A Letter from the CEO and Board Chair

This past year loss and hardship was felt globally. 2020 was a year the world will never soon forget—not only should it. In the Central Valley, we found the worst of times revealed the unshakable strength of our community.

When faced with repercussions of a global pandemic, the CVCF team acted with unyielding focus and unrelenting determination. We served our community in ways we never had before. Our team helped to coordinate the purchase and distribution of 650,000 items of PPE for essential workers. We promoted mask-wearing through MaskUp Central Valley, a month-long, four-language, cause marketing campaign. And we coordinated the Healthy Harvest program to assist farm and food-production workers exposed to COVID-19 with access to food, safe quarantining, and wrap around services.

As CVCF moved in new ways, expanding at a breadth and depth it never had before, our community embraced our efforts. In nine months, we raised $5.3 million for COVID-19 relief efforts. Propelled by the strength and generosity of our community, CVCF administered grants to more than 80 nonprofits throughout six Valley counties.

Dollars from these grants provided meals to people who may have otherwise not had a stable source of food and provided PPE to essential workers who alternatively would have reused the same masks for days on end. These dollars helped local businesses survive unheard of challenges and helped children continue to learn—remotely.

As we worked to align resources to the most immediate needs, we strengthened bonds with our partners and donors and established new, long-lasting relationships within our Valley.

While supporting our community through the pandemic, we never lost sight of Fresno DRIVE’s vision for an inclusive, vibrant and sustainable economy, helping to remove systemic barriers to economic growth and prosperity. DRIVE-related initiatives received significant funding—over $50 million—including a $15 million grant from The James Irvine Foundation, the largest single grant CVCF has ever received.

We are so grateful for our donors, partners and community (all of you reading this) for rallying with us and sticking by our side.

Last year showed us the impact that’s possible when we come together. We will look to 2020 for inspiration as we move forward and continue to do critical work. We value your continued partnership and support to bring our vision for a vibrant and inclusive Valley to life.

CVCF by the Numbers

$138,760,017
ASSETS
As of 12/31/20

271/24
FUNDS/NEW

$329,881
SCHOLARSHIPS

$14,505,490
GRANTS

Assets are the philanthropic dollars CVCF manages on behalf of local donors.

Operating funds are expenses dedicated to management of day-to-day CVCF operations.

CVCF Operations & Financials

The following items are associated with CVCF’s operating costs:

2020 Revenue

Admin fees from funds $1,103,458
Operating support from funders $1,293,774
Administrative endowment support $0
Other income $830,101

2020 Expenses

Staff compensation/consultants $1,890,739
Legal & accounting $52,455
Rent, telephone, IT $286,952
Publications, events, advertising $125,728
Other operating expenses $279,410

ACCREDITATION

The National Standards for US Community Foundations seal exemplifies the highest standards of operational distinction and integrity in community philanthropy. CVCF has completed a rigorous 124-point inspection required to receive accreditation. We proudly display this seal as a demonstration of our commitment to excellence, accountability, and impact in community philanthropy.

Rod Thornton
Board Chair

Ashley Swearengin
President and CEO
Developing the Region’s Inclusive and Vibrant Economy

Launched in 2019, Fresno DRIVE is a 10-year community investment plan with a portfolio of 19 initiatives aimed at creating an inclusive, vibrant and sustainable economy for residents in the greater Fresno region.

Fresno DRIVE is coordinated by CVCF with community-wide support.

Despite restrictions preventing in-person meetings, CVCF collaborated with Fresno DRIVE partners to bring about a more inclusive economy for all Fresno residents.

Fresno DRIVE Receives Largest Grant To-Date

The James Irvine Foundation awarded Fresno DRIVE a $15 million grant in June 2020. With approximately 80% of the funds designated for local nonprofits, the grant is focused on addressing systemic barriers to economic opportunity, strengthening community engagement and neighborhood leadership, and advancing workforce and small business development, business recruitment, and wealth creation in low-income neighborhoods.

The grant funding will support the following outcomes:
- The creation of nearly 1,700 jobs and 350 internships
- Support the growth of more than 150 small businesses owned by women and people of color
- Engagement of more than 1,000 residents annually in improving the conditions of low-opportunity neighborhoods

“We are grateful to the Central Valley Community Foundation for its connection to local Fresno leaders and communities, and we are thrilled to support efforts to improve economic mobility and job creation in Fresno through the DRIVE initiative. Despite the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we remain optimistic that diverse community leaders, elected officials, employers, and worker organizers, can, together, rebuild local economies that work for all residents.”

Don Howard
President and CEO, The James Irvine Foundation

2020 DRIVE Highlights

✓ DRIVE Executive Committee members participated in a series of workshops to understand the effects of structural racism and their own role in eliminating racism in Fresno and beyond.

✓ An Executive Committee three-day retreat, which strengthened relationships, led to formalized structures, and laid the groundwork for the development of a governance process—setting the stage for the next decade.

✓ Completion of the DRIVE Race Equity Plan.

✓ Adoption of the DRIVE Theory of Change, which is centered around:
  - A shared understanding of racism in Fresno
  - Continuous engagement of racial minority communities
  - Explicit programmatic priorities to promote racial equity

✓ Adopted a Community Engagement Spectrum framework for DRIVE’s future community engagement.

✓ Advocacy training to equip DRIVE stakeholders with tools to recognize and address structural racial inequality.

✓ Creation of a monitoring and evaluation plan to monitor the input of resources, verify the impact of interventions, and evaluate changes in the overall economic mobility of Fresno residents.

✓ Evaluation of the 19 DRIVE workplans through a racial equity scorecard, ensuring workplans meet the standards of the DRIVE Theory of Change.

✓ Consistent community engagement with residents to encourage and evaluate the community response to DRIVE.

✓ A series of community and economic development-focused webinars for Steering Committee members to share DRIVE’s effect on the region’s economic challenges and strategies.

Fresno DRIVE Joins Community in Addressing Injustice in Fresno

In June 2020, the DRIVE Executive Committee joined the Fresno State chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), along with many community leaders, in signing a letter highlighting specific demands to address injustice in Fresno—the letter was in response to the murder of George Floyd in May 2020. This unified show of support was one of the Executive Committee’s first tangible and direct actions to locally address the need for social justice.

“Being part of the selection committee, I learned that there are different nonprofit organizations applying for a grant to better their community... I learned that we all have a voice in helping our community no matter our color, age, socioeconomic background, etc.”

Phonekham Douangmala
Resident participant for neighborhood Hubs Selection Committee

Under CVCF’s leadership, the DRIVE coalition:
Cultivated $51 million of funding from public and private sources to support initiative programming, as well as foundational support for management of DRIVE.
Caring for the Community in a time of COVID-19

When our community was struck with tremendous challenges in 2020, CVCF stepped forward to lend support. Perhaps more than ever, the community relied on us to help navigate overwhelming needs and to build bridges to mend system gaps. CVCF addressed critical community needs with steadfast determination.

CVCF's COVID-19 Community Relief by the Numbers

$5.3m
Raised $5.3 million for CVCF’s COVID-19 relief efforts—which included four funds—and administered grants to more than 80 nonprofits throughout 6 counties

17,000
Helped fund a 5-county COVID call center for local farmworkers seeking reliable information about available resources, which fielded over 17,000 calls and inquiries during 2020

650,000
Coordinated purchase and distribution of 650,000 items of PPE—with several instances of providing masks to essential workers the day their PPE supplies were completely depleted

450
Promoted mask wearing through MaskUp Central Valley, a month-long, four-language cause marketing campaign providing $100 gift cards to 450 people

10,000
Hosted weekly calls for community-based organizations to engage county officials with 10,000 participants over 36 weeks

75,000
Impressions on Streaming Services

5
Participating Counties

22
Partner Agencies

In August 2020, CVCF launched the MaskUp Central Valley (CV) campaign, supported by the COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund. MaskUp CV was a six-week, multi-media campaign in four languages—English, Spanish, Punjabi, and Hmong—designed to raise awareness about the importance of wearing a mask. Throughout the Valley, 450 people each received a $100 gift card as a reward for wearing a mask.

CVCF partnered with local governments, health departments, and nonprofits at 22 different agencies in five counties: Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, and Tulare. Local leaders surprised residents who were “caught” wearing a mask. They took a socially-distanced selfie with the recipient and shared the photo on social media, adding the recipient’s reason for wearing a mask.

The public service announcements were shared on broadcast and radio outlets throughout the Central Valley. Messaging added up to 800 TV spots, 75,000 impressions on streaming services, 730 broadcast radio spots, and targeted paid placement on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. It also included a web page in four languages (www.maskupcv.org) that features COVID information and links to area health departments.

Healthy Harvest Helps Farmworkers

CVCF aligned critical resources to farmworkers and food-production workers in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The Healthy Harvest Program (Cosecha Sana) is a multi-county initiative for farm and food production workers, growers, and industry employers providing information through a centralized call center about COVID-19 prevention, access to testing, and resources to safely isolate in a free hotel room to avoid infecting others. The program is a joint initiative of growers, workers, community organizations, local elected officials, county and state agencies, and philanthropic donors.

“We With CVCF’s support, the California Farmworker Foundation was able to help tens of thousands of farmworkers across the Central Valley during trying times.”

Hernan Hernandez
California Farmworker Foundation Executive Director

We are grateful to the many donors to the CVCF COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund for their support. We would like to acknowledge the following businesses and organizations for their significant contributions to the fund:

- The California Endowment
- California Wellness Foundation
- Chevron
- Gannett
- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- The James B. McClatchy Foundation
- The James Irvine Foundation
- The Fresno Bee
- League of California Community Foundations (with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation)
- PG&E Corporation Foundation
- Sierra Health Foundation
- Wells Fargo
- The Wonderful Company

Photos provided by California Farmworker Foundation
Connecting the Community

Sewing Resources Together

As the number of positive COVID-19 cases began to rise in March 2020 it was difficult for local frontline workers to find face masks. After receiving calls from hospital staff, rural fire and police departments, and nursing home employees, the CVCF team knew there was an overwhelming need for PPE. With the help of donors, CVCF rushed into action to address the need for masks by aligning existing resources in the community—the generous owners of a sewing shop, willing and capable volunteers, and grants from CVCF donors.

Resulting from a conversation with the local owners of Kiki’s Quilt Shack, a plan was developed to produce thousands of handmade masks. They designed a custom pattern and put together kits of donated materials for volunteers, enabling a mass production of masks. With a grant from donors to CVCF’s COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund, HandsOn Central California recruited thousands of volunteers to make masks using the Quilt Shack’s kits. The collaborative effort resulted in the delivery of thousands of masks to frontline healthcare and essential workers.

Feeding the Community

Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission
CVCF’s COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund enabled Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission to deliver 73,302 meals, 21,715 snacks, and 66,184 packages of diapers to children and families throughout Fresno County.

Community Service Employment Training
More than 750 senior citizens in Tulare County rely on Community Service Employment Training (CSET) for transportation to supermarkets. These seniors lived alone and were homebound due to the pandemic. CVCF donors provided funding to allow CSET to deliver boxes of food to the seniors.

Shielding the Community

CVCF funded the production of 500 custom face shields created by local engineering nonprofit The Pi Shop. The shields provided additional coverage for emergency room workers at Community Regional Medical Center, Fresno Surgical Center, Oakhurst Healthcare Center, and LifeStar Ambulance.

Catholic Charities
After learning Catholic Charities was experiencing a 99.7% increase of people needing food support, CVCF provided a grant to the organization, contributing to its work of serving a total of 188,918 people with emergency food assistance throughout the Central Valley—a 44% increase over the same ten-month period in 2019. It also held 12 Healthy Neighborhood Market distributions, 12 USDA distributions, holiday distributions for Thanksgiving and Christmas, and 153 targeted rural outreach distributions serving the most impoverished areas of our Valley throughout the 2020 year.

Photos provided by Catholic Charities
Supporting Local Business

Restarting Local Businesses

Challenges to local businesses caused by the pandemic culminated at the time of shelter-in-place orders. CVCF teamed up with other supporters to award Regional Economic Sustainability Through Aligned Responses to Threats (RESTART) grants, which provided immediate relief to small businesses in extreme distress.

Downtown Fresno

In May 2020, the Downtown Fresno Partnership and CVCF awarded 31 small downtown Fresno businesses a collective total of $54,000 of RESTART grants—with individual grants ranging from $1,000 to $2,500. Businesses receiving awards—including restaurants, retail shops and salons—showed a 75% decrease in sales since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. Eighty-seven percent of businesses were minority or women-owned.

CVCF launched the JPMorgan Chase Partnership for Raising Opportunities in Neighborhoods (PRO Neighborhoods) program in partnership with Access Plus Capital, Community Vision and Acion Opportunity Fund CDFIs, to provide communities with the capital and tools they need to support locally-driven solutions for reviving distressed neighborhoods across Fresno. Strong neighborhoods are key for any city’s long-term economic success. Fresno is a selected city because of its southern “capital desert,” where there are fewer resources to support the aspirations of residents and potential entrepreneurs. PRO Neighborhoods helps this Fresno area to highlight investment opportunities and priorities, and connect neighborhoods with needed outside capital and development expertise.

JP Morgan Chase’s PRO Neighborhoods assisted small businesses owned by low to moderate income residents with COVID-19 relief funding. The partnership helped businesses apply to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), as well as for Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) offered by the Small Business Administration. Through these efforts PRO Neighborhoods helped small businesses in Fresno collectively access more than $2 million in 2020.

Chinatown

In June 2020, the Chinatown Fresno Foundation and CVCF provided grants to Chinatown businesses through the Re-NEW Chinatown Grant Program. Five barbers and seven other businesses received up to $1,000 each. The grants helped cover expenses like inventory, rent, utilities and payroll.

CVCF

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PRO Support

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Neighborhood Industries

In April 2020, domestic violence calls to the Marjaree Mason Center increased by 30%—and the safe house was routinely full. CVCF donors enabled the Center to provide hotel vouchers to domestic violence victims when there were no rooms available in its safe house.

Supporting Families

- Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) very quickly realized parents and guardians of “Littles” would need extra support since kids were not in school. The organization received calls from parents in need of help with anger management, distance learning information, and help with stress management—often rooted in fears induced by the pandemic. CVCF donors made it possible for BBBS to keep social workers on-hand for families to connect with trained professionals equipped to support them.

- In April 2020, domestic violence calls to the Marjaree Mason Center increased by 30%—and the safe house was routinely full. CVCF donors enabled the Center to provide hotel vouchers to domestic violence victims when there were no rooms available in its safe house.

- Recognizing the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color, particularly the Black and African American community, CVCF was the lead investor in the African American COVID fund at the United Way of Fresno and Madera Counties. The fund supported outreach to Black and African American families, direct cash assistance, and COVID testing for impacted residents.

Helping out a Neighbor

Neighborhood Industries was concerned with how to keep its thrift store staff employed when non-essential businesses were forced to close during the pandemic. Recognizing the difficulty that area food pantries had in distributing food throughout the region, Neighborhood Industries Executive Director and Co-Founder Anthony “AP” Armour leveraged the organization’s resources at hand, to lend a hand.

“The initial fear when the pandemic hit was: What are we going to do with our staff? So we started thinking creatively to figure out how to keep our people employed. We thought, well, what can we do with food,” Armour said. “We realized we already had a full production team. We already had trucks, we already had logistics management.”

We had all the ingredients to create this new recipe for a new opportunity. Now the people who at one point in time were threatened with needing relief were now contributors of relief.”

Shantay Davies-Balch

CEO, BLACK Wellness and Prosperity Center

With the support of a grant from CVCF Neighborhood Industries delivered approximately 160,000 boxes of food to 80 cities in 7 counties, totaling 2 million meals.

“The Central Valley Community Foundation was the very first organization in the county of Fresno to specifically establish a COVID-19 fund for the African American community.”
Tending to Healthcare Workers

• Knowing the comfort a warm meal provides—especially during difficult times, Feed the Frontlines Fresno, led by six mothers, provided healthcare workers with hearty meals from local restaurants. CVCF donors generously provided a $10,000 grant, allowing for 1,000 meals. Feed the Frontlines made 103 deliveries in total, which provided 5,844 frontline heroes a heartwarming meal.

• At the onset of the pandemic many rural health clinics had a particularly challenging time accessing PPE. In April 2020, The Aria Community Health Center in Avenal saw at least 68 patients a day, but like so many others, could not find the PPE they needed. Because of the generosity of The Wonderful Company and other donors to the COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund, we provided the health clinic with 4,500 masks. We also worked with an anonymous funder that gave the clinic a $100,000 grant for rural COVID-19 testing. CVCF’s support helped to alleviate its extreme funding challenges, keeping the clinics in Kettleman City and Avenal in operation.

Bringing Awareness to the Community

Keeping CBOs Dialed In
Recognizing a gap in the region’s information-sharing capacity, CVCF, County of Fresno Department of Public Health, Fresno Building Healthy Communities, United Way of Fresno and Madera Counties, Every Neighborhood Partnership, Go Public Schools, Cradle to Career Partnership, and Fresno County Office of Education, came together to cohost a weekly countywide Agency-CBO Coordination Call. Call topics included an update on public health, issues driving 2-1-1 resource referrals, and Q&A sessions featuring timely information for nonprofits navigating the pandemic. More than 10,000 have participated in the calls.

A Healthy Community Requires Local Fact-Based Journalism

One significant challenge throughout the pandemic was navigating the ever-changing information landscape and finding reliable sources of trustworthy information. With a gift from CVCF’s COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund, The Fresno Bee was able to provide eight weeks of enhanced reporting, community engagement and outreach, and digital access to resources throughout the Central Valley, all specifically targeted to vulnerable and impacted populations, particularly parents and students.

Solutions for Distance Learning
The Fresno Bee Education Lab’s solutions-oriented reporting resulted in an improved distance-learning experience for local families. Reporters spoke to parents and teachers to understand the challenges of at-home schooling and learned that families were being overcharged for Comcast’s internet service—service that was advertised as high-speed, unlimited data. Following a story describing the situation, Comcast lowered the prices and doubled internet speeds to best accommodate local distance-learning students.

Additionally, to address the unprecedented schooling experience posed by the pandemic, the Bee’s Education Lab engagement reporter hosted workshops featuring education experts to help parents and students adjust to home schooling.

At CVCF, we believe that local journalism is key to tackling complex community problems.
Since 2019, CVCF’s Impact Media and Measurement Fund has been supporting local, solutions-oriented journalism on issues that matter most to our community: education, housing and land use, neighborhoods, and agriculture. Throughout the pandemic, Central Valley residents relied on local media coverage to inform them about education, housing, and health in the region.

The Fresno Bee’s Education Lab is funded in part by the Impact Media and Measurement Fund (IMMF), established by CVCF in 2019 to amplify the diverse voices of people in the region for both informing and engaging residents, as well as increasing transparency and accountability in achieving community goals.

Impact Media and Measurement Fund projects are supported by:
- James B. McClatchy Foundation
- The James Irvine Foundation
- College Futures Foundation
- Microsoft Corp.

The pandemic revealed the vast digital divide in the Central Valley. With funding from The James B McClatchy Foundation, the Bee distributed 8,000 fun and informative workbooks to kids in rural areas who had difficulty engaging with online learning because of limited internet access at their homes.

Microsoft Invests in Fresno’s Local Newsrooms
In June 2020, Microsoft chose Fresno as one of four cities to launch a pilot program to help local newsrooms.

In June 2020, Microsoft Corp. chose Fresno as one of four cities to launch a pilot program to explore how Central Valley communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. This program is a collaboration among the Fresno Bee, Vida en el Valle, Radio Bilingue, and KVPR. “We will bring technical expertise to the pilot community newsrooms and will partner with other industry organizations and foundations to share expertise and experience that will further expand the reach and impact of the initiative,” said Mary Snapp, Microsoft’s vice president of strategic initiatives shared in a June 2020 blog post.
Measure P

The Community Unites for Parks

December 2020 marked a milestone for Fresno parks and a tremendous accomplishment for the community: Although more than 52% of voters in Fresno voted YES on Measure P in November 2018, the measure was not adopted by Fresno City officials. The City believed it needed a supermajority vote (2/3 or 66.67%) in order to be approved. Fresno Building Healthy Communities (FBHC) filed a lawsuit against the City disputing the threshold, and in December 2020, the Fifth District Court of Appeal ruled the measure only required approval of a simple majority (50% + 1) to pass. Finally, the State Supreme Court declined to reconsider. This was a huge win for the community and for the majority of voters who said YES to investing in better parks, trails, and arts here in Fresno. After decades of underinvestment in our parks and continued leadership by FBHC and Fresno Boys and Men of Color, Measure P was drafted and championed by Fresno for Parks, a coalition of residents for safer, cleaner parks for all Fresnans, which was sponsored by CVCF.

Strength From the Community

The scope of the contributions from CVCF’s COVID-19 relief efforts, which included four funds totaling $5.3 million dedicated to supporting the community through the pandemic, signified the Valley’s greathearted response in helping one another through the global crisis. Individuals within the community leveraged their time and talents to raise money for the fund, which provided emergency relief to others.

Out of the Woodwork

When Connor Wells decided to leave his job due to a health condition which compromised his immune system, he devoted his time to helping others. Wells created exquisite wooden pieces and auctioned them off on Facebook to benefit CVCF’s COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund. His generous efforts resulted in a donated total of $3,575.

Floyd Sanchez, owner of Oso y Que, re-issued the company’s Fresno Strong flag, with all proceeds benefiting the COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund. He found a high demand for the flags and contributed more than $900 to the fund.

Teaming Up for the Community

In September, former and current owners of the Visalia Rawhide (the Seidler and Sigal families) contributed a collective $250,000 to the Visalia Rawhide Charitable Fund at CVCF. Two initial grants of $50,000 each provided support and essential resources for Tulare families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the grants was given to family resource centers to support families with childcare costs, food, distance learning supplies, and other essential services. The second grant was given to The Healthy Harvest Program (see page 7) in Tulare County.

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New Fund Highlight

Central Valley Opportunity Fund

The Central Valley Opportunity Fund (CVOF) was established to support initiatives that bring significant socioeconomic growth and well-being to Merced through increased access to opportunities and resources that enrich the lives of community members. CVCF welcomed Cori Lucero (2021) as Merced Regional Director to develop and administer a strategy with CVOF to realize that goal. Lucero spent more than a decade at the University of California, Merced, advocating for the growing university, and leading a comprehensive government and community outreach strategy for the campus at the federal, state and local levels.

New Fund Highlight

Shaver Lake Volunteer Firefighter Fund

The Shaver Lake Volunteer Firefighter Fund (SLVFF) was established following the Creek Fire to support and provide additional funding for the Shaver Lake Volunteer Fire Department. Launched by a son and daughter of the department’s firefighters, the goal of SLVFF is to support and supplement the department with short-term and long-term goals.

While fighting what was the single largest wildfire in state history, several challenges arose due to the fire department’s older equipment—including an 18-year-old fire engine failing to run.

Funds are designated for the fire department to purchase first-class safety equipment, training, construction of a new fire house, and to allow for a reservoir of funds for future department needs.

Existing Fund Feature

African American Education Fund

The African American Education Fund (AAEF) seeks to provide scholarship support to African American and BIPOC students involved in the African American experience, and who seek degrees at four-year colleges. Emphasis is placed on (but not limited to) students who have demonstrated financial need, are first generation college learners or graduate students, and those with a background or plans to further serve the African American community in some way. Scholarships are awarded to enable students of color to attend college and to help alleviate barriers that may otherwise prevent students from advancing their education.

The fund also supports organizations that fall within the same criteria.

Students who have benefited from the AAEF have excelled personally and professionally. Despite facing many challenges, these exemplary scholars have gone on to successful careers in fields including law, social sciences, and careers in STEM.

The Launch of the Fund

The chairman of the Fresno Chapter of the United Negro College Fund, Dr. Robert Mitchell, along with local board members, the late Richard Keyes and Eric Payne, partnered with Central Valley Community Foundation (CVCF) to create the fund. Others involved with the fund’s establishment included Professor Thomas Ellis, Harlan Gaston, Robert Harris, Korrya Lansana and Angela Barfield.

Dr. Robert Mitchell and Professor Thomas Ellis serve on the fund’s current board of directors.
Friends of the Foundation brings together 100 Friends who annually commit to supporting CVCF’s work in the community. Three special events a year are organized for our Friends. Each dinner is held at a unique location throughout greater Fresno with themes designed to highlight remarkable local projects, programs and initiatives.

When safely hosting a large gathering became a challenge due to the pandemic, the CVCF team embraced the challenge with a new approach. Carefully curated care packages were delivered for 2020’s initial Friends event in June—with items including a branded CVCF facemask, hand sanitizer, dessert cakes, and specialty cocktails from downtown Fresno’s The Modernist, accompanied by a DoorDash gift card to support local restaurants struggling from implications of the pandemic. Friends gathered via Zoom to learn about CVCF’s Covid-19 Emergency Response Fund. The evening’s program also featured videos of three local nonprofits. Guests were asked to help select one of the organizations to receive a $20,000 operations grant, and Neighborhood Industries was chosen as the recipient.

The CVCF team’s event-planning ingenuity continued with the September Friends dinner, which took place drive-thru style at Fig Garden Women’s Club. With a “Cheers” theme in the spirit of missing the comradery of in-person events, the dinner featured delectable pub food to-go and a virtual Central Valley-themed trivia game introduced by none other than Cliff Clavin (John Ratzenberger) himself. The winner of the trivia game received $500 to award to the nonprofit of their choosing. Congratulations to Patrick and Wendy Carroll who generously granted to the Fresno Cradle to Career Partnership.

A New Year’s Eve theme was fitting for November’s dinner, as 2020 had everyone ready for a new beginning. At this drive-thru dinner at Fig Garden Women’s Club, guests were presented dinner, a bottle of champagne, and NYE party supplies. After returning home and signing on to Zoom, guests were split into virtual teams and challenged to create a toast for the new year using a CVCF and Central Valley-centric word list. Laird Durley became the champion of the event using every word on the list. The evening was capped off with a stunning performance of Scotland’s traditional song, “Auld Lang Syne” by Scottish musician Daniel Robinson.

We are grateful for our Friends and their support of our work and engagement in our community.
About the Cover

“Tree Feller,” by Brett Schoenwald, 40 of Fresno, CA. A portrait of Joe Marshall, a local tree feller who was cutting down burnt trees at the 2020 Creek Fire in Huntington Lake. The photo was taken moments after Marshall traveled down hill from cutting down a 100' damaged tree, preventing it from falling across the highway.

CVCF held a regional contest asking photographers to submit photos to potentially be selected as the cover photo for the CVCF 2020 Annual Report. Out of more than 50 photos, this image was chosen as it best depicts the grit and grace with which our community navigated through a challenging and unprecedented year.

Thank you, Brett, for sharing your inspiring photo with us!