



FISH Newsletter

February 2021

Annual Report for 2020

The Story Behind the Statistics

The initial impact of COVID on FISH was the massive loss of volunteers when Shelter In Place was announced and those volunteers over 65 years old were advised to adhere to strict new CDC guidelines and protect themselves from this deadly virus. Next came the changes to our service delivery. As an essential service, the FISH Food Room remained open to provide food via a new delivery system. Safety protocols were put in place for food distribution and FISH switched to a Drive-In model. The Clothing Room needed to close immediately.

As businesses and restaurants closed, the need for utility and rental assistance skyrocketed, due to high unemployment. Fortunately, applications for utilities and rent were easily accessed from the FISH website and over one weekend more than 100 applications were filed. As all of this was happening, FISH needed to establish a network of translators as our partner nonprofit was no longer able to provide translations service. The result was more work and fewer volunteers. After a bit of a scramble, a number of Spanish translators volunteered to assist FISH by taking phone calls and providing translations services for both rent and utilities.

As we progressed through the year, FISH was able to continue its core services; food, financial support for rent and utilities, rides to medical appointments, needed medical equipment and information to community leaders regarding the emerging needs.

The needs within the community and the financial demands on FISH were matched by the generous support of donations and grants. FISH received a record \$528,660 in grant money during 2020. Due to a flurry of online giving the last days of 2020, FISH experienced a tsunami of donations. The 1.1 million dollars of 2020 expenditures were surpassed by the 1.4 million dollars of donations, enabling FISH to increase its 2021 budget.

A huge thank you to all of the FISH volunteers and FISH leaders who gave endlessly of their time in service to our community. Kudos to the Sonoma Valley community for its support. Individuals, foundations, businesses and organizations provided the financial support to assist our neighbors in need.

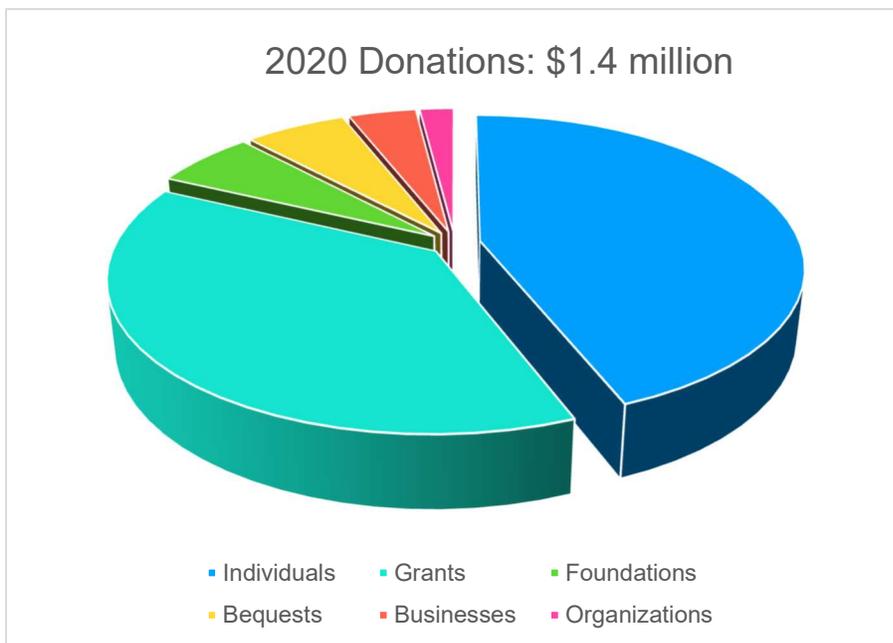
And now for those statistics.....

Services provided:

- 15,000 phone calls were received
- 2262 families received food
- 828 families were provided rental assistance
- 458 rides were given to medical appointments
- 358 families received utility assistance
- 68 individuals received medical equipment

Financial expenditures:

- \$787,000 for rental assistance
- \$77,260 for utility assistance
- \$49,400 for food assistance
- \$29,500 cost generated by phone calls
- \$8,040 for transportation costs
- \$0 for personnel costs



News from the Capacity Building Leadership Team

funded by Sonoma Community Foundation:

The **FISH Leadership Team** of Phyllis Anderson, Tom Haeuser, Arlene Holt, Sherry Michael, Beverly Seyfert, Nadine Yenni and me - Sandy - are launching into our 50th Anniversary Celebration by renewing our Vision and Mission Statements. We have been identifying all those wonderful elements that make FISH unique while surveying the changes over the past 50 years. Simply sharing and sharing simply would characterize the earlier vision of FISH. We have come a long way - and maybe not too far away from that early vision.

Included in our work that is to be completed in May are revisiting our vision, mission and core values, expanding and updating our bylaws, creating an organizational chart and articulating a decision-making process. FISH will always be an organization of volunteers extending a helping hand to our neighbors - we have many more neighbors and certainly more opportunities to serve. In the past five years FISH has experienced significant challenges as it responded to both the fires and pandemic. We are shoring up our infrastructure to meet the demands of the next 50 years.

Other FISH News:

We hope you were able to stop by **Dutch Bros. Coffee** after you received your vaccination on Valentine's Day - February 14th was the day when one dollar from every drink is donated to FISH to support our pantry. Dutch Bros. has been supporting FISH on Valentine's Day for years - and we are thankful for their "sharing the luv" with FISH.

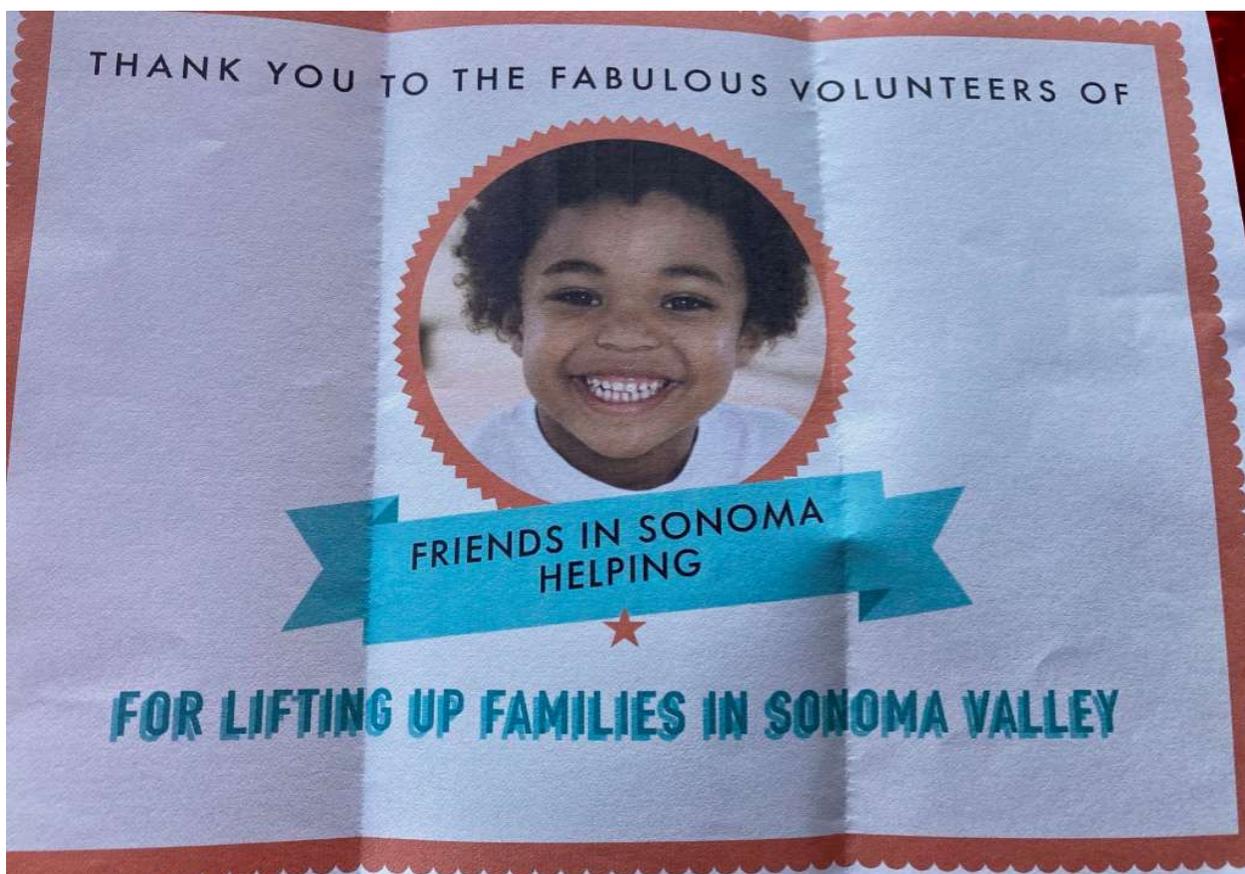
We sadly announce that former FISH volunteer **Bill Frapwell** has died. Bill was part of the hard-working committee to obtain and renovate FISH Central. The decision to centralize FISH services was a watershed decision as it transformed the food, clothing, rent and medical equipment programs and increased access to services - right there in Boyes Hot Springs! Bill was a concrete visionary - a man who got things done while kindness was a constant companion. As long as FISH is at 18330 Highway 12, Bill will be remembered for his dedication to FISH and to helping those in need.

You may have heard that **Linda Stevens** experienced a severe medical episode last month. She spent days in ICU and is now at a skilled nursing facility in Santa Rosa. She has made phenomenal progress to date and is now working on mobility issues before she can return home. A huge thank you to **Bev Koeplin** who has stepped in to fill Linda's shoes while she is out. It has been a lovely seamless transition that allows Linda to recover while Bev takes the Dispatch reins.

New Volunteers:

We welcome a number of new volunteers to FISH - all are bi-lingual! **Vicki Rivera**, 812-2547 and vrivalcsw@vom.com, has been working a couple of days each week with Spanish speaking rental applications. Vicki is a social worker and has already made tremendous contributions in connecting with those who apply and in helping us to clarify our rental guidelines. Currently Sherry is also training **Carmela Mezquita**, cmezquita17@icloud.com, thanks to Arlene who introduced her to FISH, to assist with rent requests. Carmela lived in Barcelona where she became fluent in Spanish and she has also taught ESL. To round out our excellent team we have added **Claudia Mendoza Carruth**, who can be reached at 935-1032 and mondongo@live.com. Claudia will translate documents and is willing to translate in person or through any Zoom meeting. Our bilingual staff has been growing to meet the need to effectively communicate with our Spanish speaking neighbors.

We also welcome **Marty Herrick** who picks up produce from Paul's Produce Stand each Tuesday and brings it to the Food Room where it is repackaged to distribution. Marty is available at 707-481-6522 or mherrick707@gmail.com. Welcome aboard and thank you!



This came in December's mail along with a check to support the work of FISH.