

Social Justice Fund of Ventura County Kicks Off its 2019 Campaign: Vulnerable Children of VC

On March 2nd, the *Social Justice Fund of Ventura County (SJFVC)* held a conference on “Vulnerable Children of Ventura County”. Thank you to everyone who attended participated and helped. We were delighted to have over 100 people even on this very rainy Saturday morning.

Each year **SJFVC** proposes a theme for its grant giving activities, followed by a conference to help further refine and focus that them. This “kick off” conference creates a space where local non-profits, experts, donors and the public can network and exchange ideas. Here, they can learn more about the social justice issue behind the theme and explore and contribute ideas regarding what type of grants might provide the most useful use of money to impact the theme.

The conference featured a variety of speakers beginning with a short introduction by **State Sen Hannah Beth Jackson**.



The keynote speaker was **Joe Mendoza**, Director of Special Populations at the *Ventura County Office of Education*, who described his position and shared stories on the plight of homeless, foster, and migrant children as well as other vulnerable children in Ventura County.



Following Mr. Mendoza, we had a panel of 5 experts from organizations that daily face diverse and complex issues of vulnerable children throughout Ventura County. The panel included (L to R): **Daniel Gonzalez** (Oxnard Youth Organizer with *Future Leaders of America*), **Mike Couchman** (Marketing Director, *Casa Pacifica*), **Audrey Ford** (Youth Program & Training Coordinator, *Diversity Collective*), **Mark Varela** (Chief Probation Officer, *Ventura County Probation Agency*) and **Sinead Chilton** (Director of Development & Marketing, *School on Wheels*). The panelists spoke about: the impact of trauma on the children and youth in Ventura County; how the adults providing services need to have training that is trauma-informed; they mentioned that young people should be included in the discussion about vulnerable children/youth; some panelists spoke about brain development and the role that plays in delivering appropriate services.

SJFVC would like to thank all our speakers for the time they gave to our conference, but more importantly for what they do every day.



At various times during the conference participants engaged in subgroups discussing their reactions to the speakers and were asked to share ideas for grant giving that **SJFVC** could collect and review. These round table discussions were very lively and gave us a lot of input as to where to focus our grants.



The next steps for the **Social Justice Fund for Ventura County** are to determine the precise criteria for the grants and call for Letters of Interest (**LOI**) for local organizations. These LOIs should be posted on the SJFVC website <https://socialjusticefundvc.org> in early April.

If you have an idea, please share it. Email: socialjusticefundvc@gmail.com

If you can contribute, please donate today: <https://socialjusticefundvc.org/donate/>

100% of the donations we receive are given as grants through an open and proven process.

*For over 12 years **SJFVC** has granted **more than \$450,000** to local organizations working with Ventura County populations to build a more fair and just society by encouraging equitable access to resources and opportunities so that all county residents have an opportunity to follow their dreams and lead a more fulfilling life.*