

# SANTA MARIA COMMUNITY SERVICES

Daljit  
Kaur



Fall 2020 Newsletter

# From the President & CEO

Dear Friends of Santa Maria Services,



As the holiday season approaches, I'd like to thank you for giving hope to the families of Price Hill throughout 2020! This year, we've seen families face some real challenges to their lives and futures.

*H.A. Musser*

Despite the pandemic, our day-to-day work continues. During the summer, we delivered over 1,500 gallons of soup, donated from La Soupe, and over 50,000 pounds of food donated by the Freestore Foodbank. We continue to deliver diapers and wipes, thanks to Sweet Cheeks Diaper Bank, with over 30,000 diapers going out over the summer. We also delivered thousands of Power Packs from Childhood Food Solutions. We've distributed over 4,500 face masks as well as 2,000 bottles of hand sanitizer and over 300 cleaning supply bundles. Some of our classes, like Parents on Point and Paz Financiera (Financial Peace), have pivoted to online learning, with more to come in the future. As you will see, our early childhood development graduations were celebrated virtually this year along with our High School Equivalency graduation.

We are also looking ahead to #GivingTuesday! Mark your calendar for December 1st! But why wait? You can donate to our #GivingTuesday campaign right now at [SMCS.GiveSmart.com](https://SMCS.GiveSmart.com).

H.A. Musser, Jr., President & CEO

*"During the summer, we delivered over 1,500 gallons of soup, 50,000 pounds of food, 30,000 diapers, 4,500 face masks and 2,000 bottles of hand sanitizer."*

-H.A. Musser, President & CEO

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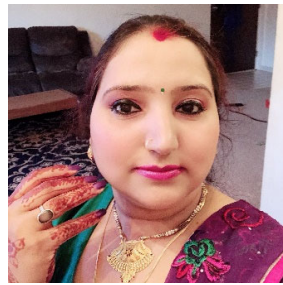


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# On the Cover

## Daljit Kaur

Daljit Kaur and her husband, Karamjit Singh, immigrated to the United States from Punjab, India to give their children, Ekampreet-14, Sukhpreet-10 and Simarpreet-4 a better life and future. They found many challenges in moving into the Delhi Township community, including their immigration status, the language barrier, and lack of job opportunities. They were also concerned about their youngest son, Simarpreet, who was having difficulties with his speech and social skills.



*Daljit Kaur*

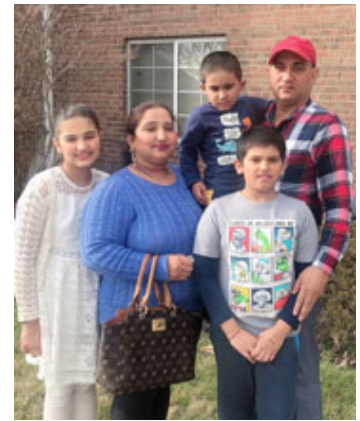


*Daljit and Karamjit*

Daljit and Karamjit, who spoke Punjabi and Hindi, found out about Santa Maria through a flyer that was posted at their job site featuring Santa Maria's free English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. Francesca Phillis, a Bilingual Office Coordinator

at Santa Maria, worked with the family. "I first met Daljit and her husband, Karamjit in our ESL Program. My first impression of the family was that they were so positive and optimistic and always ready to learn something new." Daljit found great value in the ESL Program because it allowed the family to attend English classes without worrying about childcare, as childcare is provided by Santa Maria for children whose families attend ESL classes. Since graduating from the ESL Program, Daljit and Karamjit have participated in a variety of other Santa Maria programs including Promoting Our Preschoolers, and financial coaching.

After getting to know the family better, Francesca enrolled them as participants in Santa Maria's Family Centered Leadership Team's research database as a family with a concentrated effort on goal setting and tracking. This project is a forward-thinking effort/cohort aimed at reducing the effect of Ohio's child welfare crisis by setting goals with the families and focusing on certain aspects such as families' housing, child and adult education, and budgeting. This initiative is supported by Santa Maria's community-based team with a goal to help a small cohort (around 80 families) to transition from crisis to career. This group also facilitates smoother transitions across all of the programs at Santa Maria along with more focused case management. Through the Wellness team, the couple was connected to Legal Aid to help them with their immigration case.



*Ekampreet, Daljit, Simarpreet, Sukhpreet and Karamjit*

Daljit and Simarpreet also participated in the Promoting our Preschoolers (POP) program. POP is a family-focused kindergarten-readiness program that works collaboratively with families, schools, and the community through home visitation. The home visits include developmental screens, advocacy, parent support and education, and referrals for children and their families. Daljit found the POP program invaluable, because the family was able to obtain resources and support that helped Simarpreet develop his speech skills.

Regine Gordon, Santa Maria Family Advocate and Group Facilitator, began working with Daljit in August 2019. "Her family has been a joy to work with!" Regine said, "Although Daljit had some developmental concerns with Simarpreet, she was extremely eager to engage with me, follow through on testing, and is already seeing results. Simarpreet is enjoying his new preschool program and is always eager to participate in activities on my home visits. This family has a bright future!"

[Continued on next page...]

Daljit and Karamjit recently started financial coaching through Santa Maria's Financial Opportunity Center. Santa Maria offers free financial education, coaching, and tools to help individuals reach their financial goals. Services are available to assist participants to make educated decisions regarding finances so they can increase net income, credit, and net worth.

Daljit said that Santa Maria has improved her life in many ways. Daljit and Karamjit have not only honed their English language abilities, but they were also able to find Simarpreet a school that accommodated his needs. Daljit was very pleased that Simarpreet was able to participate in fun programs that were sponsored by the Most Valuable Kids through Santa Maria's POP program. They have helped him develop new social skills that he can put to good use in school.

Daljit and Karamjit's goal is to give their children a brighter future and better education. Daljit would also like to use Santa Maria's help to get her High School Equivalency diploma so she can go to school to become a pre-school teacher and eventually own her own house.

"This family has taught me so much about the importance of family since they are so close-knit and they taught me to always remain positive," Francesca said. "Their hard work and dedication are inspirational, and I can't wait to see all that they will accomplish!"

*"Although Daljit had some developmental concerns with Simarpreet, she was extremely eager to engage with me, follow through on testing, and is already seeing results. Simarpreet is enjoying his new preschool program and is always eager to participate in activities on my home visits. This family has a bright future!"*

-Regine Gordon, Santa Maria Family Advocate and Group Facilitator

# Santa Maria's Youth Development Program Soldiers on During the COVID-19 Pandemic



Joe Williams Family Center

Since Santa Maria's Youth Development Program's big move into the Joe Williams Family Center, (formerly Espy Boys & Girls club) four years ago, there has been great room for program growth and expansion, and although the COVID-19 pandemic caused some temporary cuts to personnel, Santa Maria continues to serve families and young people of Lower Price Hill (LPH). Beyond facilitating social/emotional skills groups for middle school students at Oyler School, Santa Maria's Youth Development Program has had the opportunity to lead various after school programs, including the start of a sports league for younger children, and reviving a Girl Scout troop. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the doors to the Joe Williams Family Center (JWFC) were open four days a week, allowing us to serve more youth than ever before, providing a safe space to play basketball, make art, receive academic assistance, play board games, and mingle with their friends.

Every summer, four teens are hired to work in the Community Gardens in Lower Price Hill, learning how to grow their own food and plants, caretaking,

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and realizing the value of shared spaces for their neighbors. Another group of teens meet with Cincy Stories, a nonprofit organization dedicated to building community through storytelling, collecting stories from residents and staff, and producing their own podcast, "Young Voices of Cincinnati." You can find their interviews on the Podcast App (<http://bit.ly/3cukBax>). In addition to great programs, our youth plan service projects, support community gatherings, and take weekly field trips each summer.



*Young Voices of Cincinnati*

In response to increased youth violence across the city last summer, a social justice group called the Justice League was formed. In the Justice League teens come together to discuss pro-social topics, support community events, and positively contribute to their neighborhood. Justice League was even invited to present at the Neighborhood Summit in March, but that had to be postponed due to COVID-19.



*Justice League*

Santa Maria has partnered with many programs and organizations, connecting the coolest kids to the greatest opportunities. Those partnerships include: Community Matters, Lower Price Hill Artist Collective, District Three Police, Oyler School, WordPlay, Women Helping Women, Redemption Ranch, Indigo Hippo, 1Girl, Urban League, and Cincy Stories, just to name a few. Santa Maria also has a group of wonderful volunteers who have become lifelong mentors to some of our youth. Staff work hard to keep these relationships strong and steady, as they know it takes time to build trust, and a village to raise a child.

Beyond youth work, our administrative assistant, Nancy Laird, works to connect adults in the community to any resources they may need, navigating systems to ensure sustainable supports for households. Nancy has helped families get assistance with food, benefits, unemployment and other services. Due to COVID-19, families now must make an appointment, wear a mask, and maintain social distancing while in our facility.

Our program has worked hard to shape a community and youth-led environment, addressing and working through barriers, building intentional relationships with residents, and discovering all the beautiful assets of Lower Price Hill. Even though the pandemic has halted group programming, forced three members of the Youth Development Program team to go on unemployment because of the budget cuts in social service funds from the City of Cincinnati, and changed the means by which staff could provide support to LPH families, the two remaining staff pressed on to provide services as safely as possible. JWFC recently received renewed City of Cincinnati funding that brings a collaborative of partners, businesses, residents, and police officers together in order to brainstorm and facilitate activities that focus on preventing violence in LPH.

Jessica Polzin, Youth Development Program Director at Santa Maria, was proud of how JWFC was able to continue services during the pandemic,

Staff facilitated small group virtual meetings with youth, and initiated phone calls with individuals as a means of communication to support families. Emergency assistance was also provided over the phone to assist adults with unemployment, benefits, taxes, and more. Food resources, gift cards, toiletries, and other tangible items were still dropped off with families as needed. Group service projects turned into individual efforts as youth utilized service project supplies that were dropped off at their front door by staff members to bless their friends, family, and neighbors.

Intentional support to youth and families has continued to be the forefront of services in Santa Maria's Youth Development Program. There are still numerous uncertainties present as COVID-19 lingers on, but JWFC is beginning to develop small group face-to-face programming for youth in hopes to combat the feelings of isolation and depression during this trying season. Only time will tell what the future holds for everyone, but we are all in it together.

# Santa Maria and Raphael Moore Partner with Sweet Cheeks Diaper Bank

Roughly half of the youth served by the Santa Maria Community Services' (SMCS) Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP) are parents. Raphael (Rae) Moore, mom to R.J.-5, is one of those parents. She can attest that parenting is many things - hard work, fun, rewarding, and challenging. But she would also agree that parenthood is expensive!

Rae joined Santa Maria's CCMEP program in January



*Raphael Moore*

2020. She knew firsthand that many families in the Greater Cincinnati Area struggle to afford diapers for their children. That's where Cincinnati's only nonprofit diaper bank comes in.

Sweet Cheeks has been one of Santa Maria's most valuable partners. In addition to assisting youth by providing diapers and other essential female sanitary materials, Sweet Cheeks is a worksite host to a Santa Maria CCMEP youth through the CCMEP Work Experience Program.

In June 2020, Santa Maria partnered with Sweet Cheeks Diaper Bank to become a worksite for Santa Maria's Work Experience Program giving youth the opportunity to gain experience in nonprofit work and community engagement. With help from founder, Megan Fischer, and Program Manager, Jean Hodge, Santa Maria successfully placed Rae at the worksite within the first several weeks of the partnership. Since then, Sweet Cheeks Diaper Bank has invested in Rae just as much as they do in their own employees, making sure that she feels supported and gets as much out of her time there as possible.

As Sweet Cheeks' Community Engagement Associate, Rae is tasked with leading volunteer groups, sorting and counting donations, and scheduling volunteer events. With Sweet Cheeks Diaper Bank distributing 195,925 diapers, 45 potty-training toolkits, and 1,338 period supply kits in July alone, this is no small task! Jean says that Rae has exceeded expectations in her role and continues to do a great job at her work site,

We are thrilled that Rae is working with us!...In her first week she assimilated very well into the mix of our team. She takes initiative to complete work that is assigned to her, asks questions when she needs more information and she is a joy to be around! We aim to give Rae the experience she is looking for to set her on a course for future career development.

Rae echoes the positive feedback of the site, saying, "I love the collaboration and flexibility within the team at Sweet Cheeks. I am very grateful to work with them." As someone who has received diapers from Sweet Cheeks Diaper Bank in the past, Rae says that it has been great seeing how much work goes into running the diaper bank and getting as many diapers out to families as possible.

Sweet Cheeks Diaper Bank continues to be an irreplaceable resource for Santa Maria's clients. Santa Maria's Early Childhood Administrative Assistant, Gina Hornback, reports that for the SMCS August order, she counted approximately 170 clients served. Hornback continued, "They are a tremendous resource for our agency and clients!"

Rae's work experience is set to go until the end of December, and she is excited for everything she will have learned in her six months there. Having the opportunity to work with Sweet Cheeks fully achieves the goal of Santa Maria's Work Experience Program, which is to provide youth with work experience in a motivating, rewarding, and challenging workplace. Santa Maria and Sweet Cheeks Diaper Bank look forward to continuing their partnership in the future and fulfilling their commitment to service the Cincinnati community.



# Congratulations Promoting Our Preschoolers 2020 Grads



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## Our Mission

Santa Maria Community Services is a catalyst and advocate for Cincinnati's Greater Price Hill families to attain their educational, financial, and health goals.

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# Congratulations Every Child Succeeds 2020 Graduates





**SANTA MARIA**  
**COMMUNITY SERVICES**  
*Helping Families Help Themselves Since 1897*

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