

Published April 1st, 2020

## Nonprofit food delivery service finds that when the world closes a door, it opens a window

By Sora O'Doherty



White Pony Express volunteers offer food donations, many from Starbucks, to hungry recipients. Photo Helen Jones

White Pony Express was founded by Dr. Carol Weyland Conner in September 2013 on the simple idea that supermarkets had excess food that was being thrown out while people who couldn't afford food were going hungry. Today, with everyone sheltering in place, supermarkets are no longer having the problem of excess food to get rid of, but White Pony Express has acquired other large donors so that they can continue to provide food for the hungry.

Helen Jones, White Pony Express's Food Rescue Operations Manager, says that grocery store donations are now one-fifth of what they were, because grocery shelves are pretty empty. "If they don't have abundance, we don't," she said. But White Pony Express has managed to tap into some big distributors who have donated pallets of food to the nonprofit organization. These large donors have been keeping White Pony Express afloat. Some of these donors serve restaurants, so they actually have excess food now. One is a

subscription food service. "If they don't receive as many orders as they projected, then we can pick up the excess," Jones added. Another big donor to the project is Starbucks, now limited to only take-out or drive-through at its stores.

Noting that this is "definitely a very vulnerable time," Jones said that another big program of the nonprofit is their food pantry program. They operate 11 food pantries throughout the county where they provide fresh food to schools that have free and reduced food programs currently not operating. "On certain days," Jones explained, "we deliver to some churches and community centers, mostly in East and West Contra Costa County, including Richmond, Antioch, Pittsburg, and Bay Point."

Jones explained that many of its volunteers fall into the category of persons who must now stay at home, but nevertheless staffing is going better, because community groups, church groups, and families who are now at home together have been coming down and volunteering.

To volunteer to help White Pony Express, email [volunteer@whiteponyexpress.org](mailto:volunteer@whiteponyexpress.org) or go to its website, <https://www.whiteponyexpress.org>, where you can also make donations.

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