



Guest Chef Returns
page 2



Fall Special Events
page 2-3



Santa Store
page 4



family matters

WINTER 2021

The Power of Social Connection

How Family Services helped Spanish-speaking survivors build a community.

Community can take many forms—family units, neighborhoods, or groups with shared interests. For a group of 15 women in Tulare County, it meant meeting each week to support each other in recovering from domestic violence while navigating the COVID-19 Pandemic. Over the past three years, members of

this group have walked each other through some of the hardest times in their lives. Together, they have built a special type of community. As Delia, a member of the group, put it, “It’s more than a support group. It has become my second family.”

Social isolation is a common consequence of domestic violence. Over time, abusers cut victims off from supportive friends and family members and bar them from social

settings like school, work, or church. This isolation keeps victims from accessing practical help with leaving the abusive relationship and leads to feelings of guilt, shame, being alone, and like something is wrong with them.

Social support plays a critical role in healing from violence. Research shows that support groups can lead to positive outcomes for survivors, including a decrease in the prevalence of depression, low self-esteem, and symptoms of

(Continued on page 3)



The Purple Party: a celebration of safety

Community members raised \$46,000 for shelter and support services for local domestic violence survivors.

In honor of Domestic Violence Awareness Month this October, Family Services hosted its seventh annual Purple Party. On October 1st, 150 guests gathered at Valley Strong Ballpark in Visalia to celebrate survivors and raise funds for our 33-bed emergency domestic violence shelter, Karen's House. The evening included a BBQ dinner catered by Dog House Grill, a silent auction, a photo booth, music, and social time. We raised \$46,000 for shelter and support services for adults and children impacted by domestic violence in Tulare County. We are especially grateful to our generous event sponsors, silent auction donors, volunteers, and guests who made this event successful.

Top sponsors of this annual event include: Brenden J. Farrell Mortgage Consultant of American Pacific Mortgage, the Law Office of Afreen A. Kaelble, and First 5 Tulare County. Their involvement was an integral part of making our event a success, and it goes a long way toward helping the families we serve. We are also grateful to everyone at Valley Strong Ballpark for their great service and for providing a safe, outdoor space to host this event.

Stay tuned for future events by following Family Services on social media, or sign up for our monthly e-newsletter at <https://fstc.net/news-events/>.

Guest Chef returning in June 2022

Save the date for Family Services' signature food and wine event.

Tulare County's premier wine and food tasting event, The Guest Chef Series, will be held on Saturday, June 11, 2022 in Visalia. This uniquely all-inclusive event allows guests to enjoy a one-of-a-kind cooking demonstration with the Guest Chef, including delicious tastings and recipes paired with fine wines; catered dinner and dessert; as well as festive live entertainment. Save the date for the 14th Annual Guest Chef Series on Saturday, June 11th.

Right: The 2021 Guest Chef, Kellie Black, demonstrating how to curate a charcuterie board for the Guest Chef Series: Summer Picnic Edition, with FSTC Board Member, Danielle Leal.



(Continued from page 1)

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Friends and family can offer support, but a support group designed specifically for survivors of domestic violence is a structured and scheduled opportunity to connect with others who have been through similar experiences.

Besides their shared experience as survivors, the members share culture and language, too. All of the members in this support group speak Spanish. “Even though some of the women also speak English, it’s easier to express your true feelings in your first language,” said Claudia Mosquera, Victim Advocate at Family Services.

Claudia facilitates the weekly, two-hour group, which started as an in-person meeting and now takes place on Zoom. The meetings usually begin with Claudia asking everyone how they’re doing and how their week has been. Members share challenges they’ve encountered, while others listen with empathy and respect. Next, Claudia gives a short presentation on a topic or shows a brief video to spark discussion and help participants learn from and connect with each other. Topics can include coping and self-care, post-traumatic stress and triggers, red flags of abusive relationships, or the prevalence of domestic violence in the community.

“When they are talking about the video or a topic, they share their personal experiences with it. It’s like a door. You can open the door and they can go through it,” said Claudia.

This opportunity to share personal experiences and give and receive support is one of

the most meaningful aspects of the group. One participant, Gloria, said, “Thanks to the support group, I have learned from others’ stories. Many

have worse stories than mine. I have suffered from domestic violence, and I was close to losing my life, but I was never close to losing my children. I lament when other group members are separated from their children.”

Another group member, Raquel, said, “People have shared their stories, and they have survived very difficult things. I realized that I can, too. The support group has helped me not to return to the domestic violence relationship. It has helped me love and respect myself. My friends say that I smile more now.”

Delia’s friends have also noticed her changing. The support group helped her acknowledge what she had been through, regain her personal power, and take steps toward legal action to increase her safety. “Before, I felt bad; I felt ashamed. I didn’t scream while I was being beaten so my daughter wouldn’t notice,” she said. “I asked for a restraining order, not only for myself but for many women. I am no longer willing to allow being abused.”

With a safe, empathetic, supportive community in place, these women have been able to move forward in their healing processes, transforming from victim to survivor and beyond.

“I felt that I was worthless, and I felt that I would not be able to make it alone with my four children and my newborn baby, but thanks to God and the support of the group I have managed to get ahead. Now I am a stronger person,” said Gloria. “I am no longer going to allow anyone to prevent me from being me.”

For more information on Family Services’ Spanish and English support groups for domestic violence and sexual assault survivors, please contact us at 559-741-7310.

“*People have shared their stories, and they have survived very difficult things. I realized that I can, too.*”

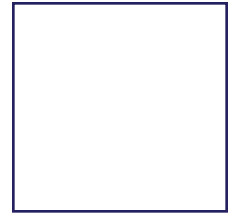


Above: Alissa Villard receiving plants for Mum Sale Sponsor, the Foundation for Medical Care of Tulare and Kings Counties.

‘Tis the season for gratitude and mums

The 23rd Annual Thanks for Giving Mum Sale begins season of giving.

The 23rd Annual Thanks for Giving Chrysanthemum Sale kicked off the Thanksgiving season. This fundraiser was a huge success thanks to the generosity of the community members and businesses who participated by collecting pre-orders and purchasing plants. Our volunteers delivered more than 2,000 plants throughout Tulare County on November 17. One-fourth of these plants were also distributed to healthcare workers, senior citizens, and clients that Family Services works with through our “Gift a Mum” initiative. Thanks to our sponsor, the Foundation for Medical Care of Tulare and Kings Counties, all proceeds from the fundraiser directly benefited Family Services’ work with children and adults impacted by violence.



Santa's Store is coming to town

Help create a fun, memorable holiday for children and adults residing in Family Services' domestic violence shelter and other programs.

Our annual holiday giving program, the Santa Store, is open! Please help us fill this Christmas-themed pop-up shop with toys and gifts to create a memorable holiday shopping experience for the families we serve. Drop-off new, unwrapped gifts to 220 N. Stevenson in Visalia on weekdays through Monday, December 13 from 8 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. Get your workplace, group, or school involved by having a donation bin at your location. Don't have time to shop? Make a donation online, and we'll do the shopping for you. Shop from our Amazon Wishlist to have gifts shipped directly to our office. Visit our Santa Store page at: <https://fstc.net/santa> for more information.



Above: A donor delivering gift bags for shelter residents at the Santa Store in 2019.



Our Mission
Helping children, adults, and families heal from violence and thrive in healthy relationships.



Get Involved
Help us create a healthier tomorrow by becoming a donor or volunteer. Visit fstc.net to get started.



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