



# SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

After a long season apart, we were thrilled to gather and reconnect with our **South County Outreach** community at the annual Empty Bowls fundraising event in April. Our first in-person event in over two years was more than an evening of celebration and raising funds to feed and house our neighbors in crisis. It was an opportunity to extend a heartfelt thank you to our supporters for showing up for SCO and the clients we serve during a time of unprecedented need.

This event, and our ability to deliver uninterrupted critical services throughout the pandemic, would not have been possible without the generosity of our many donors, sponsors, and hardworking volunteers. Thankful does not even begin to express how fortunate we are to have the support of longtime donors, as well as first-time event sponsors such as Experian, whose impactful matching gift amplified giving during the **Empty Bowls** fund-a-need.

While many of us have made strides in adjusting to a "new normal," at SCO we are reminded daily that thousands of Orange County residents continue to face food and housing insecurity. The requests for our services remain above pre-pandemic levels, hovering around a **34 percent increase**. Funds raised at this year's Empty Bowls will help us meet this need, but we anticipate it to climb yet again in the coming months.

As summer approaches, we are preparing for an annual surge in market client requests. When schools close, many families experience a food shortage due to children being at home all day without access to free or reduced school lunches. For our clients whose children rely on those meals as a primary source of nutrition, summer break isn't a time for rest, relaxation and fun-filled activities with friends. Children are filled with worry and anxiety over where their next meal will come from. Many parents will go without, so their children do not have to.

Households need more food during the summer. **One in five children** in Orange County do not have enough food to eat, but with your continued generosity, we can fill our market with fresh produce, lean protein, and kitchen staples like eggs, butter, and milk. Together, we can ensure that no child, adult or senior goes to bed hungry.

If you are interested in helping us put food on the table for every child in South County this summer, please donate by visiting [www.sco-oc.org/donate](http://www.sco-oc.org/donate).

Best Regards,

LaVal Brewer

President & Chief Executive Officer



## EMPTY BOWLS RAISES \$179,000

### Thank you for helping to end hunger and house hope at SCO's signature fundraising event!

At the [Segerstrom Shelby Event Center](#) in Irvine, more than 220 individuals came together at Empty Bowls to raise an incredible \$179,000 for [South County Outreach's](#) programs that feed and house thousands in need.

Guests sipped wine and savored soup at the signature fundraiser, which took place Thursday, April 7, 2022 at one of Orange County's newest event venues next door to our food market and warehouse. For over three decades, SCO has helped raise awareness of hunger and homelessness in Orange County, with the annual Empty Bowls becoming a beloved event within the community.

Renowned chefs and restaurants from across [Orange County](#) stepped out of their kitchens to cook for a cause. They surprised and delighted attendees with mouthwatering soup and food tastings that paired well with a selection of premium wine poured throughout the evening. In addition to live entertainment, guests had an opportunity to meet volunteers and hear from those positively impacted by SCO's programs.

They also received a thoughtful parting gift: a handmade ceramic bowl crafted by a local student or community member. A signature element of the event, the bowl represents the many residents across the county who are experiencing hunger. It also provides a lasting reminder for guests that by attending the [Empty Bowls](#) event, they are helping to fill the empty bowls of their Orange County neighbors.

SCO is grateful for the generous support of Empty Bowls sponsors, including:

#### Celebrity Chef Sponsors

Abound Food Care

#### Iron Chef Sponsors

Banc of California | Sacred Harvest

#### Top Chef Sponsors

Capital Group | Experian | Ralph's

Edward (Ted) Quinn, President, Technology Resources

#### Sous Chef Extraordinaire Sponsors

The Bowen Team | Deloitte | Farmers & Merchants Bank

In-N-Out Burger | Kitchen Table Marketing + PR

Quadrant Law Group, LLP

South County Outreach Board Member

Stifel | Sysco | Tilly's Life Center

#### Underwriter Sponsors

Traveling Foodie (Valet Underwriter) - Jerre & Dennis Williams

Food Stylist (Photography Underwriter) - Mike Thompson

#### Chefs & Restaurants

Bracken's Kitchen | FKN Bread

Taylor Made Cuisine | Trevor's at the Tracks

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## Kathy Faith

With a niece impacted by financial insecurity, Kathy Faith feels a personal connection to the **South County Outreach** mission. Kathy decided to join a friend for a SCO fill-the-trunk food event, where she met a few members of the team during donation pick-up and learned more about our work in the community. It was the start of an incredible volunteer journey that has impacted hundreds of SCO clients.

Every Friday for the last two years, Kathy has volunteered in the market to distribute fruits and vegetables. As she was driving home to Fountain Valley one week, she began to notice all the trees in her neighborhood bearing more fruit than any family could ever consume. That evening, she posted on her community's Facebook page, asking her neighbors to share their harvest.

Now, in addition to her volunteer shift, Kathy visits several homes in her community two to three times a week during fruit season to bring fresh oranges, tangerines and lemons to the SCO market. In total, she has harvested approximately **3,000 pounds** of fruit to support local residents.

**“Because I was one of the volunteers in charge of the fruit, I know firsthand what it felt like to not have enough to pass out,” she says. “I hope my story will raise awareness for fruit donations and inspire others to do the same.”**



## Gael Post

Before Gael Post even moved to Orange County, she was a South County Outreach volunteer. Nine years ago, during one of her frequent visits from Baltimore to California, she joined a good friend in the fulfillment center to help bagging food for families in need.

When SCO transitioned the food program to a market model, Gael was elated. As a psychotherapist, she is a natural helper who loves being able to directly interact and meet clients. She now helps distribute food in the refrigerator and freezer sections, where clients require assistance from a market volunteer in order to select items.

Since moving to Laguna Woods permanently, Gael has increased her volunteer service to once a week and remains deeply committed to the SCO mission.

“What do you do if you are a family and all of the sudden you lose your job? There are so many things that can happen that throw people off balance,” says Gael. **“That is what happens to a lot of people that SCO is working with. It shouldn't be about who you are, it should be about what you need.”**



For a list of all volunteer opportunities, please visit [www.sco-oc.org/get-involved/volunteer](http://www.sco-oc.org/get-involved/volunteer).



## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

---

For over a decade, SCO has welcomed volunteers from **Experian** to its market facility and warehouse, where teams as large as 40 people helped to box food, sort inventory and help clients pack their cars with groceries. Experian also hosts frequent food drives for SCO that are entirely employee-run, with team members reaching out to their own networks and collecting items from within their community.

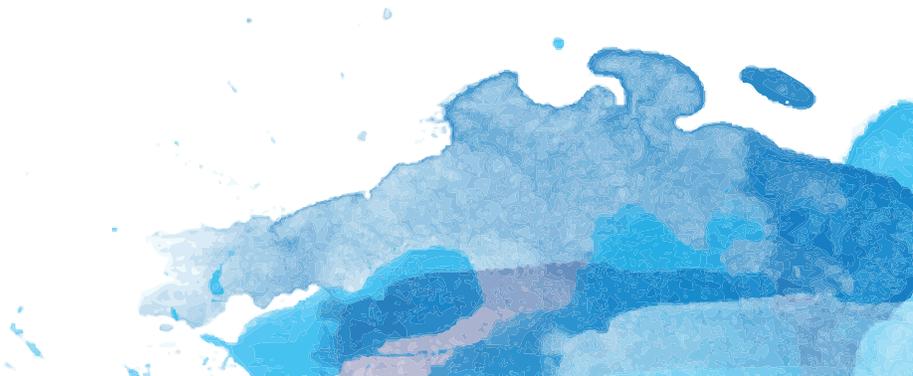
**“We work with organizations of all sizes — organizations like SCO offer a more personal and local touch because SCO’s work is so specifically targeted,”** says Elizabeth Pianalto, Corporate Responsibility Manager at Experian.

This year, Experian has gone above and beyond with a new pledge: a **\$20,000 matching gift** offered at SCO’s signature fundraising event on April 7. For every dollar raised during the fund-a-need at Empty Bowls, Experian made a matching donation up to \$20,000. As a first-time sponsor of **Empty Bowls**, Experian wanted to find a way to make the biggest possible impact. With no in-person volunteering over the last two years, this was a meaningful way for the company to support an organization whose mission resonates strongly with Experian employees.

Outside the event sponsorship, other generous contributions include volunteer matching. Through this program, the company donates **\$25 for every hour** an employee volunteers with an organization, providing employees 16 hours per year of paid volunteer time each year.

**“Volunteerism is a huge part of our culture,”** says Elizabeth. **“Although difficult to maintain during the pandemic, Experian has tried hard to make sure that employees feel empowered to serve at organizations that they are passionate about. We are very excited to be able to be volunteering in-person again now that things are opening up again!”**

To make a donation or partner with SCO, please visit [www.sco-oc.org/donate](http://www.sco-oc.org/donate).





## CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

With a friendly smile for everyone and a heart for helping others, **Caryn** had always been involved in her community. After recently leaving the workforce after 20+ years, she was looking forward to enjoying a quiet retirement.

But often, the unexpected can happen and alter lives in unimaginable ways. Caryn found herself in a position many people faced during the beginning of the pandemic. With no job and now on a fixed income, her home was repossessed and she was having a hard time making ends meet. She turned to her church in her time of need, and was referred to **South County Outreach**.

The experience of hunger is unique to each SCO client. **Caryn** remembers feeling too prideful to accept help, and even admits she did not want to come into her appointment with the SCO team. When she arrived to speak with a case manager, she broke down into tears and cried through the whole meeting. But Caryn says she was comforted by the presence of her case manager, who sat patiently with her and let her take all the time she needed.

What **Caryn** appreciates the most about SCO is how the team takes the time to meet clients where they are at, without judgment. The compassion, understanding and dignity she was shown at SCO gave her a new perspective on how she can best help others when they are down. One day, she hopes to create the same positive experience for those who find themselves in her position.

**"It's always somebody's turn — good or bad,"** she says. Realizing that hunger and homelessness can happen to anyone at any time makes her especially grateful for the help she found with South County Outreach.

You can help make a difference in the lives of SCO clients like Caryn. Visit [www.sco-oc.org/donate](http://www.sco-oc.org/donate) to learn more.

# INTRODUCING SCO'S NEW WAREHOUSE

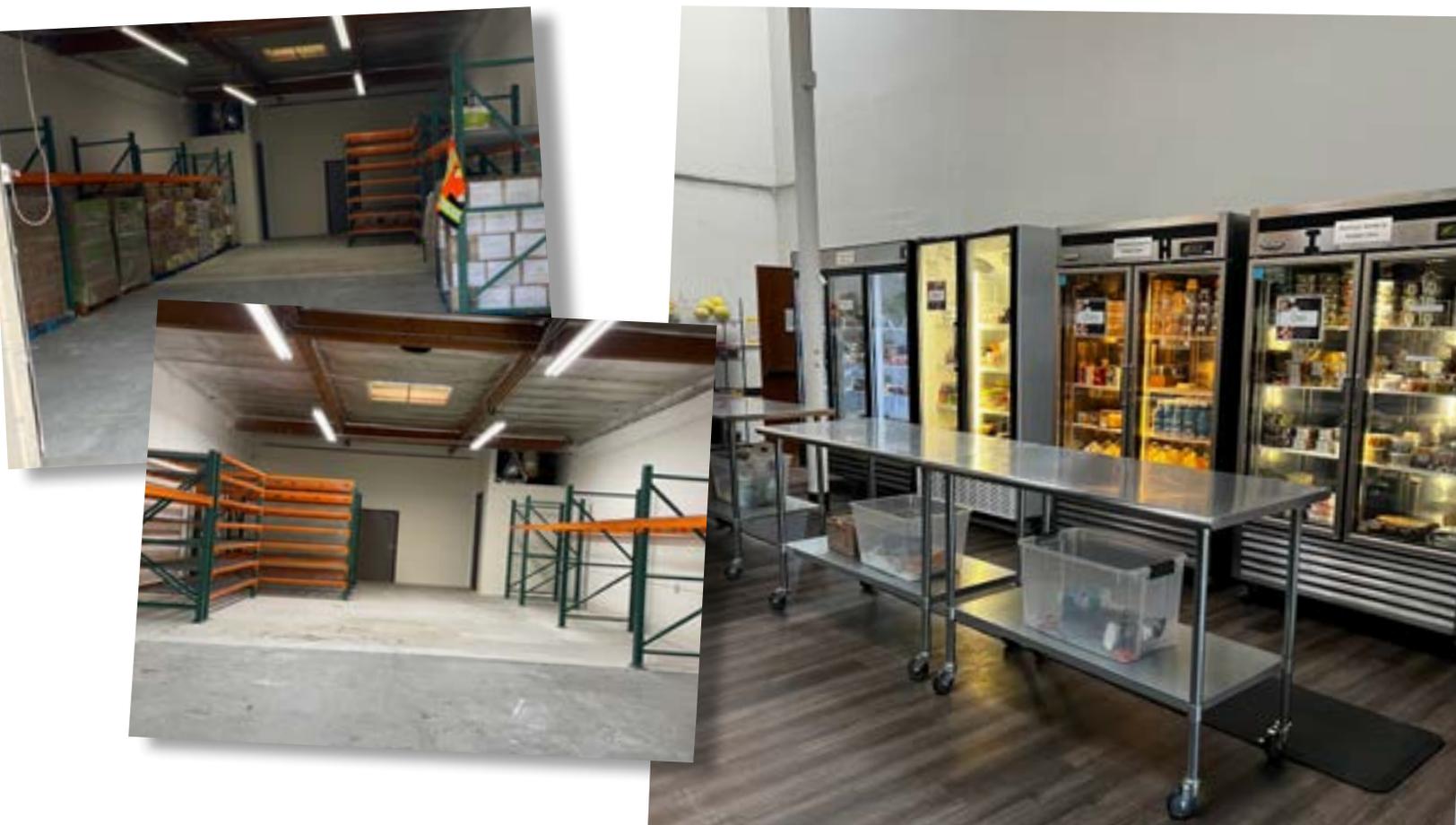
With a new food market model, **SCO** is offering a modern, dignified experience that focuses on client choice. The in-person grocery store experience allows clients to select non-perishable and fresh foods based on their household's particular needs and preferences.

To best meet the needs of clients, we want to ensure our families have regular access to nutrient-rich food that sustains them during their time of need. Our current facility at 7 Whatney, Suite B, houses 11 commercial-grade refrigerator and freezer units, allowing us to accept between **50,000 to 125,000** pounds of food in a month.

Yet, limited cold storage and shelf-stable storage capacities has proved to be a constant barrier to service. As the pandemic created a dramatic increase in food insecurity among Orange County residents, the need for additional space became apparent. With the facility at **7 Whatney** already at capacity, SCO began looking for alternative options.

In early 2022, we procured a **1,600-square-foot offsite warehouse**, which not only accommodates more food donations from the community but also allows us to increase our focus on partnerships with grocery rescue programs. The **new space** provides ample room for additional temperature-controlled storage, growing our capacity to accept meat, dairy and produce along with shelf-stable items. As a result, we've also shifted the current layout of the market to enhance operations, create a more pleasant shopping experience and bring in more volunteer groups who want to help feed our community.

For more information on donating food items or hosting a food drive, please visit [www.sco-oc.org/get-involved/feed-our-community](http://www.sco-oc.org/get-involved/feed-our-community).





# R.I.S.E. PROGRAM

---

The whole is greater than the sum of the parts — as humans, we are complex individuals, each with a unique set of needs to feel happy, healthy and sustained. Recognizing the many dimensions of human nature, South County Outreach has a new focus on whole-person wellness when our neighbors reach out for help.

As part of this effort, we are excited to rebrand our homeless prevention services as the new **R.I.S.E. Program**. The **R.I.S.E. Program** aims to end homelessness by providing short- and medium-term financial intervention services, as well as case management to better prepare households for self-sufficiency.

**Representing the many impactful services offered by SCO, R.I.S.E. stands for  
Resources, Intervention, Sustainability and Education.**

A full-time minimum-wage worker makes less than **\$25,000** a year, and the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Orange County is nearly **\$2,400** a month, or over **\$28,000** annually. One setback could have devastating consequences for our neighbors living under these circumstances, be it a missed rental payment or disconnection of vital utilities.

But with the **R.I.S.E. Program**, we are helping South County individuals, families and seniors prevent a sudden financial obstacle from becoming a long-term financial crisis. Designed to help clients who are behind in paying the current month's rent and need immediate support to avoid an eviction, the **R.I.S.E. Program** provides one-time, emergency rental relief for qualified applicants. In addition to support in the form of payment to landlords and utility providers, SCO can help clients navigate the often-confusing process of settling rental arrears and qualifying for other rental assistance programs.

With thoughtful case management and education to ensure clients understand every step of the process, the **R.I.S.E. Program** helps people from falling into homelessness and strengthens SCO's vision of an Orange County community where no one goes to bed hungry or without a place to call home.

To make a donation to support the new R.I.S.E. Program, please visit [www.sco-oc.org/donate](http://www.sco-oc.org/donate).

# south county outreach



## South County Outreach

7 Whatney, Suite B, Irvine, CA 92618  
www.sco-oc.org | 949.380.8144

### Food Market

7 Whatney, Suite B, Irvine, CA 92618  
Phone: 949.380.8144, ext. 207

### Hours:

Monday-Thursday 9am to 2pm | Friday 9am to 11am

### Upscale Resale Thrift Store

23461 Ridge Route #D, Laguna Hills, CA 92653  
Phone: 949.855.4158

### Hours:

Monday-Friday 11am-5pm | Saturday 10am-4pm | Sunday 10am-3pm

---

### Social Media

-  South County Outreach (@outreachoc)
-  South County Outreach (@outreachoc)
-  South County Outreach (@outreachoc)
-  South County Outreach
-  South County Outreach