

# Woman discovers how many mouths 44,000 pounds of rice can feed

By MARY BROWNFIELD

**TOUCHED BY** the stories of Salinas Valley field workers in need of food, Carmel resident Sandhya Kolar, with the help of her daughter, bagged 50 pounds of rice to distribute to hungry families. Fifteen years later, she and a few dozen volunteers gather at her home once a month to bag 3,000 to 4,000 pounds of rice to distribute throughout the county. Trucks deliver the rice, as well as other food and necessities, to farm laborers' camps and schools.

Last year, Kolar's Rice plus Project provided more than 22 tons of rice, an equal amount of beans, and other foods such as canned goods, cereals, dried fruits, nuts and peanut butter.

"I keep hearing the stories, and it just breaks my heart. We who have so much really need to share," she said. "We've just ordered 65 blankets and warm jackets, and whatever money we get just goes right back out."

When she learned newborns were leaving Natividad Medical Center without proper blankets and clothes, she

brought them some. Outreach workers also helped her identify children in need at four county schools.

Foodstuffs are particularly important when they close for vacations. "There are times when the kids are off from school, and they don't get that meal a day," she said. "It must be horrible for moms not to be able to feed their kids."

She soon learned they were lacking more than food. "There were kids coming to school wearing the same clothes all the time, wearing flip-flops in winter, and dirty," she said. "We found a family that didn't have shampoo or deodorant."

Realizing how horrifying it must be for a teenager to come to school in such shape, she rushed out to purchase everything he needed, just as she does for so many families.

"Now we buy toilet paper," she said. "And underwear — things those of us who have plenty don't usually think about."

Dec. 11, about 45 people filled Sandhya and Ramesh Kolar's small home to wrap 500 gifts to distribute to many of those same children. Last year, the group wrapped and gave away 800 gifts. "It's so much fun — wonderful and chaotic, and wild," she said. "We have a small house and every single inch was taken."

Kolar said the Rice plus Project not only seeks financial contributions, but more information about those in need.

"We would like to reach out to more people," she said. To make a tax-deductible donation or for more information, call (831) 624-6715, e-mail [kolar@redshift.com](mailto:kolar@redshift.com) or send a check to P.O. Box 1264, Carmel, CA 93921.



COURTESY/SANDHYA KOLAR

That's a lot of stuff. Volunteers gather at a Carmel home once a year to partake in a gift wrapping frenzy.

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Carmel Valley reads the Pine Cone.

**DOG** (dôgz): n, **Ralphie**, **ADORABLE** nine week old Ridgeback mix puppy 2. Five brothers and sisters also seeking new home.

