



Guillermo J. Valenzuela Foundation Awards \$225,000 in Grants to Inland Charities to Help Families in Need During COVID-19

Inland-based foundation created by local physician and philanthropist is focused on improving the health of underserved communities in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties.

(San Bernardino, CA) -- The Guillermo J. Valenzuela Foundation announced that it has awarded \$225,000 in grants to nine local community organizations to provide relief during COVID-19. With the pandemic outbreak beginning in March, followed by a renewed call for racial justice and an end to police brutality against African Americans, the Foundation's key goal in 2020 is to be responsive to the specific and varied needs of its community partners during these very challenging times.

With little warning, and in a very short time, community groups had to adjust to unforeseen and never-before experienced circumstances. There were no precedents, no best practices, no models to follow. Because of COVID, their constituents were made even more vulnerable and their need for assistance greater. Those living paycheck-to-paycheck became exposed and joined the ranks of those needing external support to meet their basic needs.

Families have been experiencing loss of wages/jobs, school closures, loss of childcare, inability to pay for rent, utilities, and even food. Health clinics saw reductions in chronically ill patients showing up for much needed ongoing care for fear of catching the Coronavirus. Students had to move to online virtual learning despite many lacking access to computers and Wi-Fi. Anxiety among youth increased, and family economic uncertainty creates pressure for high school graduates to work and postpone advanced education.

"It is impressive to see how our grantees, during a unique crisis, are shifting in real time and adjusting to the dramatically changing reality, while doing their very best to meet the different and expanding needs of their staff, clients, patients and students," Valenzuela said. "Not only are they being nimble and flexible, they must also plan to operate under duress for the foreseeable future." Service providers moved to working from home where possible. Protocols as well as actual services for in-person services had to be adapted to virtual/online interactions (where possible). Group meetings and sessions are being conducted by Zoom and one-on-one counseling use FaceTime. Telemedicine is being practiced more with a view to including video imaging in the future. These rapid changes have come with their own set of hazards – shortage of current technological equipment and limited Wi-Fi, both in organizations and among the communities they serve.

To get financial resources out to community organizations quickly, the Valenzuela Foundation made a \$25,000 contribution to the Inland Empire Funders Alliance Rapid Response Fund administered by the Inland Empire Community Foundation. It provided rapid response grants to established organizations with wide-reaching networks that act as coordinating bodies for resource and service distribution. Also, the Valenzuela Foundation decided to fund only those organizations with which it has long-standing relationships and trust, enabling simplified application and reporting procedures.

General operating grants were awarded to:

- **Catholic Charities San Bernardino and Riverside Counties**
- **Desert Sanctuary, Inc.**

- **El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center**
- **Inland Empire Funders Alliance**
- **Inland Behavioral and Health Services, Inc.**
- **OneFuture Coachella Valley**
- **Reach Out**
- **Southern California Public Radio**
- **Time for Change Foundation**

“We are grateful to the Valenzuela Foundation for trusting our work and providing additional support with fewer hoops to jump through this year. Some women who have become self-sufficient through our housing program from previous years have lost their jobs due to COVID and have reached out seeking basic support to maintain housing for their families,” said Vanessa Perez, Director of Time for Change Foundation. “Receiving this grant early allows us to respond to our clients’ needs in a timely manner!”

Founded and funded by longtime Inland Empire physician and philanthropist Dr. Guillermo Valenzuela, the Foundation has awarded over a million dollars in grants since its launch in 2015.

About The Guillermo J. Valenzuela Foundation

The Guillermo J. Valenzuela Foundation is dedicated to improving the health of underserved communities in Southern California’s Inland Empire, San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. The Foundation works to expand access to health care and improve quality care through research, education, grant-making, programs, and partnerships. The Foundation’s current priorities are:

1. ***Women’s Health:*** *Because women are the backbone of their families and our communities of the Inland Empire, ensuring they have access to providers and services is essential to public health.*
2. ***Increasing the Number of Medical Providers Committed to Practicing in the Inland Empire:*** *Because the underserved communities in Southern California’s Inland Empire lack adequate networks of primary and specialty providers who live and work in our neighborhoods, the Foundation is focused on increasing the number of Doctors of Medicine, Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine, Nurse Practitioners, and Physician’s Assistants.*

For further information, please go to valenzuelafoundation.org.