

Nourishing Independence for Older Adults

When the USDA's Commodity Supplemental Food Program ended in late 2025, more than 100 older adults at five Community HousingWorks communities lost a reliable source of food.

Thanks to a grant from San Diego Foundation's San Diego Unity Fund, CHW has helped fill that gap throughout 2026 with grocery gift cards and shelf-stable foods—helping older adults stretch fixed incomes, access nutritious meals, and maintain independence.

More Than Food

At Alabama Manor, CHW's older adult community in North Park, Denise Collins is one of the residents participating in the program. Having additional food resources has helped her stretch her household budget, maintain a nutritious diet, and put money toward other necessities. "I am able to eat longer and more nutritional," Denise shared.

With grocery prices continuing to rise, Denise knows how quickly a trip to the store can add up. "Bring back home one bag and it's, yeah, \$80," she said. Having food assistance means she can redirect some of those dollars toward other household needs. "Some of that money that I would have to use that I could actually use for cleaning. You know, there's other avenues for things."

The program also helps ease practical challenges of grocery shopping as people age, including transportation, mobility, and carrying groceries. As Denise put it, "If you can't get here, if it is local, it's easier to get to." And when it comes to bringing groceries home, "Then you got to look at the weight of it."

For Denise, food is also closely connected to something she loves: cooking. She makes her own bread, experiments with sourdough, and enjoys preparing and sharing food with her children and grandchildren. For Denise, cooking and sharing are important parts of maintaining independence and connection.



"This program does help people, it's helped me."

**Denise Collins,
Alabama Manor
Resident**



A Blessing When Resources Are Limited

Denise isn't the only Alabama Manor resident who has felt the impact of the program. Her neighbor Ron began participating after his EBT benefits were significantly reduced: "My EBT was cut massively. It was cut to the bone."

The food distribution has helped provide a safety net as he adjusts to that change. "It's been very, very helpful to me," he shared. "It's good for the budget." Shelf-stable foods give Ron flexibility to incorporate food into different meals as needed. "You can go, 'Oh, I'll throw this on pasta,' or, 'I'll throw this in a soup or something like that.'"

Residents also share food they may not be able to use with neighbors who need it. "We're really good about sharing things here," Ron said.

"Because what's harder in life than feeling food deprived? Life is hard enough. [The food drive] has really been a blessing." Ron, Alabama Manor Resident

Building a Foundation for Well-Being

With the support of San Diego Unity Fund, CHW is addressing an immediate need while creating greater stability for more than 100 older adults. Through the end of 2026, CHW will continue providing grocery gift cards and shelf-stable foods while connecting residents with longer-term food resources and services.

We are deeply grateful to San Diego Foundation for helping older adults access nutritious food, stretch limited resources, and maintain independence.

Older Adult Program Impact



Community HousingWorks (CHW) provides wrap-around support to more than 800 adults ages 55+ across eight communities in Southern California. In 2026, CHW met or exceeded targeted outcomes for reducing isolation, strengthening social connections, increasing food security, improving access to resources, and supporting older adults' health and well-being. Findings are based on 71 surveys from five CHW communities.

IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

97% reported feeling less isolated

93% feel more connected to neighbors

97% say food services support their food security

89% say technology support removes barriers

92% say resources improve their overall well-being

Across all outcome areas, older adults reported increased social connection, improved food security, greater access to resources, and enhanced well-being. Resident feedback reinforced the value of community activities, food assistance, technology support, and resource navigation in helping older adults remain connected, supported, and independent.

SOCIAL CONNECTION

Community activities helped residents build friendships, strengthen relationships with neighbors, and feel a greater sense of belonging and community.
"I see my neighbors more often. It gives me more opportunities to interact with them. I like most of the activities."

FOOD SECURITY

Onsite pantry and food delivery services provided reliable access to food and household essentials while helping reduce financial strain and support household stability.
"Having an onsite pantry lessens my grocery bill."

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT

One-on-one technology assistance helped residents build confidence, overcome technology and language barriers, access online resources, and stay connected with family and friends.
"The support helps reduce my fear of learning new technology."

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Workshops, benefits counseling, resource referrals, and personalized support helped residents navigate services, stay informed, and maintain their health and overall well-being.
"The workshops and resources helped me stay active, informed, and improve my overall well-being."

