

## East Palo Alto Rotarians Fighting Hunger

Photos & story by Katie Cooney (Area 9 Assistant Governor)

Ten to eighteen volunteers descend upon the East Palo Alto Senior Center every other Thursday morning. Loading boxes of fruits and vegetables onto hand trucks, volunteers steer them back to a recreational room turned make-shift warehouse. There bananas, cereal, granola bars, milk and tomatoes are sorted, repackaged, and readied to be handed out or delivered to the hungry.

Center Director Millicent Grant and daughter Bridget Grant orchestrate the symphony of food donations and volunteers each week. Both women are East Palo Alto Rotarians. Bridget president of the East Palo Alto Rotary Club.

COVID19 forced Millicent to shutter the center but did little to dissuade her passion to serve. Focused on seniors for over twenty years, Director Grant kept the free food program alive. Recalibrating, she expanded the food program beyond seniors and today “children, homeless, families, those in shelters and people outside the community in Menlo Park and beyond” receive donated food. With donations from Second Harvest, Facebook, Four Seasons Hotel, LinkedIn, Food Runners and Van’s restaurant of Belmont they have served over 11,400 men, women, and children in the past three and a half months. Over 200 + deliveries each month to the hungry.

“Some families have fourteen family members to feed,” said Director Grant. People reached out to Grant when the lockdown began, they had no food in the house. The Grants quickly responded and began delivering more food than ever before. Grant has mothers lining up at 4:30pm to get food to feed their children on their way home from work.

President Bridget Grant recruits Rotarians in Area 9 to assist in the heavy lifting of sorting and packing food and soliciting for donations. During the week, she visits Second Harvest’s hub to collect additional food items to supplement weekly donations. Their delivery van recently died, and they need a new van for food deliveries. Contact Bridget Grant if you can help.

“Seniors are last on the list. Rotary has always been there, every Christmas, always making sure seniors get a ham, turkey or chicken,” stated Director Grant.

What’s next for these Rotarians? Travel size toiletries, adult diapers – Depends, tissue and toilet paper and basic hygiene items are now being collected to distribute. Drop off donations at the East Palo Alto Senior Center at 560 Bell St, East Palo Alto, CA 94303.

Millicent and Bridget Grant are the embodiment of Rotary International’s “Service Above Self” credo.



Club President: Bridget Grant

