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Hundreds of Meals Donated to Families of Casa Pacifica

Vince Pillard, owner of SLATE Bistro + Craft Bar in Camarillo teamed up with his bartender and owner of Sweetwater Outpost, Justyn Varvais to deliver more than 900 individual meals to Casa Pacifica families in need. Families from Casa Pacifica's Wraparound Program, Therapeutic Behavioral

Services (TBS), Foster Families Programs, and Nonpublic School all received meals. "We want to make sure that we're able to help others who are suffering if we're doing okay," said Pillard.

Pillard was one of many local business owners who found themselves scrambling to adjust in the face of COVID-19. "We've been pretty quick to adapt and be proactive," he said of the recent shift. Varvais started a "Community Meal Fund" on GoFundMe with the goal of raising \$2,500 to distribute meals to those in need, no questions asked. Casa Pacifica serves 500 children and families daily, most of whom are in the community.

Vince's staff, including Justyn and his mother, along with volunteers took routes to drop off the food. Don Harper, owner of Sessions at The Loft in Camarillo was among the volunteers. Casa Pacifica's Nonpublic School staff added the meals to their weekly deliveries of school work and supplies to the kids. The special deliveries were received by thankful families and their children, eager for the treat of restaurant meal.

At the end of the day, several meals were not delivered because of wrong addresses – worried about the families who didn't receive their anticipated meals, Vince and Carrie Hughes, Chief Development Officer at Casa Pacifica, tracked down the correct addresses and Vince delivered the meals himself. "I ended up at a house in Fillmore and rang the doorbell. The woman who answered was so grateful and as she turned to go back inside, a little girl ran out the door, hugged my legs, and said 'thank you,' – that was probably the best moment of all of this. If I can put a smile on someone's face, that's all that matters," said Vince.

One TBS family said, "Thank you so much for thinking of us and providing us with the resource. We are so grateful to Slate for being so generous during this time. There was so much food and we loved all of it." Another child's grandmother said she "really appreciated the meal and was touched that someone thought of her." There was such an abundance of food she was able to freeze some for another day. And yet another family was thankful just for the relief from coming home and not having to cook after a long day of work.

The children and families of Casa Pacifica are just some of the many struggling with financial, food, and job insecurity during this difficult time. Community members like Vince and Justyn, who give generously even during uncertain times, make us proud to call Ventura County home.

The **GoFundMe Community Meal Fund** is still live, to donate please visit <https://www.gofundme.com/ffrmwrm>



CASA PACIFICA CENTERS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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Photo provided by Casa Pacifica : Vince Pillard and Non-Public School volunteers.