

# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

YOUR NEWSLETTER FROM SOUTH COUNTY OUTREACH

SUMMER 2025

Thank you  
for continuing  
to stand with us and  
making an impact.

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Brighter Futures

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Five Years Forward

300+

local partnerships to  
amplify resources  
& reach

## A Mother's Fight, A Family's Strength, and the Support That Held Them Together

When Ofelia was diagnosed with stage four cancer, everything changed for her family. It was her second time facing the disease—but this time, the prognosis was worse. Doctors gave her one year to live. The emotional and financial toll weighed heavily, especially on her youngest daughter, who struggled to cope with the fear of losing her mom.

"I just wanted to live," Ofelia shared through tears. "For my husband, for my daughters. I begged the doctors to keep trying."

Overwhelmed by medical bills and unable to work, Ofelia reached out for help through 2-1-1. That call led her to South County Outreach—and the lifeline her family desperately needed.

Thanks to a transformational gift from the **Samueli Foundation**, South County Outreach has expanded its reach to support more families like Ofelia's—those at risk of losing their housing due to crisis. This investment from the Samueli Foundation is helping build a stronger safety net across Orange County, funding emergency rental assistance, case management, and wraparound services that prevent homelessness before it begins.

With this support, South County Outreach helped Ofelia's family avoid eviction through timely rental assistance. The stability of staying in their home gave them the space to focus on health and healing.

But the support didn't end there.

South County Outreach's compassionate case worker became a steady presence in Ofelia's families' lives. She connected them to food resources, counseling, and holiday support—and checked in regularly, offering a reassuring voice during the hardest days.

"She gave us more than support—she gave us a voice and a plan," says Ofelia's daughter, Victoria. "She's like a guardian angel."







## A Letter from LaVal

Dear Friends,

Summer can be one of the toughest times for people facing hunger and housing instability—but thanks to your continued support, South County Outreach is here to help. Whether it's a parent struggling to keep food on the table, a senior facing eviction, or a young adult stepping into independence, your generosity gives our neighbors the stability and hope they need to move forward.

In this newsletter, you'll see the real impact of your compassion—from the power of choice in our food pantry to the transformative change we've made together over the last five years.

Thank you for standing with us. Your support changes lives.

With gratitude,

*LaVal Brewer*

LaVal Brewer  
President & CEO  
South County Outreach

*P.S. your gift will be matched and doubled in value to help feed even more!*

## The Power of Choice, The Gift of Hope: A Story from Empty Bowls

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, this year's **Empty Bowls** event in April was a tremendous success—raising vital funds to fight hunger and prevent homelessness in our community. The evening was filled with warmth, compassion, and stories that showed the real impact of your support.

Stories like that of Travis and Elmira.

Travis, a U.S. veteran, and Elmira, a jewelry artist, found themselves struggling with rising costs and unpredictable income. Buying groceries became a bill they simply couldn't afford. They made the tough decision to move into a trailer and live between state parks to stretch their budget. That's when they were referred to South County Outreach.

"It felt more like a local market than a handout," Travis shared. "We felt less alone."

With access to fresh produce and shelf-stable items—including vegan options Elmira relies on—life began to stabilize. "We're eating better now than we were before," she said. "Client choice means we only take what we'll actually use—and that keeps us healthy."

Now, with Travis working at UPS and Elmira growing her business at major festivals, they're moving forward with hope and purpose.

"This program helped us get through it," Travis said. "It's a positive domino effect."



## Heartfelt Thanks from Those You've Helped



Love this place.

You can feel their love and compassion for others.



Very helpful, staff are all wonderful and respectful.

And most of all you are helping a lot of people in need. Bless all your hearts.



Everyone is amazing...

They are super kind and that is way more important than anything. We go through hard times, we are so fragile, some souls are broken, financially struggling. So, a kind word, a kind smile makes our day. Everyone is amazing. Thank you so much.

## Client Connections



*Thanks to your support, volunteers like Nancy are building meaningful connections with every smile, story, and shared moment at the South County Outreach food pantry.*

### How did you come to South County Outreach?

After I retired from teaching in 2010, my friends from church invited me to volunteer at South County Outreach—and I've been showing up every Monday since.

### How do you help people through South County Outreach?

I help clients choose their groceries with dignity, walking through the aisles like any store. We offer fresh produce, meat, and kind conversation.

### How has South County Outreach changed your life?

This place has changed me. In a noisy world, SCO is where I see compassion in action—volunteers and clients creating something sacred together.

One dad once said it felt like "heaven" to pick out food his kids would actually eat. That moment reminded me: kindness, dignity, and shared humanity truly matter.

### Did you know that . . .

**\$125**

fills the fridge  
a week for a senior



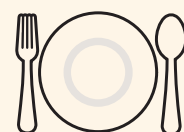
**\$250**

fills the fridge a few  
weeks in the summer



**\$375**

covers a senior's  
summer food gap







## Fueled by You: Five Years of Transformational Change

Since 2020, South County Outreach has undergone an inspiring transformation—emerging as a stronger, smarter, and more resilient force for good in Orange County. Guided by purpose and powered by innovation, we’ve expanded our team, modernized our operations, and adopted new tools like heat mapping to reach more families in crisis. Our volunteer program now mobilizes over 200 caring individuals each week, while our financial foundation is the strongest it’s ever been—debt-free, with growing reserves and an endowment that ensures sustainability for years to come.

We’ve built strategic partnerships with over 300 schools, businesses, foundations, and faith communities to amplify our impact—and together, we are creating real, lasting change. Inside our walls, low staff and volunteer turnover and high satisfaction reflect the heart of our work: a culture rooted in compassion, excellence, and community.

Thanks to your support, we’ve come this far. And with your continued involvement, we can go even further. Stay connected. Stay inspired. Help us keep building a brighter future—one family at a time.

Read more about our 5 years of impact at  
[www.sco-oc.org/five-year-impact](http://www.sco-oc.org/five-year-impact)

## ... the Support That Held Them Together

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Victoria stepped into the role of full-time caregiver for her mom, and with SCO’s help, found programs and resources to navigate the emotional and financial challenges that came with it. With stable housing and a network of support in place, the family could focus on what mattered most—Ofelia’s care and time together.

Today, Ofelia is responding well to treatment, and her outlook is much brighter. She’s hopeful about returning to work, traveling, and watching her daughters grow. Her daughter, also dreaming of travel, hopes to study animation.

“South County Outreach gave us hope,” she says. “When everything felt like it was falling apart, they helped hold us together.”

Through the power of compassion, connection, and the Samueli Foundation’s commitment to preventing homelessness, South County Outreach helped this family move from crisis to stability—empowering them to face the future with strength and hope.

## HOPE365

Did you know each month thousands of our neighbors rely on us to provide the food and other housing essentials to survive? Won’t you help them and us today by joining our monthly recurring program called **HOPE365**? This is a group of special friends who commit to a monthly recurring gift of just \$10, \$15, \$20, \$25 or more! Any amount will help feed hungry people each day, week and month!

Become a member today of the **HOPE365** monthly giving community to help feed hungry men, women, children and our aging neighbors in need who might otherwise go hungry!

Thank you for your compassionate consideration and see the back of the credit card reply slip area to join today!