

# Home *for the* Holidays

m a g a z i n e

November/December 2009



## Christmas in our town

Los Altos participates in  
holiday homes tour

## Thanksgiving leftovers

Tossing that  
turkey? Not so fast!

## VOLUNTEERS

# 'Tis the season to give, of yourself

By **Jana Seshadri**  
Town Crier Staff Writer

**H**owever satisfying gift giving may be, the joy can increase tenfold when we give a little of ourselves – our time and our energy – during the holiday season.

If you're looking for places to volunteer in the upcoming weeks, there are several organizations in and around Los Altos that eagerly await your help.

### Community Services Agency

"The neediest in our community feel the worst during the holidays," said Tom Myers, executive director of the Community Services Agency (CSA), which serves Los Altos, Los Altos Hills and Mountain View.

Preparing for the holiday season involves the CSA staff and volunteers working longer and harder to ensure the Holiday Sharing and Food Pantry programs run smoothly to service the needy in the area.

Although the Food Pantry operates all year long, it gets busier before and during the holidays, when the need is

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**Seema Bhardwaj has been volunteering eight to 10 hours each week at the CSA Food Pantry since July.**

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greater, Myers said.

Eligible families are entitled to one food bag in November and one in December, according to Alison Hopkins, director of volunteers at CSA. And it takes many hands and a lot of time to assemble the food bags.

Volunteers – who can sign up for specific shifts all week long – receive the donations, sort them, shelve them, put the food bags together and distribute them to the families. Special items like flour, sugar, oil, spices, frozen turkey, chicken and ham are all available during the holidays, Hopkins said.

Seema Bhardwaj has been volunteering eight to 10 hours each week at the CSA Food Pantry since July. What began as a call to help people has turned into a "motivating and exciting" weekly ritual for her, prompting her to do something more, she said.

"I organized a food drive in my neighborhood and the response was unbelievable," Bhardwaj said. "I was able to collect 100 pounds of food in two weeks for CSA."

families come in to CSA, volunteers help them choose toys for their children. Extra volunteers – up to 10 per shift – will be needed for the toy program, Hopkins said.

For more information, visit [www.csacares.org](http://www.csacares.org).



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**Mountain View resident Oscar Diaz reaps the benefits of produce donated to the Community Services Agency Food Pantry.**

CSA's Holiday Toy Sharing program begins Dec. 1 and serves more than 1,000 children during the holiday season.

Volunteers sort and shelve toys that are donated to CSA at toy drives held in schools and businesses. When