

paRa loS niñoS
for the childRen

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Para Los Niños Granted \$1 Million to Help Families Access Food
Org trusted to help thousands with food insecurity through pandemic

Los Angeles, CA – Para Los Niños (PLN) is coordinating to provide food for over 3,000 families in some of Los Angeles' most vulnerable communities through CARES Act funding distributed by the County. Using its strong distribution infrastructure developed in response to the pandemic in 2020, PLN and its partnership with dozens of local organizations are helping some of SoCal's hardest hit communities.

In December, when the County was looking to facilitate \$1 million in food distributions to as many people as possible in a short amount of time, Para Los Niños was prepared. In two weeks, the organization was able to register over 3,000 families to receive a box of food every month from January through April – delivered straight to their homes.

“We are honored to take on this initiative, and expand the infrastructure to serve those in need across our County,” said Brenda Aguilera, Director of Community Transformation at Para Los Niños, of the project. “Our deep community relationships and connections are critical to our ability to be effective in helping families access the resources they need.”

Para Los Niños has served children and families in Los Angeles for over 40 years – starting on Skid Row as a safe space for children to play and learn. Today, the organization serves over 6,000 across the County with schools, youth centers, mental health sites, and dozens of long-standing partnerships in the communities.

From the start of the pandemic, PLN was quick to identify the need for transportation support to help families access food and supplies and to tap into partnerships to bridge the gap. Collaborating with the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), VIA, First5LA, and local organizations last summer, Best Start Metro LA Region 1 facilitated by Para Los Niños served thousands across its 15 hubs monthly by mid-summer.

“It is unique to have this reach and success with the distributions. Many residents do not have transportation, the ability to carry, or know where distributions happen – COVID-19 exacerbates this as people do not want to be exposed leaving their homes or using public transportation,” said Aguilera of their success.

Connections in communities further enabled PLN to connect with smaller organizations and residents who may not have access to resources or technology to learn of distributions in their area. One of those organizations is Homies Unidos, which was able to register 700 of its families to be a part of this initiative.

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“This is a relief for so many families – especially having this delivered,” said Ana Minauri, Program Director at Homies Unidos. “We have a lot of elderly members who struggle to carry these boxes. We are realizing that this isn’t going away, knowing that we can continue to help families for the next few months is huge for these families.”

Now in the second month of deliveries, but the eleventh month of pivoting to food distribution, there is still more to do and Para Los Niños hopes to continue to find funding and solutions for all of Los Angeles’ residents to be food secure and healthy.

“The pandemic has been helpful in activating and engaging others to join us in this work,” says Aguilera of how COVID-19 has impacted PLN’s community work. She is hopeful though that the County will continue to adjust policies and partner with residents. “There can be real change created – or at least started.”

About Best Start Metro LA:

Best Start Region 1 is a community movement funded through First5LA that strengthens families and communities. Through community partnerships, work groups, and neighborhood leadership groups, community members identify and address family and community barriers that impact healthy outcomes for children. Residents develop leadership and advocacy skills, increase knowledge of systematic barriers and the resources that exist to keep their families healthy and safe, and make strong connections with one another and with local officials, positioning themselves as advocates and change-agents in their communities, and for their children.

About Para Los Niños:

Founded on Skid Row in 1980, Para Los Niños provides education and wraparound support to over 6,000 of L.A.’s neediest children, youth, and families each year. PLN fosters pathways to success by striving for excellence in education, family support, and comprehensive social-emotional, and community based services.

Through early-education, TK-8th grade education, youth workforce services, and family and community services Para Los Niños’ model provides a comprehensive, holistic approach to break the cycle of poverty and help children and youth thrive.

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