

Survey Spotlights the Work of Local Nonprofits



Photo: Kelli Utcell

Core leaders from the Nonprofit Alliance of Monterey County (l-r) Sue Parris, Elsa Quezada, Larry Imwalle and Paul Mondestin strive to strengthen agency collaboration and educate the public about the increasing need for social services while resources are stretched thin.

When community leaders launched the Nonprofit Alliance of Monterey County (NAMC) 10 years ago, they were navigating a dot-com crash and subsequent economic slowdown. The group's approximately 100 member agencies face similar financial challenges today; they succeed thanks to creative partnerships and careful use of resources.

In fact, a NAMC study released in advance of the group's December anniversary celebration estimates that local nonprofits have a \$2.1 billion annual economic impact. That's up from \$1.5 billion in 2005, when the group last released a survey. These agencies also employ approximately 8,000 people and record more than 500,000 volunteer hours a year.

"But, the economy is just one dimension where we have impact," says ACTION Council of Monterey County's Larry Imwalle, a member of NAMC's core leadership group. "The work we do benefits the community in so many different ways."

About 5.7 million individuals are served by nonprofits annually, states the NAMC study, through efforts related to housing, hunger and health programs, plus job assistance, arts outreach, animal welfare, youth

services, environmental projects, grants and more.

"While maybe the perception is that we're just serving the 'needy'—the at-risk or elderly or marginalized—the reality is that in some way, almost every day, everyone in Monterey County is coming into contact with a nonprofit," Imwalle says.

Though he sees local agencies accomplishing more with fewer resources, that also means many are being stretched thin. By offering workshops and networking opportunities, NAMC educates constituents, encourages members to collaborate and raises awareness of nonprofits.

"At a time when the economy has been doing poorly, the demand for services that nonprofits provide has really exploded," says Imwalle. "Nonprofits here have met the challenge. Our report shows that groups are adding programs and serving more people, even when they're feeling more challenged."

The Nonprofit Alliance for Monterey County celebrates its 10th anniversary with an event on Thursday, Dec. 4, from 8-10am at the InterContinental The Clement Monterey. Learn more at www.alliancemonterey.org.

—Renee Brincks