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Editorial

Marin hunger fighters must remain vigilant

While the threat of the pandemic has eased, the need for food for many in Marin remains high.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the local need for food for money-strapped households rose.

The county estimates that one in five Marin residents face “food insecurity.”

That’s an estimated 20% in one of the most affluent communities in the nation.

The rising cost of food and gasoline are only exacerbating this societal discrepancy.

During the rise of the pandemic, the San Francisco-Marine Food Bank saw a 90% increase in requests for food. A survey of its clients showed that a large majority are worried about running out of food or are still dealing with financial issues caused by the pandemic.

“Many are forced to make impossible choices between paying bills and buying food,” said Tanis Crosby, the food bank’s director.

Many other programs have seen similar increases.

Marin’s Meal on Wheels program, which delivers food to seniors, grew by more than 50% and more than 13,000 Marin households are enrolled in CalFresh food stamps program — a 40% increase over pre-pandemic numbers, even given fear among immigrant families about Trump-era threats that enrollment would be used to block their path to citizenship.

Still, local officials expect enrollment will increase as a new state law widening access to CalFresh benefits goes into effect next spring.

These statistics are troubling and reflect the reality behind the broad-brushed affluence of our community.

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nonprofits that are aware of and responsive to this population. They — including many volunteers — collect “extra” food and meals and get them to households for whom a healthy meal is not certain.

They recognize that there may not be a shortage of food, but a need to get extra food to those who need it.

Meanwhile, for families who have enjoyed emergency pandemic-prompted increases in their state benefits, the waning of the public health crisis will mean a return to pre-pandemic levels of less support — and less food for their families.

While most Marin families aren’t going hungry, it should be known that there are some — too many — who worry about not having enough food for their family’s next meal.

Their number is not diminishing.

That’s why community support for the food bank, Meals on Wheels and nonprofits that work to fill this vital need is so important.

The need may not be visible, likely glossed over by Marin’s popular image as a land of “haves,” higher-income earners and top-priced real estate. But there are many who struggle in our communities. Their need is real and they need our help.



Jack Waldvogel accepts a bag of food from Meals on Wheels program manager Erika Vaughn as Mill Valley Mayor McCauley looks on in Mill Valley on Wednesday, March 23, 2022. McCauley was among mayors from around Marin who joined Vivalon for a day delivering meals to seniors. (Sherry LaVars/Marin Independent Journal)

Photo and caption obtained from the same editorial piece that ran online in the Marin IJ on Oct. 5, 2022.