

Stories of Service: The Mercy Brown Bag Program In California



For over 40 years, the Mercy Brown Bag Program has provided fresh, free, healthy groceries to vulnerable older adults in California's Alameda County, home to 25,000 nutrition-insecure seniors. Last year, the program distributed 2.5 million pounds of food in more than 120,000 bags. Each bag of groceries, which includes lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, is the only source of food for most of the 8,200 low-income, older adults who receive bags twice a month. New in 2022 was an on-site store where recipients can select their own free food items, which supports their inherent dignity. In just over a year, the store has seen its number of monthly shoppers grow from 150 to over 2,000.

The program's 77 distribution points countywide also serve as places where seniors meet, build community and volunteer. Many of the 500 senior volunteers are program recipients themselves. Individuals who are served by the Mercy Brown Bag Program stay socially connected, have improved health, and experience financial relief, all of which help them to live independently and with dignity.

This article is part of a series about Mercy Fund for Ministry grant recipients and how their funded work lives out Mercy's Critical Concerns and Works of Mercy. The ministries provide food and services for older adults and meet people where they are in a spirit of community. For more information on Mercy Brown Bag Program, please visit their website - www.mercybrownbag.org



This article was first published in Mercy Now – the newsletter of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. For more information on the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, please visit their website <https://sistersofmercy.org>