

# San Jose Mercury News

## Applied Materials Foundation gives \$1 million for emergency assistance to needy in South Bay

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**A**fter he was laid off from a factory job in Mountain View, James Lester said he "was frantic." No job. No money to buy food or pay for rent in a shared house.

But with the help of the Community Services of Mountain View and Los Altos, Lester, 39, got emergency rental assistance.

"Honestly, I don't know what I would have done," he said recently, after picking up a bag of groceries from the center's [food bank](#). "I wasn't going to make rent. I could have been on the streets."

Today at a news conference, officials will announce a new safety net, called the Urgent Community Response Fund, which received a one-time grant of \$1 million from [Applied Materials](#) Foundation.

Tens of thousands of working poor — finding themselves in precipitous economic circumstances — will benefit from the new fund, which will be distributed through [the United Way](#) and other social service agencies that help the needy with food, shelter, prescription medication and transportation.

"We know the need is pretty acute," said Carole Leigh Hutton, United Way's president and CEO. "These funds will make an extraordinary difference for people who used to have a paycheck but are finding themselves not self-sufficient anymore."

The United Way estimated that as many as 56,000 will be helped by funds donated by Applied Materials Foundation.

The combined decline in donations to organizations that help the poor, cuts resulting from a smaller state budget and the continuing surge of people needing services have stressed charitable organizations during this recession.



July 17, 2009. At left, Akila Kadambi, a volunteer at the Community Services Agency helps pack groceries for James Lester, a Mountain View resident who received free groceries from the Food and Nutrition Center, at the Community Services Agency in Mountain View. (LiPo Ching/Mercury News) (LiPo Ching)

A year ago, [Catholic Charities](#) of Santa Clara County in San Jose received about nine phone calls a day, inquiring about emergency rental assistance. Today, those calls have more than doubled. At CSA in Mountain View, the number of homeless picking up brown bags of food for the day have more than doubled, too. And the lines to the daily food pantry that Lester uses are often more than a block long.

"The fact that the (charitable) sector itself is under stress" convinced Applied Materials Foundation to give the \$1 million, said Joseph M. Pon, vice president for corporate affairs.

"As a company, we respond well to local needs," Pon said. "This is to remind people that engagement is still possible."

The need for emergency assistance is great and some may characterize [Applied Material's](#) \$1 million gift as a drop in the bucket, said Greg Kepferle, CEO of Catholic Charities.

"It's a drop," he said, "but it's an essential drop. It is absolutely critical."

Kepferle said he hopes that the Applied Materials gift might inspire other corporations to give.

Officials are also setting aside money to help nonprofit groups hit hard by the recession. The David and [Lucile Packard Foundation](#) announced a \$530,000 "effectiveness" grant to help struggling nonprofits with restructuring, consolidations or mergers. An informational meeting for nonprofit groups will be held in mid-August at United Way Silicon Valley in San Jose.

A recent survey by the Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits shows that 59 percent of all charitable groups are dealing with cash-flow problems, 24 percent are downsizing, and 19 percent are looking at mergers or collaborations.

"In these tough times, it's imperative to step back," Hutton said, "and take a look at how we're doing business."

At Mountain View's CSA recently, LaDrea Clark counted the number of shelves for the brown bags of food distributed to homeless. Two shelves of about 40 bags used to be enough for one day. It is easily double these days, she said.

Clark, a nutrition assistant at CSA's food pantry, said she was grateful for the new grant from Applied Materials.



July 17, 2009. Nutrition and Health Education Assistant LaDrea Clark restocks the fresh produce at the Food and Nutrition Center, in the Community Services Agency in Mountain View. (LiPo Ching/Mercury News) ( LiPo Ching )