MEND matters

With dignity and respect, MEND’s mission is to meet the immediate needs of individuals and families and increase their access to opportunities that strengthen their capacity to thrive.

FIFTY YEARS OF COMPASSION IN ACTION – THE LEGACY YOU MAKE POSSIBLE

ONE COULDN’T SIT FOR HOURS getting lost in the stories of Ed and Carolyn Rose and how MEND first came to be... stories filled with so many different people and places; of seeing a need and doing something about it.

As we celebrate MEND’s 50 years in this community, we reflect on how a young thirty-something couple and several generous families came to found such a consequential organization and movement in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles.

Carolyn Rose shares: “It was so many people (who started MEND). … We all had a dream that we could do more. We never dreamed we would be where we are today.”

MEND was born out of the love and work of caring neighbors and friends, many of whom were members of Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church and other Valley congregations. They all shared a common purpose – to lessen the suffering of poor and vulnerable families. They collected and stored the most needed items – food, clothing & furniture – in three family garages. And through a growing network of churches, schools, neighbors, and friends, they connected with families in need and quickly mobilized to get them what they needed.

“We did not start with the intention of creating a non-profit organization”, the Rose’s share, “We were all volunteers. We survived on whatever people donated.”

The remarkable group of friends and neighbors settled on a mission very early on – to meet each need with dignity – and this has driven the work that you have supported through the years.

Ed adds: “We meet people at such a difficult point in their lives and if we don’t have their dignity in mind, we’re not doing our job.”

He recalls the story of one family from the early years of MEND.

continued inside
FROM STRUGGLING TO RESILIENT

You have done incredible things for the most vulnerable because you have continued to believe in the work that we do. Together, we are at a new place—moving from struggling to greater resilience. In no small measure, the families we serve are among thousands of San Fernando Valley families that relied on MEND for food assistance in 2020. After she lost her house-cleaning job, she shared that she had packed it and sent it to her mother. ‘My mother never had anything new in her life,’ she said.” Ed was quiet for a while. Then he recollects: “The kids were so happy, they brought out their toys and clothes, and showed me what they got. Their mother kept bringing up a sweater she received—she called it a beautiful pink sweater… Finally, I asked her if I could see it, since she was so happy with it. It is then that she shared that she had packed it and sent it to her mother. ‘My mother never had anything new in her life,’ she said.” Ed was quiet for a while.

The family stayed on his mind throughout the holidays. After Christmas, Ed dropped by again.

He recalls: “The kids were so happy, they brought out their toys and clothes, and showed me what they got. Their mother kept bringing up a sweater she received—she called it a beautiful pink sweater… Finally, I asked her if I could see it, since she was so happy with it. It is then that she shared that she had packed it and sent it to her mother. ‘My mother never had anything new in her life,’ she said.” Ed was quiet for a while.

The fledgling group’s mission attracted people from across the San Fernando Valley and beyond. This included two nuns, Sister Elizabeth Barber and Sister Sue Schneider, who helped “staff,” the first MEND service center. In addition to distributing food, they led classes in art, gardening, tutoring for children and English classes for adults.

While MEND has evolved through the decades, what has never changed is the heart that so many kind and giving people like you have brought to intervene with care and compassion in the lives of hurting people. 2020 certainly confirmed to MEND and our community that it is blessed with incredibly generous people, willing to give of themselves in times of great need.

Ed, Carolyn, and their friends and neighbors saw a great need back in 1971, and knew that they could not do it alone, just as today we know we cannot do it without you. And all of our efforts, ultimately, are for families like the one Ed recalls fondly from the early years. Their story provides a glimpse into the lives of the individuals and families MEND has served through the years and continue to serve today; families that are truly grateful for the help you give and, are often ready to share the little they have with others.

We are deeply grateful for the legacy that you have enabled, and for the 50 years of services that you have provided.

KARLA AND HER YOUNG FAMILY were among thousands of San Fernando Valley families that relied on MEND for food assistance in 2020. After she lost her house-cleaning job, she shared that for months she was afraid her family would be evicted or would lose their electricity. And even after our case staff assured her there were resources available to her and things she could do to minimize risk, her stress kept her up at night. She adds: “MEND’s help made me so thankful not to worry about food. I have no idea what I would have done if they did not exist. I am so grateful for MEND and the people who support MEND.”

She never has to worry about keeping her family fed thanks to the fresh produce and essentials that you make possible through your gifts.

HANNAH’S STORY

“If it wasn’t for MEND being there for us, I don’t even know what we would have done as kids. I still smile so brightly just thinking about the joy MEND sparked,” says Hannah.

Today, Hannah is a 32-year-old professional and supporter, but when she was just a child, she craved human connection. Her mom was often away from home and her family often had to spend the night in a garage. The family’s hard times lasted more than a decade and included bouts with homelessness. Life improved only after Hannah’s Mom got clean from drugs. But even during her worst years, Hannah remembers fondly the gifts, blankets, backpacks and wonderful food she received from MEND.

On behalf of all the children who grow up coming to MEND for food, holiday toys, back-to-school or other events; we are forever grateful for kind donors like you who bring joy to their lives.

KARLA’S STORY

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