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## EHP Offers Renewed Hope to Struggling Families

For many years EHP offered a modest financial assistance program to low-income families requesting help with paying for an unexpected bill or emergency. When Covid-19 hit our community, the need for financial assistance skyrocketed due to loss of employment and/or illness. Our families barely had time to recover before rising inflation made living in our community almost impossible with some falling into deeper and deeper debt. What could EHP do for these families?

During this time, our generous donors gave more than what could be spent due to pandemic related operational limitations. This surplus would be key to the solution. What if these families had a support system that could sustain them long enough to truly make a difference? Not just a shot in the arm, to pay the gas bill this month, but enough support to set them on the road to self-sufficiency. Would these families succeed? In July of 2022, EHP announced a special \$2 million fund which would provide direct assistance to local families-in-need for the next two years and the creation of the Family Sustainability Fund. This new fund, an all-inclusive support program, would help selected families over the course of several months reduce debt and increase income through modest financial assistance combined with budget planning, employment and financial counseling, and referrals to other agencies that specialized in affordable housing, childcare, and government aid. We recognized that providing financial assistance alone without providing the tools to become financially stable had the potential to lead to dependency instead of self-reliance. Now, in its 4th month, we are already seeing positive changes in our five inaugural FSF recipients. They have all significantly reduced their credit card debt, two have found new employment while another is working to revive his business which suffered greatly during the pandemic. Additionally, one of our families will be moving from a cramped apartment into an affordable-income 3-bedroom house later this month.

The following was written by a fund recipient relating what this new EHP lifeline would mean to her family. Your donations are giving her the opportunity to rewrite their future.

*To explain why I would greatly benefit from financial assistance, I'd like to provide some background to how I got where I am today. I grew up in an abusive household where I witnessed my father abuse my mother. After my father was gone, my mother was not very present, and we were constantly struggling to make ends meet. Times were always hard, and it was harder not having supportive parents to get me through those tough times. Despite all the hardships I went through in my childhood, I made sure to stay on top of my grades because I saw school as my only way out. I felt like I needed to escape from my family and my circumstances and that was how I was going to do it.*

*With extremely hard work, and a lot of tough times and lessons of my own as a young adult, I was able to graduate from the SJSU Lucas College of Business with a degree in Business Administration/Concentration in Accounting holding a 3.0 GPA. The year I graduated, SJSU's Business College was ranked by Money Magazine as 8 out of the top 10 colleges in the nation for Business majors. This was a huge accomplishment that I will carry with me for a lifetime. I have done well for myself and continue to have goals that I strive for every day.*

*Starting from the ground up has been hard, especially after having a son shortly after I graduated college. I've been a single mom since he was born and have had no help. Living in a place with one of the highest costs of living has been hard to say the least. Because I'm on my own, I'm often living paycheck to paycheck, now even more because of the rising costs for everything from groceries to rent and PG&E. When I don't have enough cash, I use my credit cards which have added to my overall debt. I currently have \$50,000 in outstanding federal student loans, and around \$7,000 in credit card debt. I dream to be a homeowner some day and give my son the life I never had even if I have to do it all on my own. However, with piling debt and no real way out it has been hard to see the bright future I've always dreamed of. I appreciate any help you could offer as it would greatly change my life's trajectory and allow me to get on a path to being the woman and mother I've always dreamed of being.*



# Volunteers Making a Difference: EHP Organic Garden Expansion

When EHP relocated to their current East Palo Alto site in 2003, a portion of the property was reserved for a community garden. EHP envisioned low-income neighbors using our plot to grow their own organic vegetables. Garden boxes were built on one side and the circular Pi Garden soon followed.

Shaped like a pie with 8 planter boxes resembling slices, people could grow different crops in each slice of the pie. There were years when community groups came to grow vegetables for our families-in-need and years when the garden sat quietly unattended.

In 2019, the organic garden took on a new life when May Chevalier decided she wanted to do something to help alleviate hunger in our community. May took on EHP's garden and began growing fresh vegetables for EHP's clients. Under her guidance, a drip irrigation system was added to the garden boxes and additional planter boxes began to appear. However, the Pi garden didn't fare as well. There were some years when a service group would plant and care for crops for a season, but there was no continuity. Without a sprinkler system, it was just too work intensive.

This year, the Housing Industry Foundation awarded EHP a grant to renovate the Pi garden and surrounding area.

HIF brought in their longtime supporter, BellaVista Landscaping Services, who donated their time and materials.

Then with donations from Lyngso Garden Materials and Pine Cone Lumber, the EHP organic garden expansion project got the green light.



planter boxes and an irrigation system in the space once occupied by the Pi garden. EHP expects the newly renovated section will easily double our production of fresh vegetables going forward. We would like to thank Housing Industry Foundation, ED, Steve Sullivan, and their volunteers, BellaVista Landscaping Services, Pine Cone Lumber, Lyngso Garden Materials and Scott C, for making our Organic Garden Expansion Project a reality.

EHP would also like to thank May, Linda, Maggie, Ginnie, Marian, Scott and all of our volunteer gardeners who plant, nurture, maintain and harvest our vegetable garden. Without them, none of this would be possible. Many thanks also to Lyngso Garden Materials, Upstart Organic Seedlings, Summerwinds Nursery, Milk Pail Market, and Ciardella Garden Supply for their support.



In November, during a whirlwind 3-day event, the BellaVista team, with assistance from EHP volunteer, Scott Clawson, and HIF volunteers, built and installed new

With the completion of our garden expansion, EHP could really use a few extra helping hands. A couple hours a week will provide fresh, healthy produce for our struggling neighbors all year long. If you have the time, please give EHP a call at 650-323-7781 and join our team of master gardeners. Thank you!

**Food for Thought ... From July 2021—June 2022, we served:**

4,190 households, 11,295 individuals and 21,552 food boxes  
3,287 individuals were served during the Thanksgiving distribution  
And we are anticipating serving over 6,500 during EHP's Christmas distribution



# Wish List

Our families desperately need your help. Families already struggling have been blindsided by economic conditions and the exorbitant cost of living in the Bay Area. These families are food insecure and struggling to survive. Your generosity can make all the difference and you can become a safety-net for a neighbor-in-need this holiday season.

In order to have a socially distanced distribution that will protect our staff, clients and donors, we are asking for monetary and gift card donations to ensure a safe and simple holiday distribution, and to allow our families the ability to shop safely online. But new in-kind donations of food and gifts are also welcome.

## Gift Cards

- Amazon, Costco, Nordstrom Rack, Safeway, Walmart, Target, Visa & Mastercard (for bill payments)

## Gift Donations (youth Christmas gifts)

- Action figure sets
- Bluetooth speakers, headphones, earbuds
- Board games (popular)
- Ethnic dolls
- Amazon Firestick
- Hot wheels sets
- Remote control toys (ground & air)
- Make-up/nail polish sets
- Men's & women's scents & bath sets
- Official NBA & NFL gear (local teams)
- Purses & fanny packs
- Men's and women's sterling silver jewelry

## EHP's Holiday Hope & Happiness Program for Youth

Every holiday season we encounter the same problem - our older youth, ages 10-18, are often overlooked by traditional giving programs. You can make a difference by providing gifts for one or more EHP teens this year! Donate a gift card from one of the stores listed and let the teens shop for themselves or if you would like to purchase the gifts

personally, ask the store for suggestions. Thank you so much for helping to make the holidays a little brighter for our youth. Your generosity changes lives!

We also desperately need Family Sharing Donors! This program allows donors to participate in a truly life changing giving experience!

We have hundreds of families experiencing extreme hardship on a waiting list but only a handful of donors. Please call or email LaKesha at EHP (650) 323-7781 / LaKesha@ehpcares.org for more information on how you can participate in this rewarding program. You can also simply shop from the above wish list and drop off your gift at the EHP campus.

## Feliks' Story

The following was written by a long-time client. Feliks' wife recently graduated from Stanford and we were happy to help them during their time of need.

*For many years, EHP helps our family to survive. I am not able to work because of health issues and my wife is a student. We have 3 small kids.*

*When we talk with EHP, we feel their people love us and they are happy to give us what they have. Toys, clothes, bedding stuff, household goods. With some other nonprofits, when asking them for something, the answer is normally "we have no this, have no that."*

*Looking at them, it seems they collect donations, take the best to sell, and give away*

*only the things no one would buy. On the contrary, EHP says, "Take a look and see if it fits you" or "We will call you when we find it".*

*The things we pick up there sometimes are so*

*good, they could be sold, fast. But at EHP, everything is free. For us, we have no doubt, that EHP works honestly.*

*The girls who checked the lists have a wonderful memory.*

*We had not been there for one year, and even after all that time, they can say, "Hello Feliks, your family has 5 people, right?" They personally remember people. Once I told Nevada, "Please, we need a king-size mattress." She answered, "Didn't you take one two years ago?", without checking any notes-she knew what items I took!*

*I answered, "Our kids eat and play on this mattress and made it so dirty and wasted."*

*"Okay, I'll give you the mattress but please be careful this time because other people need it as well".*

*We also take so many good foods.*

*Thank you, EHP!*





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***Our Mission:***

to provide compassionate, dignified  
and practical assistance to families  
and individuals experiencing  
economic and personal hardship.

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EHP is a Platinum-level [GuideStar Exchange](#) participant, demon-  
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