

MountainView VOICE



CSA helps
those in
need | P.5

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MICHELLE LE

Surrounded by stuffed animals, games, books and pajamas, CSA volunteer Ineke Ligtenberg sorts out the donated gifts for the holiday sharing program.

CSA covers 'the basic needs'

COMMUNITY SERVICES AGENCY IS A LONGTIME
RECIPIENT OF THE VOICE HOLIDAY FUND

By Kelsey Mesher

Mountain View resident Eric Ross is all smiles as he greets a familiar volunteer at the Community Services Agency and begins selecting items from the organization's Food and Nutrition Center.

The people who work in the food pantry are like "saints without wings," he says.

Ross, who had been waiting patiently in line Tuesday outside CSA's building at 204 Stierlin

Road, says he has been using the organization's services for about five months. He is among



a recent surge of new clientele at CSA, many of them victims of the economy and all of them residents of Mountain View, Los Altos and

Los Altos Hills.

This year, CSA is again among the recipients of the Holiday Fund, which takes donations from *Voice* readers and doubles them through matching grants from local foundations.

"We are the beneficiaries of a very generous community," said Tom Myers, executive director of CSA, which in addition to running a food pantry also provides other support services such as rent

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CSA

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assistance and case management for the poor, homeless and seniors.

“My biggest concern is not necessarily donations at this point,” Myers said. “We have huge numbers of people coming in for services.”

Since 2007, CSA has seen a 23 percent increase in its Food and Nutrition client count and a 31 percent increase in its senior program clientele. Their Alpha Omega program, which serves the homeless, has risen 28 percent in the last year alone.

“Since I’ve been here, this is definitely the deepest” recession, said Maureen Wadiak, associate

View for three years, working as a carpet installer and marble specialist. Though he works part time and can afford his rent, he said right now he relies heavily on the food he gets from CSA’s pantry.

“This is a big help because food costs a lot nowadays,” he said.

Larry Marcuson said he and his wife have been using CSA’s services off and on for 10 years — most recently for the past three months. He worked for 27 years as a cook, but could not longer work, aside from a few odd jobs, after his asthma flared up. Though his wife works part time, “Our income is so low we wouldn’t be able to eat,” he said.

“The basic needs are the ones that are getting called into ques-

Since 2007, CSA has seen a 23 percent increase in its Food and Nutrition client count and a 31 percent increase in its senior program clientele.

director, who has been with the organization for 12 years. After the dot-com crash and 9/11, she said, “within five or six months people were getting jobs back, and it’s not happening right now.”

Wadiak said the people they serve are often families whose parents have been laid off and gone through all their savings. Some have been couch surfing, or living in their cars. Others are clients who CSA helped several years back, and were doing fine on their own until the economy went sour.

Ross has lived in Mountain

tion more than ever these days,” said Jim Boin, CSA’s development director. The holiday season is the busiest for CSA — so busy, Myers said, that the staff decided a few years ago to hold its annual holiday party in February.

“It’s too early to tell what the year-end campaign will be,” Boin said, speaking to whether or not the donations coming in will match the increased need for services. Despite the bad economy, donations are “looking strong,” he said. Those from the Holiday Fund will add to their year-end push. ■