a computer are at risk of social and economic disadvantage.

CTN’s mission remains consistent, but the pace of change means the goalposts are constantly shifting. The agency is committed to using its years of experience to help organizations move their communities online.



* The 152 new learners in 2020 reflects the period when CTN developed and piloted the Home Connect Program (virtual), which became operational in 2021.



After graduating from the Home Connect program, Luis Mascarenhas received a replacement Fire tablet from CTN to continue his training.
PHOTO: Courtesy of CTN



Grand reopening of L/OMI COVID hub (relocated from 50 Broad Street to I.T. Bookman). PHOTO: Courtesy of I.T. Bookman

“ God takes care of us,
so we can take care
of the community.”

Felisia Thibodeaux



The Southwest Community Corporation / I.T. Bookman Community Center serves seniors and those living with access and functional needs in the Lakeview/OMI (Ocean View, Merced Heights, Ingleside) neighborhoods. Many of its services — nutritious meals, recreation, senior fitness, technology training and networking — are delivered by community partners and organizations.

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THE PANDEMIC PIVOT



A staff member at Southwest Community Corporation readies supplies for delivery to seniors in OMI. PHOTO: Courtesy of Southwest Community Corporation

When the pandemic forced public facilities to close, Executive Director Felisia Thibodeaux sprang into action. Pre-pandemic, I.T. Bookman served lunch to 40 seniors whose average age was about 75 years; the shelter-in-place order was not going to stop her. “We’re opening up to prepare lunches and take food to our seniors, we’re going to activate the Resilient OMI HUB.”

I.T. Bookman had “recently been approved by the American Red Cross as a congregate facility in case of natural disaster; this was a natural disaster, so we sprang into action,” Thibodeaux said. The next day, she and Facilities Coordinator Michael Perkins, prepared and delivered 40 lunches to those in need. “I drove, and he was the legs,” she said. When the neighborhood realized what she was doing, other seniors began calling for help. “We now distribute to 150 seniors each week. God takes care of us, so we can take care of the community,” she said.

Lakeview/OMI is a food desert. Except for a few corner markets, there is no accessible supermarket that meets the needs of the whole community. Pre-pandemic, the M line provided access to other shopping opportunities (Upper Mission, Stonestown, West Portal), but during the shelter-in-place order, Muni terminated that line. But even when the M was in service, the large hills behind I.T. Bookman made it difficult to navigate. With the pandemic, lack of access to food became even more significant.

FAMILIAR FOOD

Accessing essential items were first on I.T. Bookman’s to-

do list. But it was not just any food their neighbors wanted, they wanted culturally appropriate food like collard greens, okra, and mustard greens — vegetables that reflected the Black experience — as well as berries and other healthy fruits and vegetables. “In a person’s darkest moments (like this pandemic) they want food that’s familiar to their palates, not just good to the stomach,” Thibodeaux said.

With support from United Council of Human Services, home of “Mother Browns,” I.T. Bookman was able to provide culturally appropriate food. During the holidays, they delivered crab, shrimp, vegetables, and rice for gumbo. With additional support from the “Food is Medicine Program,” Arcadios Produce partnered with I.T. Bookman to provide fresh produce to the clients. The Mega Black COVID-19 Taskforce and Collective Impacts allowed them to continue the food program during the first year of the pandemic. Just when the funding was running out, Arcadios Produce offered in-kind credit to continue access to fresh produce through the holiday season. Other cultural relevant produce (i.e., bok choy, bean sprouts, zucchini and avocados) were added to the bags to reflect the needs of the community. “It was the relationships that allowed us to serve the community,” said Thibodeaux.

WELLNESS CALLS

The wellness calls were a learning experience. “When we called and asked how they were, they’d say, ‘okay.’ But when you came to the door, that’s when you really discov-

ered how they were. 'Honey, can you get me a pack of diapers or some tissue,' they'd say. They didn't have the essential items or food items necessary to shelter in place for extended periods of time."

The agency's budget was stretched thin, so Thibodeaux asked for help. Supporters donated toilet paper, sanitizing lotion, mouthwash, shampoo and conditioner—enough non-food items to warrant a monthly delivery of personal care items to everyone on their list—and volunteered to deliver them. Thibodeaux explained

“ In a person's darkest moments (like this pandemic) they want food that's familiar to their palates, not just good to the stomach. ”

Felisia Thibodeaux

that she held on to "special delivery, those personal items like adult diapers and incontinence cream that required more discretion."

In addition to Food is Medicine and HRC-Mega Black Covid-19 Taskforce, Waymo, the Bayview YMCA, and the Oceanview/Merced Heights/Ingleside Community Collective (OMICC) granted funds for virtual programming, while an anonymous donor gave \$50,000 for the purchase of a transportation van, one of the Center's long-held dreams.

COMPUTING CLASSES

As few of their seniors were computer literate or connected to the internet when the pandemic began, I.T. Bookman contracted with the Computer Tech Network for classes. By fall 2021, 25 seniors had

completed the program and received tablets. More are waiting to be trained.

The success of their outreach effort won recognition from Mayor London Breed and the SF Department of Public Health, the SF 49ers, Assemblyman Phil Ting, KPIX Jefferson Award, and the SF Parks and Recreation's Martin Luther King, Jr. Service Award. "The partnership that developed in the Lakeview/OMI between the Invest Black Cohort, the OMICC, and the Neighborhood Empowerment Network for Resilient OMI, is

how our hub has come together and we've been successful," Thibodeaux said.

GOING FORWARD

In the brief time the restrictions loosened, I.T. Bookman began some limited programming, opening its doors to 40 participants. Ruby Draper, in her 80's, a Bid Whist player at the Wednesday game session reflected, "Staying home 24/7 is no fun. I come in to play cards and join the line dancing. Felisia does all she can to try to help us. Yesterday she even brought a group to the Embarcadero Farmers Market and treated them to lunch."

"It's a good outlet," said 86-year-old Robert Ellis, "it gets us out of the house. Psychologically it's good for the mind. I feel blessed. They're doing a wonderful job."



Above: I.T. Bookman bookclub. Below: Mayor Breed visits L/OMI rollerskate street party (pop-up vaccination event). PHOTOS: Courtesy of I.T. Bookman



Thibodeaux thanks Supervisor Ahsha Safai's office and his legislative aides, the Department of Disability and Aging Services, and the Department of Public Health; Lakeview/OMI HUB partners: Invest Black Cohort, and the OMI Community Collaborative; along with anchor institutions Southwest and Inner City Youth/ Young Community Developer, Catholic Charities, and Community Partners: OMI

Cultural Participation Project, OMI Neighbors In Action, Youth 1st, Our Kids First, African American Early Childhood Educators, Stonestown Family YMCA, Bayview YMCA, Urban YMCA/OMI Family Resource Center, Coalition of Agencies for Special Education, Coalition of Agencies Serving the Elderly, SF Neighborhood Centers Together.

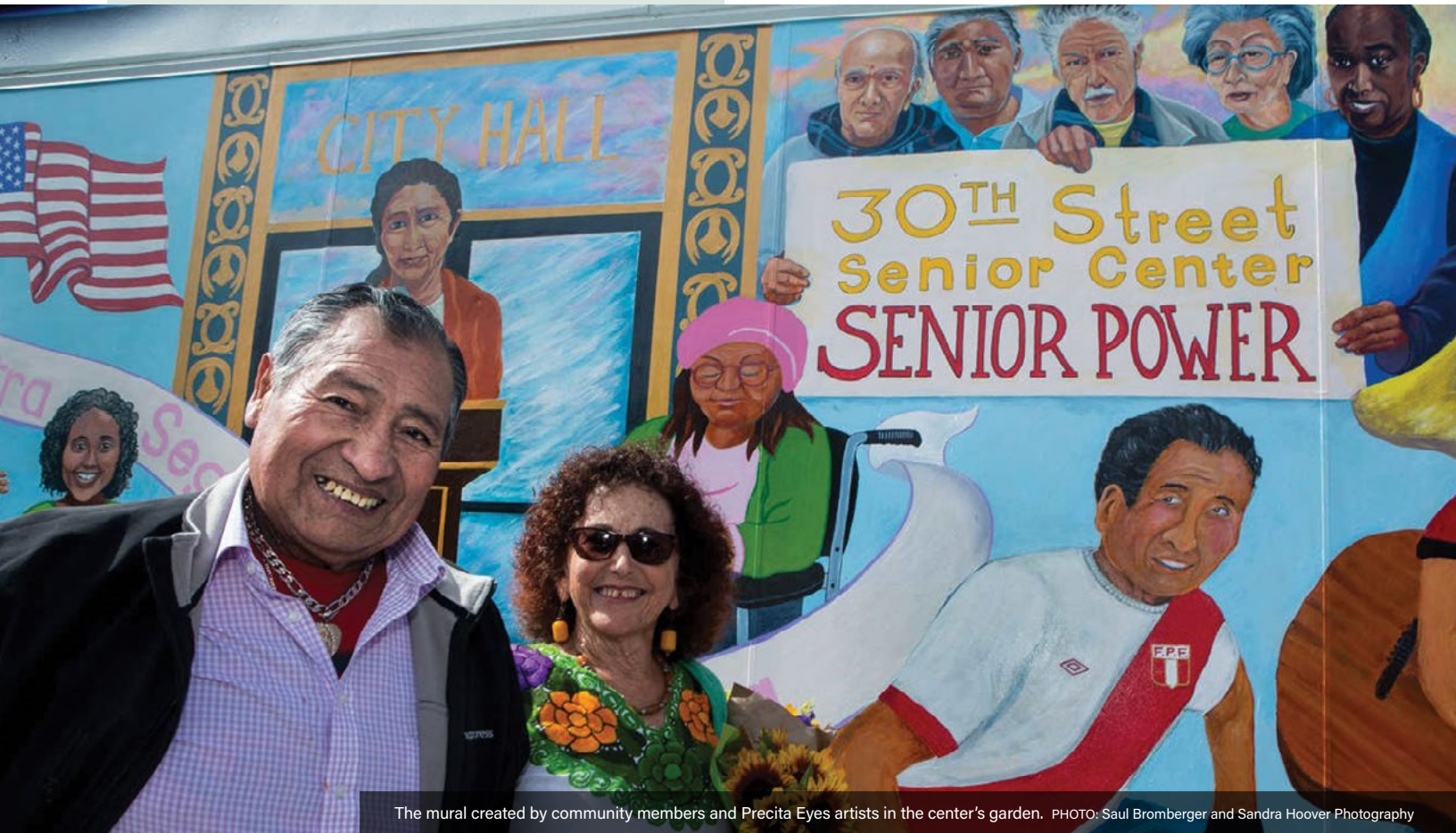
Teamwork makes the dream work.



Supervisors Safai and Melgard lend their support at the L/OMI pop-up vaccine event on Orizaba Avenue. PHOTO: Courtesy of I.T. Bookman

On Lok 30th Street Senior Center

onlok.org/senior-center/



The mural created by community members and Precita Eyes artists in the center's garden. PHOTO: Saul Bromberger and Sandra Hoover Photography

“**At the Center, we have a family.**”

Ana Rivera
On Lok 30th Street Senior Center
volunteer, teacher, student

Contact:
Sandra Rivas srivas@onlok.org

 **ON LOK** | 30th Street Senior Center
where seniors embrace life

On Lok 30th Street Senior Center is a senior center and a provider of services partially funded by the City and County of San Francisco Department of Disability and Aging Services (DAS).

While it welcomes people of all backgrounds, as a center founded by Nicaraguan immigrants, On Lok 30th Street Senior Center maintains a special history with the Latinx community and many of its staff today are bilingual in English and Spanish.

“Before the pandemic, the center was a dynamic, busy place with lots going on; daily attendance averaged 250-300 seniors a day,” said Sandra Rivas,

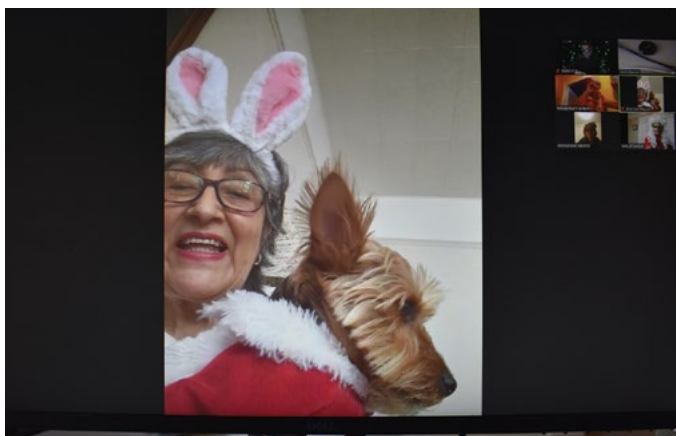
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Assistant Director of Operations. Some participants only visited the center for the community meals served in its dining room; others enjoyed a variety of classes — both peer-facilitated or led by staff of On Lok or its partner agencies: Leah’s Pantry, La Raza Centro Legal, the Memory and Aging Center at the University of California San Francisco, the Community Music Center, and the Community Living Campaign. Community members also came to the center to play cards or dance on Friday afternoons, meet with the case manager, or socialize with their friends — every corner bustled with activities and conversation.

As a nutrition provider, On Lok Mission Nutrition prepared and delivered lunches to five other community centers and over 350 homebound participants. The center’s Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) provided drop-in services and referrals, other staff facilitated On Lok Always ActiveSM exercise and Fall Prevention classes, Healthier Living workshops, and the Diabetes Empowerment Education Program (DEEP) at locations around the city.

Left: Irving and Anna Rivera in front of On Lok 30th Street Senior Center. PHOTO: Charlotte Fiorito - Compass Photographers



In March 2020, On Lok Always Active began delivering virtual classes five days a week in English, Spanish and Cantonese, drawing up to 145 seniors per Zoom session. PHOTO: Courtesy of On Lok 30th Street Senior Center

THE PANDEMIC PIVOT



During fiscal year 2020-21, On Lok Mission Nutrition provided 221,770 take-out and home-delivered meals to the community. PHOTOS: Left, Guru Khalsa; right, Saul Bromberger and Sandra Hoover Photography

The pandemic suspended all congregate meals and in-person programs. However, On Lok Mission Nutrition meal programs continued and expanded meal deliveries to San Francisco homebound seniors and older adults sheltering in place. Community meals at the center and its congregate meal sites were replaced with frozen, individually packaged takeout meals. Over the 2020-2021 fiscal year, On Lok Mission Nutrition staff prepared 49,890 takeout meals and 221,770 home-delivered meals.

Using a two-week on, two-week off schedule, On Lok 30th Street Senior Center kept all staff working and was able to adapt to city ordinances, infection control and safety policies as the pandemic evolved. "We held many meetings to discuss which services were essential and discussed both participant and staff safety. So much was unknown then, including whether the pandemic would last more

than a few weeks," Rivas said.

Staff mastered Zoom, allowing the center to livestream events and classes. A number of programs went virtual, either online or by phone, including On Lok Always Active exercise and Fall Prevention Classes, ADRC and case management support, Healthier Living and DEEP, Body Dynamics, and psycho-educational support groups in Spanish and English.

"At the beginning of the COVID lockdown, we were worried and stressed out. The Conversation Circle with Dr. Maria Perry was such a revelation. I learned that the mental health part of living was just as important or more so than exercising. We learned how to handle stress, how to be grateful and to be positive thinkers," said Irving Rivera, a participant in the Conversation Circle support group.

Two new programs were also initiated: the Aging Mastery Program developed

(continued)

“On Lok 30th Street Senior Center never closed; we provided services throughout the pandemic, and along the way we learned new and innovative ways to connect with seniors. We will continue to implement these learnings as we resume in-person programs. It is important to recognize that we are still navigating a worldwide pandemic and we owe it to our participants and staff to deliver programs in the safest way possible.”

John Blazek
Executive Director
On Lok Day Services

by the National Council on Aging, and Somatic Movement Workshops.

The pandemic highlighted the importance of cross collaboration. The **Community Living Campaign** helped guide staff and participants to use Zoom. Leaders of the **Community Music Center's Adult Choir Program** collaborated with On Lok 30th Street Senior Center staff in bringing choir members online. Spanish-speaking participants were encouraged to connect with the Spanish-language programs offered by Covia Front Porch.

But not all seniors could connect online. "The digital divide was especially evident among monolingual Spanish speakers," said Rivas. "We partnered with the **Community Tech Network (CTN)** to teach basic computer skills to our participants. Twenty-five monolingual Spanish speakers graduated from the first class and participated in CTN's Home Connect program." On Lok 30th Street Senior Center continues to refer clients to CTN and has invited CTN tutors to provide onsite tutoring services by appointment.

STANDING TOGETHER AGAINST RACISM

In response to the wave of anti-Asian hate crimes in the Bay Area, On Lok joined other community organizations in taking a stand against racism. While no one reported hearing anti-Asian sentiment at the center, staff continually checked in with seniors through wellness calls, video conferencing, as well as in person. The center also began providing programs in Chinese and hired Chinese-speaking

staff to address language-specific needs.

MOVING FORWARD

On Lok 30th Street Senior Center is open with modified services, balancing dual programming: virtual and in-person. The center continues to provide virtual and to-go activity kits for members and is slowly resuming in-person programming and re-engaging their volunteer workforce in accordance with Department of Public Health guidelines.

Ana Rivera, a student, teacher and volunteer, said she will be "forever grateful" to On Lok 30th Street Senior Center: "I've taken so many classes and learned so much. I would have been dead or very sick without the center. We have to have a social connection. At the center, we have a family."

As John Blazek, Executive Director of On Lok Day Services, noted, "On Lok 30th Street never closed. We provided services throughout the pandemic and along the way we learned new and innovative ways to connect with seniors. We will continue to implement these learnings as we resume in-person programs. It is important to recognize that we are still navigating a worldwide pandemic and we owe it to our participants and staff to deliver programs in the safest way possible."



In May 2020, the On Lok Peace Caravan brought a message of friendship to the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities we serve. PHOTO: Courtesy of On Lok 30th Street Senior Center

“At the beginning of the COVID lockdown we were worried and stressed out. The Conversation Circle with Dr. Maria Perry was such a revelation. I learned that the mental health part of living was just as important or more so than exercising. We learned how to handle stress, how to be grateful and to be positive thinkers.”

Irving Rivera
On Lok 30th Street Senior Center volunteer, teacher, and participant

Self-Help for the Elderly

selfhelpelderly.org



“Clients quickly called Self-Help after shelter-in-place for information and assistance...”

Self-Help for the Elderly serves 40,000 clients annually across five Bay Area counties: San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda, and Contra Costa. Most of their clients, 37,500, live in San Francisco and are Chinese speakers; many do not speak English. About 90% are low-income. Self-Help's programs include activity and meal centers offering classes and lunch, social services, job training and placement, home and health care (housekeeping, adult daycare, and Alzheimer's care), Medicare counseling, tech education with support, and senior housing.

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THE PANDEMIC PIVOT



COVID response team.

PHOTO: Courtesy of Self-Help for the Elderly

Clients quickly called Self-Help after shelter-in-place for information and assistance. Self-Help immediately started making weekly wellness calls to their clients. As most clients did not have computers or access to the internet, and government offices and social services agencies were closed to in-person services, these calls revealed increasingly desperate needs. On June 22, 2020, following health and safety guidelines, Self-Help reopened its Chinatown office at 601 Jackson for limited in-person support.

March 2020 to June 2020: First 100-Day Response to the Pandemic

EMERGENCY HOME DELIVERED MEALS

5,000+

Meals Delivered Daily

6,243

Meal Delivery Clients

300+

Volunteer Drivers & Packers

July 2020 to October 2021: Ongoing Efforts

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES AND CLASSES

2,574

Hours of Virtual Activity/Classes

1,929

Virtual Activity Clients

1,500+

Meals: Pick-up Service Daily

SOCIAL SERVICES

Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)

Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) services pivoted to virtual services from March 17 until June 22, 2020, when ADRC began providing in-person services.

Outreach to Areas with COVID-19 Outbreaks

Case Managers made home visits to high-risk clients who could not receive services virtually. A team of Self-Help's bilingual Case Managers worked with the San Francisco Department of Public Health and Chinatown community-based organizations to triage Single Room Occupancy (SRO) buildings with COVID-19 outbreaks. During the early stages, the team conducted door-to-door outreach in Chinatown SROs with COVID-19 outbreaks to promote testing, case management and answer questions on the City's isolation hotels. The agency then expanded this effort to other communities to promote and conduct several pop-up clinics and in-home vaccination events.

Testing, Vaccination, PPEs

Staff also conducted outreach with the University of California San Francisco, to offer testing and outreach on vaccinations and provide PPEs to the Chinese community, reaching more than 600 residents in SROs. Residents were initially hesitant about getting the vaccine because they had heard so much negative news from invalid sources. Still, with time and culturally competent services, and accurate information, they stepped up to be vaccinated.

Outreach for the Housing Vulnerable

The Housing Team provided face-to-face visits from March 19 until June 22, 2020, when Self-Help reopened. Because many housing-related forms were unavailable online, housing staff met clients in person to ensure that they received the subsidy they needed to remain housed.

Short Term Elder Care

Initially, personal care, chore, and homemaker services, while in high demand, could not be provided because it was

challenging to access PPEs for workers, and guidelines on home care during COVID-19 were unclear. During this time, staff conducted wellness calls to 185 clients who were ineligible to receive Medi-Cal-funded In-Home Support Services and lacked stable caregivers and family support. They resumed personal care, chore, and homemaker services by April 22, 2020, when Self-Help secured adequate PPEs.

Technology Education, Training, Support

When the pandemic started, most of the agency's clients had no or limited technology skills. Self-Help brought in additional computer instructors, funded by SF Connected, to provide the training many clients needed.

Self-Help referred over 1,000 participants to SF Connected's free comprehensive computer/smart device virtual classes providing tech education, training, and support. When in-person classes and tutoring support were not possible, staff relied on phone support and using Zoom over the phone. Staff reinforced these SF Connected classes by facilitating over 3,000 virtual hours of instructions over Zoom to keep the seniors actively engaged in social activities and enhance their understanding of technology.

ADULT DAY SERVICES (ADS)

In the past 18 months, Adult Day Services (ADS) provided emotional support and social services. These services included phone calls, doorstep visits to assess participant and caregiver health, a monthly caregiver support group in Chinese on Zoom, mailed resource and educational packets, activity sheets in

Chinese and English, telephonic health monitoring, health education and vaccination appointments. ADS staff also delivered: 20 Grand Pads from the Community Living Fund, and incontinence and other personal supplies to participants' homes.

JOB TRAINING AND PLACEMENT

Self-Help is the only career center that provided multilingual assistance and accepted walk-ins during the peak of the pandemic.

- Assisted over 1,000 dislocated workers in **applying for unemployment benefits** and navigating the reapplication and recertification processes.
- Conducted over 200 **virtual training sessions**, workshops, and orientations using Zoom and other communication platforms.
- Offered four **hybrid-model vocational training** series in different trades such as Custodial and Home Health Aide.
- Offered a **Housekeeping Sanitation Specialist training** in response to high demand for deep cleaning.
- Served as a **resource hub** for PPEs, promotional flyers, and information on reopening safely for limited English proficient small business owners.
- Assisted over 200 small businesses in the Bay Area with **applying for disaster relief grants and loans** and provided guidance on available resources.

(continued)



Packers prep meals for home delivery drivers.
PHOTO: Courtesy of Self-Help for the Elderly



COVID response team members outreach to residents at an SRO building.
PHOTO: Courtesy of Self-Help for the Elderly

COLLABORATION WITH SF CONNECTED and SF PUBLIC LIBRARY

In addition to collaborating with SF Connected, Self-Help partnered with the SF Public Library to conduct the first virtual Tech Week, providing tech skills workshops that attracted over 700 viewers. Self-Help continues to actively seek new opportunities to expand and provide tech training to other underserved communities for greater digital inclusion.

PROTECTING HOUSING RESIDENTS

Autumn Glow Alzheimer's Care Home and Lady Shaw Senior Apartments continued to provide care and services despite an outbreak at Autumn Glow. Fortunately, the diligence of the Autumn Glow team, the fantastic assistance from SF DPH, and the strict adherence to the CDC/DPH guidelines halted the spread of the virus within two weeks.

HEALTH INSURANCE COUNSELING and ADVOCACY

Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program (HICAP) provided counseling to clients on Medicare. During the pandemic, staff and volunteer counselors served their clients primarily over the phone. San Francisco HICAP is one of the few HICAP locations in the state that continued providing in-person Medicare counseling to seniors who do not have computers or phones. HICAP conducted in-person and phone counseling sessions with 3,000 Medicare beneficiaries during the pandemic. Around 15% of those beneficiaries had complex cases that took weeks or months to resolve.

SAFETY

In May 2021, Self-Help launched Senior Escort Services (SES) in response to the increase in anti-Asian hate speech and violence. SES provides free individual and group escort services for seniors to ensure their safety when traveling to medical appointments, banks, vaccination sites, pop-up testing sites, senior activity centers, grocery shopping, and the laundromat.

GOING FORWARD

Going forward, Self-Help for the Elderly has engaged and safely integrated its services with the City's reopening by conducting multiple on-site technology classes at senior housing properties in adherence to health and safety guidelines that limited participants and mandated social distancing.

Self-Help continues to prepare more virtual materials and programming to enable a hybrid program model. They will be piloting



Senior smiles as she receives the home delivered meals.
PHOTO: Courtesy of Self-Help for the Elderly

a WeChat group for job search and will continue to offer tech help and support, social connections, and other virtual services. To better support their clients to age-in-place in the community, "We envision maintaining virtual services to enable greater access for clients with mobility or other limitations to stay engaged and connected with our agency programs and services," summarized Winnie Yu, the Director of Programs and Administration.



SteppingStone participant exercising with a stationary hand cycle in the Presentation Day Health Center gym. PHOTO: Presentation Day Health Staff

**“Come for healthcare,
stay for community.”**

Contact:
Daniel Gallagher danielgallagher@steppingstonehealth.org



SteppingStone

Your Path to Health and Independence

For the past forty years, SteppingStone has provided a multifaceted program of activities to San Francisco's low-income, chronically-ill seniors and adults with disabilities — primarily dementia, depression or other mental health conditions. Weekdays, the four neighborhood centers — two in the Tenderloin and two South of Market, with the Mission Creek SoMa program operating two shifts a day — were busy engaging the 350 adults attending their programs in a schedule of activities, including frequent health checks. The shelter-in-place order severely tested that model.

THE PANDEMIC PIVOT

After receiving the order to shelter-in-place, Executive Director Daniel Gallagher was forced to furlough most of their staff. "Because Medi-Cal, our major source of funding, restricted payment for Adult Day Health Care programs (ADHC) to services delivered in a center, the closure order forced SteppingStone, and other ADHCs, to scramble for funds," Gallagher explained. Within a day, the remaining staff began calling participants to check on their health. "We serve an extremely vulnerable group. If we don't take care of our participants, there is a strong possibility they would enter a hospital or skilled nursing facility. We needed to engage them for their own health."

While the calls were a great tool to keep their participants from complete isolation, it quickly became apparent that telehealth calls were insufficient: staff needed to see and interact with participants to assess their health needs. Gallagher rehired staff to make home visits, what SteppingStone called the "doorstep" program.

These visits uncovered other needs. Confined to their rooms, without the stimulation of Center activities and the opportunity to interact with staff and friends, the participants complained about being isolated and lonely; many also appeared hungry and malnourished.

Staff connected participants to the SF-Marin Food Bank and other meal programs, and began delivering medication, adaptive equipment, and personal care items to their participants. Activity sheets and Center newsletters slipped in with the deliveries connect-



SteppingStone participant with family celebrating Kwanzaa at Presentation Day Health. PHOTO: Presentation Day Health Staff

ed participants to one another and the Center. "That helped," said Danny McClendon who, prior to the shelter-in-place order, had only to cross the street

from his single-room-occupancy hotel (SRO) to participate in the program at the Presentation Center in the Tenderloin. "They brought

pencils and paper for me to draw, and activity sheets to keep my mind occupied. I also worked out with dumbbells and read the Bible. It kept me

sane." But for McClendon, as for many of their participants, it wasn't the same as seeing his friends in person.

More contact was needed. Participants needed to stay in touch with one another as well as with their family members. Virtual exercise programs would allow participants with access to Zoom to see one another even while confined at home. About half were already computer literate, but others needed a digital device, training, and a connection to the internet.

SteppingStone partnered with the Community Living Campaign and the Department of Disability and Aging Services (DAS) for tablets and training to bring forty participants online. As important as the exercise program is, it was a little less important than the opportunity to socialize, as the Director of Development, Paul Boneberg, explained: "What we found was that they were as equally interested in seeing each other as in the exercise."

In July 2021, when it looked like the pandemic might be getting under control, before the Delta variant again restricted contact, SteppingStone invited 100 of their frailest participants to return for a semi-re-opening, McClendon among them. He had been lonely at home, and while his GrandPad was good for playing bingo and hearing music, he desperately wanted to return. "My friends are at the Center, that's why I wanted to come back. Everyone is so friendly, they say good morning, how are you doing?" Even when they were not allowed physical contact because of the need to maintain distance, "we make the heart sign,"



SteppingStone Golden Gate Day Health Occupational Therapist providing virtual therapeutic services. PHOTO: Golden Gate Day Health Staff

McClendon said, demonstrating with his thumbs and forefingers.

The calls, the visits, internet access all helped, explained Jimmy Goh, a nurse with SteppingStone's Mission Creek Day Health Center, but they weren't enough.

"To really know what's happening with our patients, we need to see them in person over a prolonged period of time. From a medical standpoint, we need to assess their medical and physical needs. How are they walking, what about their stamina? From a mental health standpoint, we need to interact with them. Are they down, depressed, are external factors contributing to their problems? From a public health standpoint, so many



SteppingStone Presentation Day Health Social Worker with participant in the Presentation Garden. PHOTO: Presentation Day Health Staff

expressed feelings of isolation. They needed contact with a provider. They needed to be recognized, validated, engaged — to increase their own feelings of validation."

When vaccinations became available, the staff began an intensive campaign to ensure all participants received

the shots. The staff scheduled appointments when necessary and accompanied participants to get their vaccinations. The campaign yielded an over 95-percent vaccination rate.

While Center staff and participants were trying to adjust to the new service reality,

(continued)



Food insecurity has been a major problem for many clients during the pandemic and remains difficult for some. Here, a Golden Gate Center Program Aide is making a food delivery. PHOTO: Golden Gate Day Health Staff

Gallagher was consumed with the challenge of funding the program. The San Francisco Department of Disability and Aging Services responded to the shelter-in-place order by repurposing their grants to allow virtual services. Previous funders — The Metta Fund, University Mound Ladies Home, and the Ray and Dagmar Dolby Family Fund — stepped up their support. Finally, in July, three months after the stay-at-home order went into effect, the California Department of Aging and the Community Based Adult Services approved reimbursement for virtual “Temporary Alternative Services” (TAS) programs.

The victory was short-lived. Within a week, Governor Newsom announced a proposed budget cut for the coming year that eliminated funding for adult day health programs. Gallagher, along with other ADHC leaders, gave testimonials, attended meetings, and set about educating legislators and their staffers.

The effort succeeded. Countless hours of testimony convinced the Governor to reinstate the budget for adult day health care services. In July 2020, Gallagher was able to bring back the entire staff.

It is difficult to predict the future of this pandemic. But what is known is that a hybrid model can only be successful as more participants are able to connect via Zoom. After a combined effort by the Coalition of Agencies Serving the Elderly (CASE) and individual agencies, the 2021-22 SF Department of Disability and Aging Services budget set aside just under \$1 million for technical support. Meanwhile, SteppingStone is opening its doors to more participants while staff will continue to call and visit those unable to attend the program in real time.

ADDITIONAL STORIES

Five other agencies answered the pivot questionnaire and made significant pivots during the pandemic. This section brings their stories to light.



**RICHMOND
SENIOR CENTER**
Golden Gate Senior Services



GOLDEN GATE VILLAGE
A Program of Richmond Senior Center

The Richmond Senior Center occupies a small space on the third floor of an office building on Geary Boulevard in San Francisco's Richmond District. The facility houses two programs: the Senior Center, and the Golden Gate Village. The pandemic impacted both programs.

"We cooperate with the San Francisco Department of Public Health during emergencies like extreme heat and poor air quality, so when the pandemic orders came down, we knew what to do," explained Kaleda Walling, the Executive Director. When the shelter-in-place order was instituted, staff began calling Richmond residents to offer help.

An immediate concern was hunger. How would the seniors who ate lunch at the Center cope? Staff and volunteers stepped up, delivering meals and helping Center participants sign up for other food programs. The number of seniors and adults with disabilities taking advantage of the meal program increased from 70 to 105.

But it's not only the food program that grew during the pandemic. "The Village received the most remarkable growth," said Walling. The Golden Gate Village is a community-based, volunteer-led activity, unique among other Villages in being affiliated with a senior center. The Senior Center serves as the information hub, the knowledge hub of the Village, connecting members to the community and city resources. It differs from the Senior Center in that "you don't need to walk through our doors to join. You just have to be willing to volunteer: to make 'friendly calls' and visits, accompany a neighbor to the doctor's office, to make yourself available.

"I think Villages should be popping up all over the City. It's a great idea," Walling said. She is excited about the Village and so, it seems, are its 150 members, double the number who participated before the pandemic."

Richmond Senior Center seniorcenter.us/sc/richmond_senior_center_san_francisco_ca

Golden Gate Village ggvillage.org

Kaleda Walling kaleda@ggsenior.org



"The problem is," said Stella Lazo, a family consultant with the Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA), "people don't know there's help out there. They wait 'till they're burned out to call. It's so much better if they call us when they first begin to give care." The Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA) helps caregivers develop and implement care plans for their family member. It also offers classes and groups to family caregivers, and, on occasion, provides respite care and limited help paying for assistive devices and medical supplies.

Before the pandemic and the shelter-in-place order, FCA's services were limited to phone and in-person support. While they still remain accessible by phone, Zoom and webinars have replaced in-person classes. Much to their surprise, these virtual classes have proved popular,

(continued next page)

expanding attendance from 20 participants to as many as 80 attendees. The support groups experienced an equally dramatic growth, forcing FCA to add three new groups for a total of six support groups.

Moving forward, FCA plans to continue offering a hybrid program of virtual and in-person classes and groups.

Family Caregiver Alliance www.caregiver.org

Stella Lazo slazo@caregiver.org



The Institute on Aging (IOA) is a large, multi-service agency serving thousands of seniors. The pandemic and shelter-in-place guidelines forced all to quickly pivot to protect staff and clients. “And we did,” explained Rowena Fontanos, the Senior Manager of Community Programs.

One that stood out was a program developed in cooperation with a Mercy Housing residence. IOA had assigned a nurse/health education specialist to the facility to monitor residents’ health and well-being. When sheltering in place precluded easy meetings with clients and the opportunity to unobtrusively observe their behavior, the IOA nurse bought a coffee cart, filled it with coffee and snacks, and wheeled it from room-to-room. As residents sipped their coffee, she was able to discern and respond to changes in their behavior and to subtly administer the geriatric anxiety scale. The program was so successful that IOA initiated it at other facilities where they had programs.

Institute on Aging www.ioaging.org

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Before the pandemic, **Art with Elders (AWE)** offered art classes at Laguna Honda (their mothership) and various senior living facilities throughout the Bay Area. When the pandemic shuttered all classes, “it was a bit of a heartbreak for our constituents,” said Mark Campbell, the Executive Director. “The lights went out. Our students were really suffering.” Phone calls and letters helped, but also highlighted their students’ distress. They were “sitting at home with fearful thoughts. We were their alternative to depression,” explained Darcie O’Brien, the Exhibitions Director.

The first Zoom studio class came online in mid-April to an audience of students and their friends and families. Others followed — all supported through foundation grants and donations by “very accommodating funders.” The classes were made available to residents of senior facilities and members of community and senior centers. Students who lacked the technical expertise or equipment to participate were referred to computer training programs offered by the **Community Living Campaign** and the **Community Tech Network**. As months passed, AWE expanded its online programming to offer classes in Spanish for On Lok and **Mission Neighborhood Centers, Inc.**, and in Mandarin and Cantonese for On Lok 30th Street Senior Center.

But the Laguna Honda program was still floundering. Because HIPPA regulations excluded using Zoom to reach these students, Campbell turned to video. “Creating those first videos describing watercolors was not easy,” Campbell said, “but with the help of everyone on staff and with

(continued next page)



Artist Rita R. Goldman and Artist Instructor Betty Rothaus of The Reutlinger Community celebrate at the 2019 27th Annual Exhibit Event Artist. PHOTO: Courtesy of AWE

considerable support from the Laguna Honda staff, the videos were able to be shown on the hospital channel."

Exhibitions — and the celebrations accompanying them — are a major part of AWE's program. Gradually, exhibits were available online. With COVID-19 under better control, they can now be viewed both in-person and online.

"As artists, we're uniquely suited to think of this time as a challenge," Campbell said, one that AWE's staff is proud of meeting.

Art with Elders www.artwithelders.org

Mark Campbell mark@artwithelders.org



Instructor Mei Mei Everson works with participants at Belmont Village Albany, 2019. PHOTO: Courtesy of AWE



Creative Spark

A PROGRAM FOR SENIORS

The Connection Programs (Well Connected, Well Connected Español, and Social Call) offer group activities and individual connection to older adults by phone or online. When the pandemic forced other agencies to move to virtual services, Covia, a Front Porch partner, simply continued doing what they had always done. Then they began receiving calls from other agencies: how do you provide virtual services that are engaging?

Over at Ruth's Table, an arts nonprofit committed to increasing access to creative opportunities for older adults and adults with disabilities, Jessica McCracken was fielding similar calls. A longtime advocate of the importance of creativity in the lives of older adults, she knew that engagement in the arts enhances the quality of life for individuals, as well as providing opportunities for self-expression, social engagement and personal growth. In restricting opportunities to socialize, the pandemic posed huge challenges to the health and well-being of older people.



Colorful collage of a creative community made through the Creative Spark program. PHOTO: Courtesy of Creative Spark

McCracken's response, developed in collaboration with her team, was to design creativity kits for agencies to use with their clients. While the kits were attractive, their effectiveness required the facilitator to first experience their own creativity before they could engage the creativity of others.

Thus, began **Creative Spark**, a consultation, curriculum, and training program for organizations and professionals in senior centers and facilities. "Our goal," McCracken explained, is "to keep our participants connected and encourage our older, often more vulnerable, communities to explore simple moments of creativity at home."

After McCracken workshopped the program at the new Campus for Jewish Living, Rebecca Holzman, the Intergenerational Volunteer Coordinator at CJL said, "Creative Spark inspired me to work more with my team; to continue to shift my thinking and belief systems about what it means to grow older; to discover what lights me up so I can use it to help others find what lights them up."

McCracken is eager to bring Creative Spark to other agencies; she also developed a one-off workshop of interactive exercises, *Creating Joy at Work*.

Covia covia.org/programs/creative-spark/

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Our separate struggles
are really one – a struggle
for freedom, for dignity
and for humanity...

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR
TELEGRAM TO CESAR CHAVEZ (1966)

Cover photos (clockwise, from top): **Community Music Center**: METTA Fund event. PHOTO: Hasain Rasheed. **I.T. Bookman**: Lakeview/OMI COVID-19 Wellness HUB partners activate vaccinations and testing at I.T. Bookman Community Center. PHOTO: Courtesy of I.T. Bookman; **Computer Tech Network**: Josie Boyle offers technical training at Eastern Park Apartments. PHOTO: Courtesy of CTN; **On Lok 30th Street Senior Center**: Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) team offers activities to keep program participants connected. PHOTO: Courtesy of On Lok 30th Street Senior Center; **Self-Help for the Elderly**: COVID response team members outreach to residents at an SRO building. PHOTO: Courtesy of Self-Help for the Elderly; **Bayanihan Equity Center**: community partners deliver Supplementary Grocery Program bags to the Filipino Community Center. PHOTO: Mary Roque; **SteppingStone Adult Day Health**: Golden Gate Center Program aide makes a food delivery. PHOTO: Golden Gate Day Health staff; **Community Living Campaign**: Bayview Home Delivered Grocery team packs bags at Meals on Wheels San Francisco. PHOTO: Courtesy of CLC.



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