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Building **Power** Together

What does it mean to invest in the power of the people?
SVCF has shifted its priorities to do exactly that



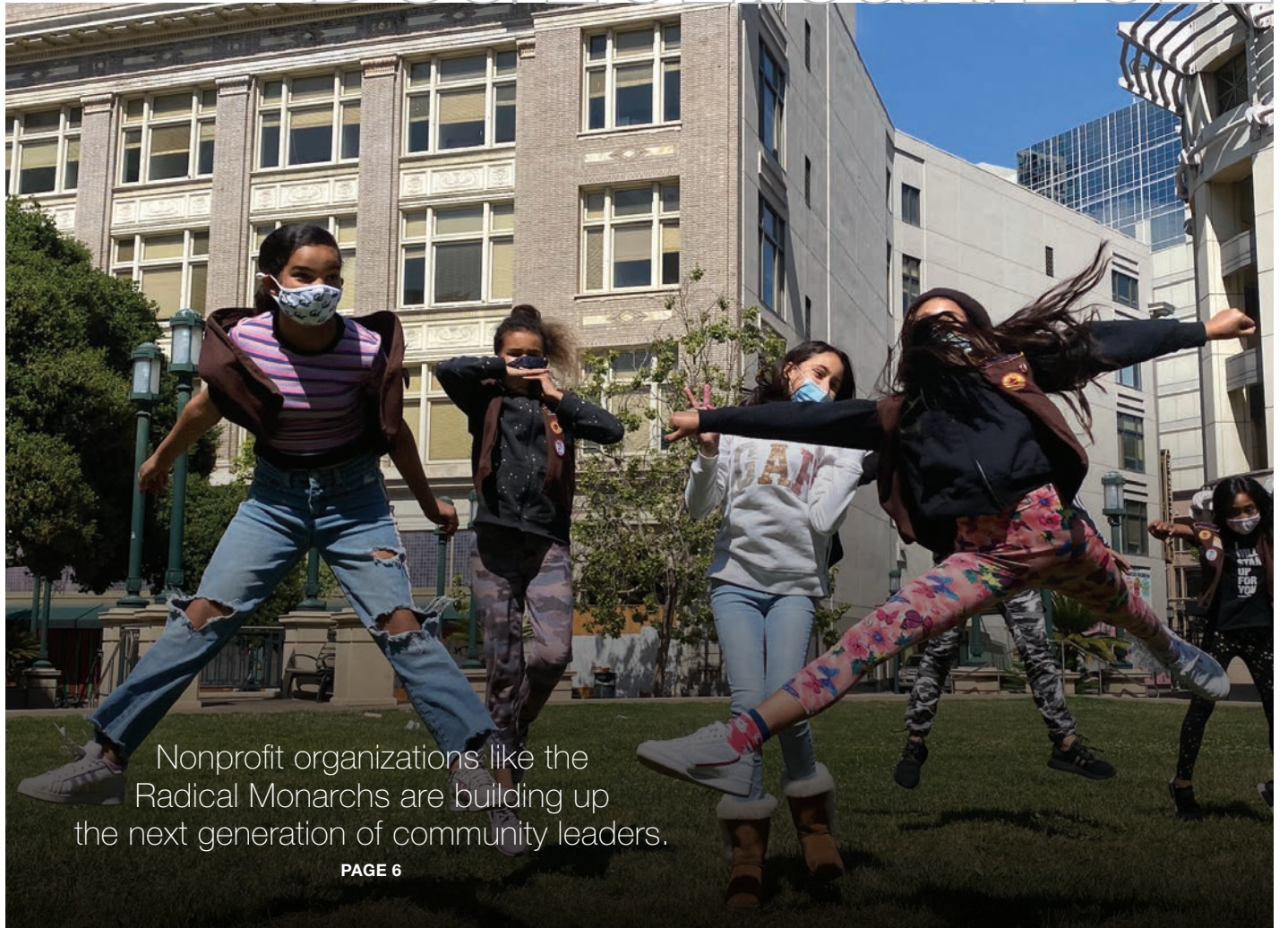
“At SVCF, we ask ourselves: How can we continue to use our leadership, relationships and resources to help guide our region not just through a recovery, but to a better normal where every person has opportunities to succeed and thrive?”

Nicole Taylor
President and CEO

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Dec. 2021/Jan. 2022



Nonprofit organizations like the Radical Monarchs are building up the next generation of community leaders.

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From Nicole Taylor



Listen to SVCF podcasts, including episodes featuring Nicole Taylor, at siliconvalleycf.org/svcf-philanthropy-now.

Building a Better Normal, Together

All over the country — and certainly in Silicon Valley — people view this as a time of recovery and for building back communities to a better normal. At Silicon Valley Community Foundation, we ask ourselves: How can we continue to use our leadership, relationships and resources to help guide our region not just through a recovery, but to a better normal where every person has opportunities to succeed and thrive?

For our communities to be just, inclusive and equitable, we need to start by ensuring that all residents — no matter their race, gender identity, religion, socioeconomic background or citizenship status — have the opportunity and the power to participate in the decisions that will shape their lives and the future of our region.

The wise, talented, deeply connected community and nonprofit leaders of Silicon Valley know what their constituents need to make this happen. Our quest is to support these leaders as they empower and rally their communities to chart their own paths toward a future that respects and supports every person's well-being and success. The process as a whole is known as power-building. And we're pursuing it because the times deserve nothing less. I hope you'll read more starting on page 6.

Our magazine also contains stories about some of our remarkable donors and corporate partners, and examples of how together we've supported our communities through the ongoing pandemic. I hope you will enjoy reading about our new, collaborative approaches and initiatives. Thank you to our community partners, donors, and corporate and public sector partners for making this work possible. With your support, together we will undoubtedly build back a much better Silicon Valley.



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Making a Difference



Chopsticks Alley Art hosts cultural events, like the 2019 Moon Festival, to highlight Southeast Asian art and artists.

Supporting the AAPI Community Year-Round

SVCF is working to ensure Asian American and Pacific Islander communities get access to the resources they need

In 2020, hate crimes against Asians in 14 of America's largest cities — including four in California — rose by 145%, according to a study from California State University, San Bernardino. In February 2021, SVCF joined local Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) leaders in condemning these racist acts

and with more than 30 philanthropic organizations to call for increased funding for organizations that support AAPI communities.

This dovetails with SVCF's 2020 pledge, in partnership with the American Leadership Forum Silicon Valley, to drive more attention and resources to communities of color.

"We are deepening our commitment to support organizations fighting for racial equity and social justice," says SVCF President and CEO Nicole Taylor. "We are highlighting the voices of local leaders of color, and we continue to drive much-needed philanthropic resources to those facing layers of challenges."

Some of SVCF's recent grantees that are led by or serve Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders include:

- **The Vietnamese American Roundtable (VAR)** is using its grant from SVCF to organize, educate and advocate for the Vietnamese American community in the Bay Area. VAR's bilingual volunteers

"We are deepening our commitment to support organizations fighting for racial equity and social justice."

put on events, civic engagement programs, issue forums and festivals. Recently, the group launched an effort to bridge the information gap between elders and their children so both groups' voices can be heard.

- **Chopsticks Alley Art** highlights Southeast Asian art and artists through exhibits, classes and cultural events. It's using grant money to offer more classes, send art kits to students (who are learning virtually) and pay artists who share their work through the CreativiTEA Open Mic project. "We bridge communities by bringing our art and culture to the mainstream in an approachable, nonthreatening way," says Trami Cron, founder and executive artistic director of Chopsticks Alley Art.

- **Anamatangi Polynesian Voices (APV)** is using SVCF grant money to find office space and train employees so they can help support East Palo Alto Pacific Islander families with parenting skills training, immigration rights education and more. "We've been working on a zero budget," says Tiffany 'Uhilamoelangi-Hautau, APV's executive director. "Thanks to these funds we are more empowered to address the nuts and bolts of our organization in order to serve the needs in our community."

Making a Difference

A Big Boost for Early Childhood Development

SVCF's efforts to improve the lives of young children just got a boost from the state

The future of education is looking a little brighter in the Bay Area thanks to new state funding and SVCF's new Early Childhood Development strategic initiative.

California's approved 2021-22 budget directs billions of dollars to education, including expanding transitional kindergarten and providing an additional 200,000 state-funded childcare slots. Plus, this summer The Big Lift, a literacy-focused initiative for children in San Mateo County, received \$1 million in state funding, the first time California has pitched in to support this eight-year-old program. SVCF is a founding partner on the project.

"We've been a committed supporter of early childhood development for many years, but we've recently shifted our role in the space," says Christine Thorsteinson, SVCF's director of early childhood development. "We're now focusing more on policy and advocacy work, which we've done in the past, and less on direct program implementation. We have a grantmaking strategy and portfolio that we're building out for the first time, and we're working more closely with donors to help them understand the importance of high-quality care, education and resources for children. We're

also continuing to support research in this area."

One beneficiary of SVCF's new strategic initiative is Build Up for San Mateo County's Children. "The grant money we've received has allowed us to spend more time and effort on advocating at the local, state and federal levels for recovery funding and to make sure that childcare is in all of the general and emergency plans," says Christine Padilla, director of Build Up for San Mateo County's Children. "Childcare is an industry that impacts so many people so deeply. It's astonishing there's not more funding for or awareness of it."

“Childcare is an industry that impacts so many people so deeply. It's astonishing there's not more funding or awareness of it.”



The Big Lift, a literacy-focused initiative, received \$1 million in state funding for the first time in its eight-year history.



Increasing Testing and Vaccination Rates in Hard-Hit Areas

Pop-up clinics help communities of color get tested, vaccinated and stay safe

The Problem: Not everyone has equal access to COVID-19 testing and vaccines. Lack of access to healthcare and transportation, language barriers and fear over immigration status are some of the hurdles facing low-income people and communities of color when it comes to testing and vaccination. In addition, these same communities frequently work in essential jobs (those deemed critical for the community, state or federal government), lack safety nets if they become infected and can't go to work, and are at higher risk of getting sicker if they do contract COVID.

The Solution: Pop-up testing and vaccination sites are making it easier for low-income communities and communities of color to get information about tests and vaccines from trusted community members and in their native language. Last spring, half a dozen testing sites were set up in some of the hardest-hit communities in San Mateo County, thanks to Faith in Action Bay Area and grant money from SVCF's COVID-19 Regional Response Fund. Since then, more pop-up sites — run by other local nonprofits and the county — have sprung up to help people in these communities get tested and vaccinated, with healthcare professionals administering the tests and vaccines.

The Results: As of late August, 61 clinics in San Mateo County had either been completed or scheduled.

"Before SVCF stepped in, community members running these sites were basically responsible for things like supplies, PPE and food for volunteers out of pocket," says Lorena Melgarejo, executive director of Faith in Action Bay Area. "And that's not sustainable. SVCF was able to provide a grant quickly, with less red tape than what the government does."

Creating New Public Art in East Palo Alto

A local nonprofit is combining mentorship with creativity via a planned arts project

In the fall, about two dozen young people between the ages of 16 and 25 served as apprentices to an East Palo Alto muralist. Their mission?

To design and implement a water tank mural in a local affordable housing complex.

The project, which is scheduled for completion in spring of 2022, is being spearheaded by EPACENTER, a creative youth development organization and the recipient of a recent Arts & Culture Community Action grant from SVCF. The goal is to offer this group of young people valuable training in the arts, design and technology, and show them how to amplify those skills to realize their career aspirations.

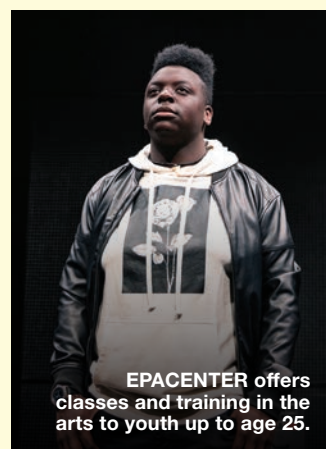
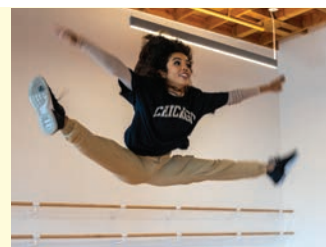
"We want to make sure that youth of color and the

underserved have equal access to creative tools and the resources that allow what they dream up to come alive," says Nadine Rambeau, EPACENTER's executive director.

The group will work with residents of the housing complex and wider community, soliciting ideas and feedback, and then design the mural together. "The project will get them familiar with people who utilize creative services, get them out in front of the community as leaders, and introduce them to the

nuts and bolts of creating a large-scale design project," Rambeau says.

About the Grant
SVCF's Arts & Culture grants help address disparities in funding and influence that have historically excluded Black and Indigenous communities and other communities of color (BIPOC). The grants are targeted mainly to BIPOC-led and allied organizations with budgets under \$1 million in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties.



EPACENTER offers classes and training in the arts to youth up to age 25.



Building **Power** Together

What does it mean to invest in the power of the people? SVCF has shifted its priorities to do exactly that

Picture this: an activity group for young girls that's based around engaging in politics, social justice issues and self-empowerment activities. It's a far cry from your grandmother's youth groups. But this is what it means to be part of a Radical Monarchs Troop. Established in 2014, Radical Monarchs are girls of color ages 8 to 11 who are interested in getting involved in their community, exploring their racial identities and learning what it means to love themselves unapologetically, especially in a society that will try to tell them otherwise.

"For marginalized communities to have collective power, they need to be in charge of the decision-making and then have the resources to implement those collective decisions," says Marilyn Hollinquest, co-founder of Radical Monarchs. "Marginalized communities need to have a voice so they can say, 'These are the things we need to thrive in this community.' There's money, people and resources

\$100K

In June 2021, Radical Monarchs, which has grown from two troops in the Bay Area to nine troops across the country, received a \$100,000 multi-year grant from the California Black Freedom Fund.

attached to that. We teach our girls about social justice movements in history and how to advocate for themselves and the communities they are connected to."

In June 2021, the organization, which has grown from two troops in the Bay Area to nine troops across the country in cities like Denver and Minneapolis, received a \$100,000 multi-year grant from the California Black Freedom Fund (for which SVCF provides administrative support and fiscal management). This unrestricted funding will allow the organization to work to sustain itself while building up the next generation of community leaders, and, Hollinquest says, it will enable the organization to launch even more troops across the country.

"The pressure of fundraising for your budget every year is real. It's a gift to be able to know that we can count on that funding through this multi-year grant," she says. "It allows us to do our work better because we don't have to shape-shift what we do in order to please a donor."

"Grassroots nonprofits have front-row visibility into the challenges their communities face and solutions that work. Sustained, committed operating funds are what they need."

This point is crucially important in supporting nonprofits that serve communities of color, says SVCF President and CEO Nicole Taylor, who was instrumental to the creation of the California Black Freedom Fund. "Grassroots nonprofits have front-row visibility into the challenges their communities face and solutions that work," she says. "Sustained, committed operating funds are what they need, not funding that can change on a whim or that they need to remake their priorities to obtain."

ADDRESSING AN IMBALANCE OF POWER

SVCF began rethinking elements of its grantmaking processes starting in 2020. It has evaluated what organizations its grants are going to, which communities are benefiting most from grant funding, and most importantly, who is left out and how SVCF can help increase the agency and voice of the communities it serves.



Radical Monarchs, which began in the Bay Area, hopes to keep growing across the country.

Wealth Inequity Leads to Power Imbalance

Although this region is one of the wealthiest in the United States, it is also one of the least equitable when it comes to wealth. In fact, a recent survey conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California estimates that top earners in the region make 12 times more money than the lowest earners in the area. The survey also found that Black and Latinx communities are overrepresented at lower income levels, and therefore extremely underrepresented at the high-income levels.

These issues lead to others. If low-income earners lose their job or if their wages fail to increase over an extended period, they are less likely to have savings and other forms of income to lean on. And because housing costs remain

stubbornly high in the area, it is difficult for these earners to afford living in the communities they call home. This makes capital a form of power. Those who don't have it struggle to make ends meet, but they also struggle to have their voices heard.

"There is so much wealth in Silicon Valley, and we want to make sure the results of this wealth can be used to positively impact the communities we serve," says Jack Mahoney, director of movement- and power-building at SVCF. "That's why we're asking ourselves, 'How can we invest in community agency, including low-income communities, in this region? And how can we ensure everyone has a seat at the decision-making table?'"

The nonprofit organization Radical Monarchs encourages girls of color ages 8 to 11 to get involved in their communities and explore their racial identities.



“Community solutions to address systemic inequities need to ... emerge from these communities.”

One way SVCF is working to address structural inequalities and power dynamics in the community is through three recently established grant funds: the California Black Freedom Fund, the LatinXCEL Fund and the Movement- and Power-Building Fund. These funds were created to address unequal access to power and funding by intentionally giving unrestricted funds to nonprofit organizations that organize and serve people of color, build coalitions and advocate for public policy changes.

Rather than focus on large nonprofits that do this work, SVCF and its partners have chosen to focus on smaller, grassroots organizations headed by Black leaders, Indigenous leaders and people of color — many of these organizations have annual operating budgets

of less than \$1 million. The reasoning: These nonprofits and their leaders have been part of these communities for years addressing the needs and concerns of their peers. They know better than anyone outside of their communities what is needed for them to thrive.

“We realized we needed to help build the ecosystem of these nonprofits, and invest in leadership and in their networks. If you don’t invest in the ecosystem, it will be difficult for organizations to grow from the ground up,” says Gina Dalma, SVCF’s executive vice president of community action, policy and strategy. “We shifted around 70% of our funding to movement- and power-building. Community solutions to address systemic inequities need to be designed by communities, sustained by communities and emerge from these communities. Otherwise, it won’t be sustainable.”

One of the organizations that recently received a movement- and power-building grant from SVCF has advocated for healthcare in the Latinx community for nearly two decades. Latinas Contra Cancer (LCC), founded by Bay Area journalist Ysabel Duron, helps Latinas and their families navigate their cancer diagnosis, treatment and long-term care. The organization will use its \$50,000 grant to create a new program called Defensoras: HealthCare Advocate Training. Designed to encourage the Latinx community to think differently about the healthcare system, the program teaches participants about patients’ rights, healthcare justice and treatment options. The goal is to help the Latinx community see injustices in their healthcare treatment as systemic and to empower participants to lead conversations in the broader Latinx community about healthcare inequalities and strategies for inclusivity.



Latinas Contra Cancer received a movement- and power-building grant from SVCF that will help it expand its programming for Latinas and their families navigating cancer diagnoses.

“We want to help clients understand that the health injustices they experience are not one-off events. It’s a systems issue, not a personal issue,” says Darcie Green, CEO of LCC. “We want to be an organization that not only helps people overcome these inequities — we want to eliminate them. This is the future for our organization. We’re hoping that through these cohorts we start building a network of clients who can start helping each other.”

REAL RESULTS

In 2021 alone, grants from the Movement- and Power-Building Fund, the California Black Freedom Fund and the LatinXCEL Fund went to more than 100 different nonprofits in the Bay Area and across California (via

the California Black Freedom Fund), totaling more than \$15 million in support. Since its shift in grantmaking focus began, SVCF has received largely positive responses from the local nonprofit community. The next step: SVCF is creating a new evaluation framework that will help gauge the impact of its new approach.

“Our staff is part of these underrepresented communities; they have been pushing us toward this way of thinking and funding,” Dalma says. “It was clear that we needed to shift what we were doing and allow the community to lead the work. The philanthropy sector is going through a point where we’ve acknowledged there is a power dynamic that has not served our community well. If we want to be a healthier, better Silicon Valley, we need to be sure we’re doing everything we can, and if what we’ve been doing hasn’t been working, we need to use different tactics.”

Q&A: Equity Forward

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, the inequalities that have existed in underserved communities for decades reached a boiling point. In response, SVCF and leaders in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties began to create plans that would not only address new issues that formed due to the pandemic but also long-standing ones, including the yawning income gap, the high cost of living in the area and the lack of affordable housing.

SVCF and its partners, Stanford University and Joint Venture Silicon Valley, are launching a new initiative to implement this plan. This project, called Equity Forward, is overseen by SVCF’s Community Partnerships and Learning department, which is led by Avo Makdessian. Here, Makdessian explains what Equity Forward is, what it looks like in practice and why it’s important to the Santa Clara and San Mateo communities.

What is Equity Forward?

Equity Forward is an initiative, in partnership with local government leaders, community organizations and higher education institutions, that aims to address the drivers of systemic inequity in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. Specifically, Equity Forward will:

1. Strengthen community by investing in programs that build up community leaders’ power to both advocate for short-term priorities and build long-term movements.
2. Implement bold, local pilot programs focused on the racial economic divide that leverage the resources of local higher education institutions.
3. Activate employers as champions of equity to co-design practices and initiatives that increase equity for workers, job seekers and the community.

Why was the creation of Equity Forward so important?

Because it will address immediate community needs while also focusing on building back a more equitable region for the long run. Equity Forward is squarely focused on closing the racial economic divide in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. We’re imagining a region where:

- Wealth becomes the status quo for communities of color, rather than cycles of poverty.
- Every employee is paid a thriving wage, not just a living wage.
- All residents can afford to have a safe and stable place to call home, regardless of race.

What has been the most challenging aspect of this work?

Equity Forward was initially created to focus on specific recovery efforts including policy and structural changes in our community. However, when we met with community leaders to test that approach, it was clear that to have lasting change, we needed to go deeper. This means examining and addressing the conditions of our community that have created and exacerbated the racial economic divide, including power structures, racist narratives and historically discriminatory policies. It also means examining the role each sector of our community plays in either furthering racial economic equity or inhibiting it.

What excites you about the future of Equity Forward?

What makes the promise of Equity Forward different and exciting is that we are addressing racial economic inequity by shifting the conditions that hold the inequity in place — from policies and practices to power dynamics and relationships, to how individuals perceive our region. It is invigorating to see different sectors of our community, including philanthropy, nonprofits, higher education and the private sector, coming together for this initiative.



Convening a New Council

Through the Community Advisory Council, local leaders of color are giving voice to issues of equity

In 2020, SVCF took a step it hadn't taken before. "Creating the Community Advisory Council (CAC) was a critical cultural shift for our institution," says Mauricio Palma, director of community-building for SVCF. "Historically, we've built relationships to tell the story of the foundation. The CAC centers the community in the storytelling process and doesn't put the foundation first."

The idea for the council was born out of SVCF's work on its new strategic plan, which was finalized at the beginning of 2020. Under the leadership of President and CEO Nicole Taylor, SVCF staff and the

board of directors developed a plan that would center grantmaking efforts around reducing systemic disparities and injustices that affect people in the region who typically face the harshest circumstances — communities of color, immigrants, undocumented residents and low-income households.

During the planning stages, SVCF invited community leaders of color to gatherings to share their history, guidance and feedback — important information that could help direct the foundation's new efforts. It quickly became evident, however, that even more needed to be done before true change could happen. Community

leaders were looking for a presence that went beyond grantmaking — they wanted to have critical conversations about the challenges in their communities and address the root of those challenges.

"The systems we're working within have historically oppressed communities of color, and that carries into the doors of many organizations that weren't rooted in serving those communities," says André Chapman, CEO and founder of Unity Care and a member of the council. "They don't know what they don't know."

The CAC, which was formed midway through 2020, brings together more than 20 leaders of color to provide input as the foundation moves its strategic plan forward. To populate the council, SVCF identified not just large organizations but also small and emerging ones led by people of color who had already been creating community-driven solutions and were closest to

the affected communities and regions. The group includes leaders who bring a variety of different experiences to the table, including backgrounds in education, faith, social work and the arts.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In 2021, the Community Advisory Council, which had been founded as a pilot program, was recognized as a fully accepted advisory committee. Up next: defining its agenda. "Given that many CAC members indicated that they wanted to be part of an organization that had a more defined purpose, it's important for them to be included in defining that," Palma says.

CAC members have also expressed interest in using the council as a platform by which they can engage other philanthropic institutions about issues critical to communities of color.

"I have seen some movement in the right direction by other

The Community Advisory Council brings together more than 20 leaders of color to provide input on SVCF's efforts to move its strategic plan forward.

local and regional funders, but a lot of work still needs to be done," says Chike C. Nwoffiah, founder and executive director of the Silicon Valley African Film Festival and a CAC member. "One of the major upsides to the Community Advisory Council is the signal it has sent to other philanthropic institutions that cultural competency is a crucial determinant factor to successful community investment. As our nation reckons with the dark shadows of historical marginalization of communities of color, the CAC has become a shining example of how philanthropic institutions can engage our communities through genuine partnerships. As CAC members, we have also built relationships with each other, and the CAC has become a quasi-support system for BIPOC leaders with an understanding of our shared history, challenges and opportunities."

Reflections from Three Community Advisory Council Members

"Systemic racism is not just within government entities, it's within every walk of life — banking, education, housing. It doesn't escape foundations, either. By wanting to convene leaders of color, SVCF created a place where we could have courageous conversations. If we really want to create equality and give access to underserved, marginalized communities, we have to do things that are very intentional. This should be a model that other foundations follow."



André Chapman, CEO and founder of Unity Care

"SVCF made it its business to bring leaders of color to its table and say, 'Tell us what you're doing, help us understand it better and, more importantly, help us shape the future of this foundation, because we need to be where we are most needed.' As someone who has been part of the community for more than three decades, I'd never gotten that call — ever. This was a turning point. For the first time, we thought there were possibilities. We'd



Chike C. Nwoffiah, founder and executive director of the Silicon Valley African Film Festival

"The CAC is a clear example of how to center those with lived experience and community experience. I can count on the foundation to listen. That trust, that confidence, helps me as a leader to know that not only is this work important, but also that we're going to be in dialogue about the most emergent needs, and there's going to be an outcome. That's not something you can always say about a foundation. They've been walking their walk. That's impressive and hard to do."



Patricia Barahona, CEO of Youth Leadership Institute

Visionaries

On a Mission to Advance Equity

For John Matthew and Andie Sobrato, there has never been a more important time to refine their approach to philanthropy

By Shayla Martin

There's no shortage of challenging issues that need solutions. And with so many organizations doing incredible work to provide relief to their respective communities, it can be overwhelming for community-minded people to determine where to dedicate their time and resources. Having both an understanding of one's own core values and a clear strategy is vital, say John Matthew and Andie Sobrato — and nothing defined the couple's philanthropic strategy more than the tumultuous nature of 2020. From the coronavirus pandemic to disaster relief efforts to combating racial injustice, the Sobratos agree that now is the time to make bigger bets in their grantmaking because so much is at stake.

"The overriding theme of our grantmaking is about advancing equity and fairness in society so that everybody has an opportunity to succeed," John Matthew says. "Andie and I often use the lenses of race and gender to inform our priorities, as both are connected to groups of people who have been historically oppressed here in the Bay Area and across our country."

John Matthew and Andie are both Bay Area natives. Andie runs her own personal styling business, and John Matthew is a former teacher who has transitioned to full-time nonprofit work. As a lifelong observer of the power of philanthropy through his family's multigenerational legacy of giving, John Matthew now serves as vice chair of the board for Sobrato Philanthropies.

The couple's three main areas of focus are social justice for marginalized communities, educational opportunity for women and students of color, and women's rights and health. In addition to supporting these issues, they were also able to identify opportunities to aid with the region's current housing crisis, thanks to suggestions from their SVCF philanthropy advisor.

No matter the cause or organization, though, the Sobratos believe in the concept of trust-based philanthropy. That means that instead of dictating to an organization their own priorities as a couple, they

"The overriding theme of our grantmaking is about advancing equity and fairness in society so that everybody has an opportunity to succeed," says John Matthew Sobrato.

SAUL BROMBERG & SANDRA HOOVER PHOTOGRAPHY

trust the experts within the organization to direct support based on the solutions the organization wants to pursue.

A perfect example is the ¡Sí Se Puede! Collective, an alliance of five community-based organizations serving San Jose. "¡Sí Se Puede! serves as a safety net to the San Jose community, providing a host of services as well as community organizing to advocate for the solutions they want," John Matthew says.

Post-COVID, the couple is looking forward to learning, engaging with other philanthropists and subject matter experts and seeing the work in person.

"We want to visit grantees and really dive into how the work is being executed," Andie says. "Seeing the impact of these organizations on the people they touch is very motivating and helps us become better philanthropists and better understand the strategies and approaches that will bring about a more just world."

How to Get Started

When it comes to beginning a journey into philanthropy, John Matthew and Andie Sobrato offer concrete advice.

- 1 Embrace What Drives You:** "It's so personal trying to figure out where to give, and I think it's important to really listen to yourself and identify what compels you and what issues speak to your heart," Andie says. "It's not to say that other issues are less pressing, but chances are there is something that pulls at you in a way that makes you want to go deep, and you should lean into that."
- 2 Remain Teachable and Humble:** "Stay engaged and keep learning," Andie says. "I've spoken to so many people in the maternal health space to hear all different perspectives on the issues and understand how to tackle them from various angles. It's so important to learn all of the approaches and details from experts." John Matthew adds that humility is key when partnering with people who understand the challenges on a deeper level. "If you don't share a similar lived experience with the groups of people you are partnering with, you have to show trust in them and realize that you are not the expert on the solutions to the challenges they face, no matter how many books you've read or how much work you've done," he says. "You have to have that level of humility to really learn from those groups and let them lead."
- 3 Get Started Now:** "If you have philanthropic capital to deploy, get started now," John Matthew says. "You don't need to wait until your twilight years to get to work. So many people across different geographies need help today, not when it's convenient for a person to give later in their life, so you've got to be willing to take some risks."
- 4 Stay Patient:** "So many of our areas of giving are working toward changing entire systems in various ways and that is not a short process," John Matthew says. "You're going to hit obstacles, meander a bit and face challenges you didn't originally foresee, so being able to see the organizations stay nimble and be resilient is a key sign that your giving is having an impact."

Visionaries

Investing in a Smarter, Better-Connected Future

Karen Law is committed to building and strengthening communities, one connection at a time — and her donor advised fund at SVCF helps make that happen

By Jessica Dunham

Karen Law looks to both for-profit and nonprofit vehicles to strengthen communities.



SAUL BROMBERGER & SANDRA HOOVER PHOTOGRAPHY

“Philanthropy is a humble recognition that all of the resources we have at our disposal — money, skill, experience, time — are borrowed from a collective whole.”

It started simply enough. As recent Stanford grads in the mid-aughts, Karen Law and her husband, Eric Sun, made donations every Christmas in lieu of gifts — a philanthropic endeavor that not only bonded the pair, but also set the tone for what was to come for the couple.

“Philanthropy is a humble recognition that all of the resources we have at our disposal — money, skill, experience, time — are borrowed from a collective whole,” Law says. “Selecting a nonprofit together was a cherished exercise in reflecting on the past year and our hopes for the coming year.”

Then, in 2016 at age 32, Sun was diagnosed with glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer. He died in November 2017. In the last 14 months of his life, Law and Sun turned their “one day” ideas about philanthropy into “now.”

They created a fund at SVCF so that while he was still alive, Sun could plan for and establish charitable vehicles, leaving his money to the causes that he believed in.

Since Sun’s death, Law has expanded and refined the couple’s giving strategies, and describes herself as an “investor in a smarter, better-connected future.”

“I look for opportunities to build and strengthen communities, using both for-profit and nonprofit vehicles,” Law explains. “I see the arts, sustainability and equitable empowerment as three key areas of opportunity. On any given day, I may be working on a fundraising campaign for a performing arts nonprofit, screening technical proposals for clean energy investments and learning about a new women-led venture.”

With this mission in mind, the Peninsula resident experiments with various vehicles in those three key areas. She cites Melinda French Gates’ and Bill Gates’ notion of looking for problems that can’t be fixed by the market or governments as a lens through which she understands philanthropy.

“Some areas, like diversity in leadership, clean energy and smarter transportation, can be powerfully served by business and/or policy,” Law says. “Others, like the performing arts, environmental protection, journalism and civil rights, benefit from philanthropic attention.”

Through her donor advised fund at SVCF, Law makes one-time, recurring and recoverable grants. She appreciates her partnership with SVCF for its ability to leverage its position as a community connector and matchmaker and for helping her learn what she doesn’t know.

“I’ve come to count on SVCF to flag the most pressing challenges facing our community and to convene thought-leadership events,” she says. At one such event, Law had the opportunity to chat with social entrepreneur Jim Fruchterman, whose nonprofit work she long admired. Fruchterman advised, “Only make it a nonprofit if it can’t work as a for-profit.” Experiences like this have helped shape the way Law views impact. “There are few partners,” she says, “who have both the community-mindedness and scope of work that SVCF does.”

Shifting, Sharpening Philanthropic Focus

Law believes that her journey with Sun crystalized her conviction about philanthropy — that even if they’re small things, even if they won’t solve the world’s biggest problems, it’s doing something that makes the difference. “We may not yet have the full resources to deliver the perfect solution,” Law says, “but in the meantime, there’s one life waiting to be touched, one connection waiting to be made and one person for whom a little encouragement makes a world of difference.”

The COVID-19 pandemic — and the imbalance of power that it has laid bare — further sharpened her philanthropic views. Law’s current collaborations revolve around two concepts, both of which are opportunities to realign power within our communities.

First, by investing in pathways to financial citizenship, a concept she became familiar with through her work with the Mission Asset Fund, Law hopes to empower women, Black and Indigenous people and other people of color, immigrants, low-income people, and other often unheard members of the community to find their voices and unlock all levels of economic opportunity. And second, as a staff member and board member of Palo Alto Players, the Peninsula’s first theater company, Law is leveraging the performing arts as a powerful platform for diversity, equity and inclusion.

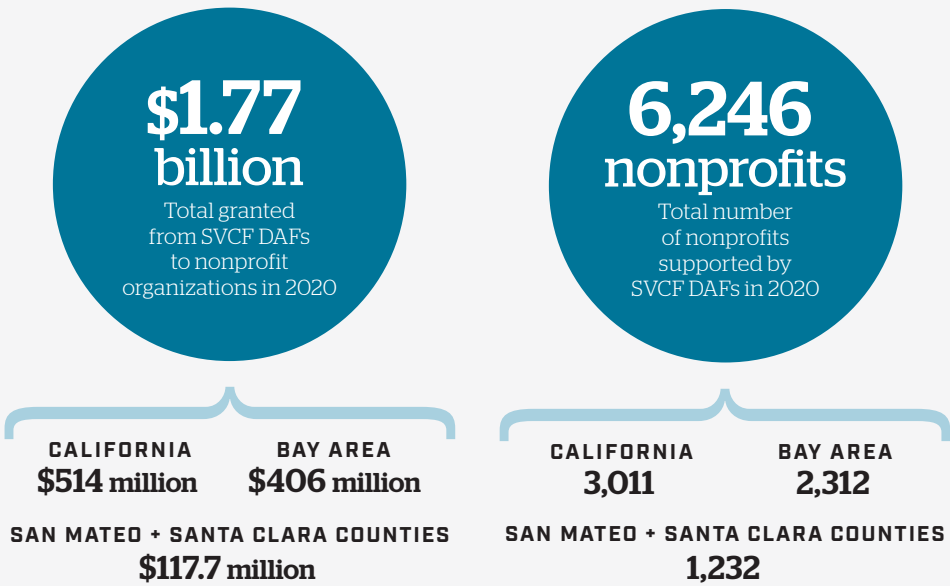
“The events of the past year-plus have shown that we can either express outrage and solidarity and then move on, or we can take a hard look at our hearts and minds through the stories we perpetuate. When diversity, equity and inclusion are approached not as a *cause* but as a *lens*, we create wide horizons in our thinking and uncover untapped opportunities in every part of our lives.”

The Power of Donor Advised Funds

The increased popularity of donor advised funds (DAFs) has raised public interest about how these funds operate. Here, we share the impact DAFs have made on our region and how they amplify giving to nonprofit organizations both now and in the future.

18.7%

Annual 2020 average payout rate from advised funds held at SVCF



*The SVCF numbers reported here measure donor advised, corporate advised and committee advised funds and memorial funds. Donor advised funds make up the vast majority of SVCF's funds.

TOP 5 AREAS SUPPORTED BY SVCF DAFs IN 2020

1

Community Development

2

Education

3

General Nonprofit Support

4

Civil Participation

5

Health

6 WAYS DONOR ADVISED FUNDS SUPPORT NONPROFITS

- 1

Provide an easy charitable giving tool. DAFs are an easy-to-use tool that help donors manage their giving and provide them with access to SVCF's in-depth community knowledge and philanthropic consulting. Anyone can open a DAF; the minimum amount required to open one with SVCF is \$5,000.
More than 1,800 individuals and families partner with SVCF, using its donor advised fund services and community expertise to create lasting, positive change in Silicon Valley and across the world. Of these funds, nearly 40% have balances of less than \$25,000.
- 2

Expand the community of engaged donors. SVCF connects donors to pressing issues facing our communities and helps them identify charitable opportunities to support. SVCF regularly offers learning opportunities at which donors can gain insight about challenges facing our region and ways they can support community leaders who are leading change.
In 2020, SVCF held more than 25 educational events, inspiring philanthropists to give more than \$1.9 billion to support nonprofits locally, in California, nationally and around the world.
- 3

Support the community during difficult times. DAFs continue to provide a steady stream of support during economic recessions and crises, ensuring our communities have access to immediate, as well as long-term, support.
Thanks to its generous donors, SVCF's COVID-19 response funds mobilized \$64 million to aid Bay Area families, nonprofits, small businesses and educational partners in 2020. SVCF's donors granted an additional \$246 million from their advised funds to support COVID-related causes locally, nationally and internationally.
- 4

Foster active philanthropists. SVCF's policies ensure that grant funds get out the door. If after two years a donor has not made any grant recommendations from their fund, SVCF will transfer the balance into its Community Endowment Fund for community grantmaking.
The average annual payout rate of SVCF's advised funds in 2020 was 18.7%. That's significantly higher than the 5% annual payout required of private foundations.
- 5

Open doors to new charitable resources. Donors can donate a wide range of assets to their DAFs, from stock proceeds to real estate. This allows nonprofits to benefit from donations of noncash assets that might otherwise be too complex for many organizations to accept or process.
SVCF works with many entrepreneurial donors who create charitable funds using illiquid or restricted gifts, and who frequently pursue strategies to extend their philanthropy, including through impact investments and direct investment opportunities.
- 6

Grow giving through charitable investment returns. DAFs maximize giving by growing charitable assets and distributing more to nonprofits over time.
From 2015 to 2019, the investment returns on people's donor advised funds nationwide equaled an estimated growth of \$5 billion, creating more capacity to grant to community and social impact causes.

A Look Ahead



How the Pandemic Has Shaped Cisco's Crisis Response Efforts

By Erin Connor

The pandemic has resulted in a global crisis on a scale that many of us have never witnessed, and my specific area of focus at Cisco is crisis response — whether providing access to basic needs, such as food, shelter and clean water, or responding to humanitarian crises or disasters.

During this time, Cisco — the worldwide leader in technology that powers the internet — has expanded its disaster-relief campaigns through which employees can donate to nonprofits and have their gifts matched by the Cisco Foundation. We launched seven regional campaigns around the globe, featuring nearly 80 nonprofit organizations, which was, frankly, unheard of in our company's history.

The Cisco Fund at SVCF has given us yet another strategic avenue through which to support our work with NGOs (nongovernmental organizations), universities and other partners that are active in the areas where we seek to make the biggest impact.

During the pandemic, Cisco donated an additional \$10 million to Destination: Home. The funds helped provide emergency financial assistance to families in Santa Clara County, with 94% of the funding going to households of color.

THE INTERSECTION OF RACIAL EQUITY AND CRISES

Our grants have always had a focus on marginalized populations, but what became more apparent in recent months is the intersectionality between racial equity and crises.

Destination: Home, an organization working to end homelessness in Santa Clara County, is a grant recipient we have worked with since 2018. During the pandemic, we donated an additional \$10 million to help the organization provide emergency financial assistance to families that suffered a job loss, lost wages or financial hardship due to COVID-19. Of that funding, 94% went to households of color.

The commitment to racial equity and social justice is represented in our portfolio through the partners we support, but we also see an opportunity to shift the systemic structures that have historically oppressed people of color.

In 2020, Cisco took additional actions to support the Black community, including investing in historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). We are using some of our long-running corporate social responsibility programs to meet this commitment: Cisco Networking Academy, our technology education program, will be available to all HBCUs, with increased student recruitment opportunities and free instructor training. We also launched our first-ever HBCU Startup Prize within the Cisco Global Problem Solver Challenge, a program that awards \$1 million to early-stage technology entrepreneurs solving the world's most pressing social and environmental problems. The HBCU Startup Prize is awarded to a team with at least one founder who is an HBCU student or graduate.

When we ultimately move beyond the pandemic, this same commitment will continue to guide our grantmaking and disaster-relief support around the globe.



Erin Connor leads the crisis response team at Cisco, a San Jose-based global technology company. Her group's funding portfolio is part of Cisco's broader Corporate Philanthropy and Corporate Social Responsibility grantmaking team, which aims to create an inclusive future and bring equitable access to opportunities.

“Community solutions to address systemic inequities need to be designed by communities, sustained by communities and emerge from these communities. Otherwise, it won't be sustainable.”

Gina Dalma

Executive Vice President of Community Action, Policy and Strategy

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Bringing people together for the greater good — that's where transformation happens. At Silicon Valley Community Foundation, we listen to and learn from our neighbors and catalyze resources so we can help create a more equitable community. From January through November 2021, we distributed nearly \$700 million in grants to Bay Area nonprofit organizations, thanks to the generosity of our donors.

Join SVCF to find out how together we can make a **difference**.

