

## *Volunteers Reach Out to Support Their Community Neighbors*

Fifteen years ago, Carmel resident Sandhya Kolar responded to an urgent call to provide food to Salinas Valley field workers who were going hungry. Kolar purchased a fifty-pound sack of rice and, with help from her daughter, set about filling smaller bags for the hungry families.

Inspired by a grateful response, friends gathered at the Kolar residence to help package more rice for distribution at Christmas time. They also bagged beans and wrapped gifts for the children.

The Rice *plus* Project, as it came to be called, quickly expanded into a regular monthly event, which last year alone

distributed over 22 tons of rice and an equally impressive amount of beans. Donated items also expanded to include canned goods, cereals, dried fruits and nuts, peanut butter and other foods, together with such necessities as soap, shampoo, detergent and toilet paper. This year the project also made donations to 4 schools and bought and wrapped over 800 Christmas presents for young children and teenagers.

When Kolar learned that some newborns at Natividad Hospital were leaving the hospital without a blanket or clothes, she started providing receiving blankets and baby clothes. When she learned that some children came to school without shoes or jackets, she also started providing school uniforms, shoes, backpacks, socks and underwear for the children.

The Rice *plus* Project is a nonprofit organization of people who want to feed, clothe and help those less fortunate

in our local communities. All the work is accomplished by generous volunteers, so every penny received goes directly to those in need. Though the project continues to grow, there remains much poverty, hunger and a lack of funding to meet the needs of the Monterey County farm working families.

Kolar's vision is to wipe out poverty in the Salinas Valley. This vision includes empowering women to start small business circles and to develop new skills so that they can create a higher standard of living for themselves and their families.

*To make a tax deductible donation to the Rice plus Project, please mail your check to the above address or contact Sandhya Kolar at (831) 624-6715 or e-mail [kolar@redshift.com](mailto:kolar@redshift.com)*

