

SAM Initiative Awards Grant to Homeboy Industries Feed HOPE Program

*Spring Grants
Total \$350,000 to
11 Organizations*

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Sports Editor

The SAM Initiative, founded by Kehillat Israel member Mindy Freedman, serves as a catalyst to improve the lives of women, children and families in Los Angeles through engaged philanthropy. It stands for sustainability, accountability and movement.

Created in 2013, SAM has evolved into a strong, supportive and responsive community, committed to learning and working together to make a difference.

As of 2021, The SAM Initiative has given over \$1.5 million in grants to the community, but its collective spirit and network reaches far beyond grants. Its impact is in the new connections made, the inspired giving of time and money, and the immeasurable ripples it has created to strengthen the community.

"We have 50 members, a majority of whom live in Palisades," said Freedman, who herself resides in nearby Brentwood. "We have women of all different ages who came to SAM for various reasons. Our inspired giving is well over \$1 million now.

"We're wrapping up our giving cycle and are very proud to announce we're granting \$350,000 to 11 incredible organizations. All of these organizations are addressing many of the most pressing issues in the community such as: homelessness, health and mental health, food insecurity, education, and much more. Despite the pandemic, this has been our biggest year yet."

One of those organizations is LA-based Homeboy Industries, which, during the pandemic, launched its Feed HOPE Program to produce hundreds of pre-packaged meals per day for those who are food insecure. Women and men working



Photos courtesy of
SAM Initiative

SAM Initiative members come together with grant recipient, A Sense of Home, in 2019.



Mindy Freedman

in the bakery changed the arc of their own lives at Homeboy and are now serving those in need through their tireless efforts during an extraordinary time.

"We're funding \$75,000 to Homeboy Industries' new social enterprise, Feed HOPE," Freedman said. "Our funding will allow them to create up to 75 jobs and deliver more than 25,000 meals per week, and will support their growth."

Freedman talked about the genesis of the relationship.

"Feed HOPE was born out of COVID, they needed to find a way to pivot Homegirl Cafe and they were desperate to find



Feed HOPE Program

feed funding," she said. "We believed in it, and as we rolled into 2021, we checked back in with Feed HOPE. It was thriving, so we decided to double down. This is our second year in a row funding them. We focused on housing, healthcare and food. In the spring, we had some extra money, did a discretionary grant cycle and invited them to talk to us."

The coronavirus has forced many companies and nonprofits to change how they do things, and SAM is no exception.

"Due to COVID our cycle is a bit different this year," said Director of Operations

Michelle Ohayon. "We funded three organizations totaling \$170,000 in December with COVID Response Grants. Subsequently this spring we had a pool of discretionary dollars and have chosen to fund some of our past grant recipients, totaling \$105,000. This will be our biggest year ever in grants."

"Our objective is to educate and engage donors by investing in community-based organizations that reflect our passions and address the most pressing needs in our community," Freedman said. "As a giving circle, we pool our financial resources and expertise to drive social change and nonprofit sustainability."

Freedman's motto is SAM's credo: "We can do far more together than we can alone."

"Nonprofits are conditioned to seek funding in a traditional way of philanthropy, and SAM takes the time to know grant recipients," she said. "We also have SAM SE, which we started a few years later in 2015, which is committed to investing in sustainable business models that create social change."

To get involved or to learn more about The SAM Initiative, visit saminitiative.org.