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Guillermo J. Valenzuela Foundation awards \$250,000 in grants to nine Inland Charities helping families, women in need

By Community News

The Guillermo J. Valenzuela Foundation recently announced that it has awarded \$250,000 in grants to local community organizations that work to improve the health and wellbeing of underserved families in the Inland Empire.

Grants were given out at the Foundation's first awards luncheon, held Wednesday, Aug. 28 at The Mexico Café in San Bernardino. Founded and funded by longtime Inland Empire physician and philanthropist Dr. Guillermo Valenzuela, the Foundation has awarded nearly \$700,000 in grants since its launch in 2015.

The Foundation's 2019 grants were provided to local non-profit organizations whose activities align with the Foundation's mission of expanding access to healthcare and improving quality care by addressing the Inland Empire's shortage of physicians and healthcare providers.

"I am delighted that our 2019 Foundation grants are supporting such incredible organizations, each of which plays a crucial role in improving the health, wellbeing, and potential opportunities of families and women in need across the Inland Empire," Valenzuela said. "The care, services and most importantly, the compassion provided by these organizations across the Inland Region are absolutely vital to improving outcomes for the most vulnerable among us."

The grants ranging from \$20,000 to \$30,000 each were awarded to:

- **Catholic Charities San Bernardino and Riverside Counties** to assist with critical funding for casework staff to increase the stability, health and safety of 100 low income women and their families.
- **Desert Sanctuary, Inc.** of Barstow to support women and children seeking refuge from violence and fear at their domestic violence shelter that hosts over 30 beds.
- **El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center** to screen 250 elderly women for mental health symptoms and depression, and to provide additional on-going services.
- **Funders Alliance of San Bernardino & Riverside Counties** to support extended 2020 Census outreach efforts into rural communities to ensure they receive appropriate federal assistance program funding.
- **Inland Behavioral and Health Services, Inc.**, to purchase new medical equipment, and to recruit medical providers in their San Bernardino and Banning health centers.
- **OneFuture Coachella Valley** to assist disadvantaged students in Coachella Valley's underserved communities in achieving undergraduate and post-graduate education towards careers in health care.
- **Reach Out** of Upland to expand the number of culturally competent healthcare through advocating for systematic changes and providing students through the LIFE program.
- **Southern California Public Radio** to support its high-quality multimedia coverage of healthcare issues.

- **Time for Change Foundation** of San Bernardino to help provide accessibility to safe, affordable housing for 50 homeless families and to transition 25 individuals/families into Permanent Housing.

“We are elated to have been chosen by the foundation to receive a grant to assist more than 100 women and their families that are facing a crisis, find stability and health,” said Ken Sawa, Executive Vice President of Catholic Charities San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. “With these funds, we are able to increase caseworker staff and support additional programs that uplift those in the community.”

In addition to this year’s grants, the Valenzuela Foundation also donated \$110,250 to the Health Professions Education Foundation’s Steven M. Thompson Loan Repayment Program. This commitment from the Valenzuela Foundation will help relieve medical student debt for a physician willing to work for three years in San Bernardino.

The Inland Empire leads the state as the region with the greatest shortage of both primary-care and specialist physicians. A recent study by the Center of Health Journalism showed Riverside had the lowest physician to resident ratio in California, with only 39 physicians per 100,000 residents; far below the recommended 70 doctors per 100,000 people. In fact, California is expected to be short 4,700 doctors by 2025.

Born to working-class parents in Chile, Dr. Valenzuela overcame adversity and severe economic obstacles to become a successful physician and a leader in the Inland Empire’s medical community. Dr. Valenzuela’s strong belief in giving back to the community helped him launch the Dream Project, a motivational program for at-risk youth at Colton High School, and the TECH Laptop Scholarship Program, a program that has provided nearly 250 laptops to elementary students to encourage them to pursue a higher education.



Dr. Guillermo J. Valenzuela (right) and Lina Paredes (left) of the Valenzuela Foundation present a check for \$30,000 to Margarita Luna and Max Freund of The Funders Alliance and The Community Foundation.