

NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT: MIRACLES FOR KIDS • MOCHI DONUTS HAVE ARRIVED • SOCAL'S LIVE MUSIC LANDSCAPE

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ELECTION 2020

FIRST LOOK AT CANDIDATES RUNNING FOR IRVINE MAYOR AND COUNCIL

2019 Night of Miracles
Autumn and Kids



SAVING IRVINE'S NONPROFITS

MIRACLES FOR KIDS CONTINUES TO SUPPORT A COMMUNITY IN NEED.

BY TARA FINLEY • PHOTOS COURTESY OF MIRACLES FOR KIDS

There has been a lot of talk and aid surrounding drowning industries since the COVID pandemic began. From #TakeOutTuesday to artist assistance funds, well-deserving businesses and their staff have seen galvanized support from social media and their communities these past few months.

However, not every organization or business that needs help is getting it. An oft-overlooked sector of pandemic economic casualties are nonprofits, as they struggle to continue to support their clients and pay their staff. While all of us are just trying to make it through the day – given the never-ending stressors of 2020 – *Irvine Weekly* does think it's vital to shine some much-needed light on those in our community that could use a helping hand if you have one free.

Like all businesses, nonprofits have had to constantly stretch and pivot in order to keep up with the ever-changing rules and regulations of operating during a pandemic.

Local organizations have each made imperative changes to their fundraising efforts and annual events to ensure their families are supported. However, the hits keep coming. In-person galas and fundraising events are unlikely to take place for the remainder of 2020, and the future of 2021 remains unclear. So what will these nonprofits do to ensure their mission of support is able to be served?

We've been talking to the dedicated leaders of Irvine's nonprofits to learn what's next for them, and how we as a community can help.

Miracles for Kids helps support the families of children suffering from vari-

ous critical illnesses by providing financial and emotional support, housing, household essentials and supplies, and more. Fighting a life-threatening illness requires an immense time commitment and often results in depleted savings or income loss – making their mission more important than ever as COVID-19 rages throughout the county.

While we are all grumbling about a few months of quarantine, the families and children that rely on Miracles for Kids are all too used to the isolating lifestyle. Given their critically weakened immune systems, COVID-19 has essentially cut them off from everything, for fear of catching a virus their body cannot fight.

"We serve a highly vulnerable population – families with critically-ill children – so when COVID hit we had to

restructure hours and accelerate programming in order to ensure we could be there for those who needed us most," explains Autumn Strier, co-founder and CEO of Miracles for Kids. "Prior to the shutdown, we trained staff on how to work from home, accessing files and utilizing our VOIP system to communicate. We instituted a rotating staff schedule to ensure less than 10 staff were onsite at any time, and rolled out health and safety protocols immediately."

Have they seen an increased need arise in the communities they serve? "The need for our services has been overwhelming, as the families we serve battle job loss, risk of homelessness and mental crisis," answers Strier.

Miracles for Kids is working their hardest to step up their support by providing household essentials that can be difficult



Autumn Strier
2019 Holiday Basket of Miracles



Miracle Manor Construction



2019 Night of Miracles
Lindsay and Anthony Geisler
with Autumn Strier

to get at a grocery store and dangerous for the family to pick up on their own – calling these donations “Spring Baskets of Miracles.” In addition to much-needed supplies, the organization also implemented a virtual campaign to provide social outlets and lift the spirits of these kids and families. Known as the Virtual Messages of Kindness campaign, this is an easy way for the community to send encouraging words to these kids and their families whether it’s via email, text, mail or a video shared on social media.

“We have dramatically increased the use of our social media platforms – Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn – as well as personal emails, e-blasts and the media to share the stories of our families and their needs,” shares Strier. “In a time when digital is the primary way to communicate, it has truly helped us bridge the distance between the community and those in need.”

However, not all things can easily be made digital.

“Many of our programs and outreach already had a digital or online component, but for those that did not – such as our new 360° Miracle women’s giving circle – we had to reach out to one of our corporate partners for their assistance with building a digital interface,” Strier furthers. “We also increased and restructured our social media platforms, making sure to use specific content and algorithms that maximize exposure.”

Thankfully, Miracles for Kids has been able to continue to support those who need them, due to the unwavering support of their community partners. They’ve been able to pivot their annual events to fall in line with quarantine criteria, but it’s no easy task.

“Our events are a large part of our annual revenue and the primary way we raise funds to support our mission and we are blessed to have a community of supporters who have agreed to stand by us this fall, regardless of the format. We have, and will continue to, adhere to all

guidelines set forth by the county and state,” says Strier.

What’s next for Miracles for Kids?

“Our families were in crisis prior to the pandemic trying to support their ill child,” answers Strier. “Today, their instability has increased substantially as a result of the pandemic’s impact on the economy.”

“Nearly 80% of those we serve have lost their source of income,” she expands. “This means they need us now more than ever, so our focus is going to be on continuing to build out digital fundraising platforms, touchless engagement environments, communication avenues, and more – so we can keep donors and the community at large in touch with the devastation happening around all of us.”

Most importantly, how can the Irvine community help?

“Our families need basic resources to function every day, but they have very limited means, so most families must

do without. This is where our Kindness Box of Miracles comes in – a delivery program born early in the pandemic, where we fill and ship 300+ boxes to our families each month – filled with items such as grocery and gas cards, PPE, cleaning supplies, clothing, food and toys/games/books for the children. We are in need of donations to fill these boxes,” answers Strier.

“Miracles for Kids is successful at supporting critically-ill children and families because of incredible local community support over the last 15+ years. We have volunteers of every age and ability, corporate partners of every size, and community groups of every type – all doing what they can to make a difference,” she says. “If you are reading this, and you are considering donating an hour or a dollar – we would be honored, and your donation truly valued.”

To donate to Miracles for Kids, visit <https://miraclesforkids.org/take-action/donate/>