



The Faces of Need During the Pandemic

Presented by:



T is a 40-year-old single woman who has no home and depends on asking for money in order to eat. M is 41 years old. She lost her job and now her husband only works two days a week. Without the food they receive from these organizations, the situation would be unsustainable. F, a 40-year-old man, lives on the streets with his partner and has seen how the money he used to get for food has dried out as people's hostility towards him has grown.

These are some of the faces of need during the pandemic that Iniciativa Comunitaria sees every day during their food delivery rounds in the metropolitan area.

Yorelys Rivera, Executive Director of Iniciativa Comunitaria, explains that since the COVID-19 crisis began, the organization has been distributing breakfast and lunch in about 12 routes they cover daily. "Hunger continues to grow and this crisis now includes mental health. We are seeing how many of the people we serve in the organization now also ask us to see a psychiatrist."

"Iniciativa Comunitaria was one of the first organizations we supported in Triple-S Foundation and we renewed our commitment to them because we understand the importance of the work they do with the most vulnerable populations. On this occasion, our support is directed towards the food

delivery service that has been so crucial for the population they serve," stated Ivelisse M. Fernández, Executive Director at the Triple-S Foundation.

On his part, Alex Serrano, Director of Community Relations at Iniciativa Comunitaria, points out that the crisis has also affected the access to drugs and there is an increase in users who want to be admitted to detoxification programs. "R is a drug user that has lived on the streets for many years. He has told us that in the past he has quit cold turkey, but now he wants to go to a detox center. The problem is those programs are not accepting new people from the streets because of the virus," explains Serrano.

Since the crisis began in March, Iniciativa Comunitaria's team of employees and volunteers has been in the streets, initially providing education about what COVID-19 is and how to take care of oneself within the scenario that homeless people experience. These routes quickly incorporated the delivery of hundreds of plates of food that are distributed on a daily basis to homeless people and people who have lost their jobs and income during this crisis.



For the past 27 years, Iniciativa Comunitaria has offered an array of health, education, and prevention services for marginalized communities. Yorelys Rivera attributes part of the organization's success and longevity to its ability to "listen to the streets" and adjust to serve their needs.

Since the crisis began, Iniciativa Comunitaria has been in the streets providing education about what COVID-19 is and how to take care of oneself, as well as bringing food for people without a home and those that have lost their income.