



# Field Notes

STORIES, DEPLOYMENTS AND MOMENTS OF SERVICE ACROSS OUR COMMUNITY

## AT A GLANCE

- CERC members supported four **major food-distribution sites** during and immediately following the CalFresh pause
- New **reflections from Bakersfield, Fresno, San Bernardino, and Santa Barbara** show the heart behind the work
- New 1200-hour **positions are open**. If you know someone who would thrive in this work, encourage them to **apply**!

## CERC Deploys

### Boots On The Ground Across California

For many of you, deployments were where CERC first came alive. This month's efforts **echo the same grit and teamwork** you brought during your own service.

Just days after completing deployment training, CERC members across the state were asked to respond to the **CalFresh pause**, a disruption that placed hundreds of thousands of families at risk of food insecurity. And respond they did.

As part of **Operation Feed California**, members deployed throughout November in four regions—**Bakersfield, Fresno, San Bernardino, and Santa Barbara County**—to keep food moving, restore stability and ensure no one faced the season alone. Whether it meant standing in the sun for hours directing cars, turning warehouse aisles into grocery-store-style markets or packing thousands of boxes by hand, each member showed up with focus, heart and determination.

# DEPLOYMENT LOCATIONS



Fresno



Bakersfield



Santa  
Barbara



San Bernardino

Here's a deeper look at what members have been doing across California.

Bakersfield – A system only works when every piece does

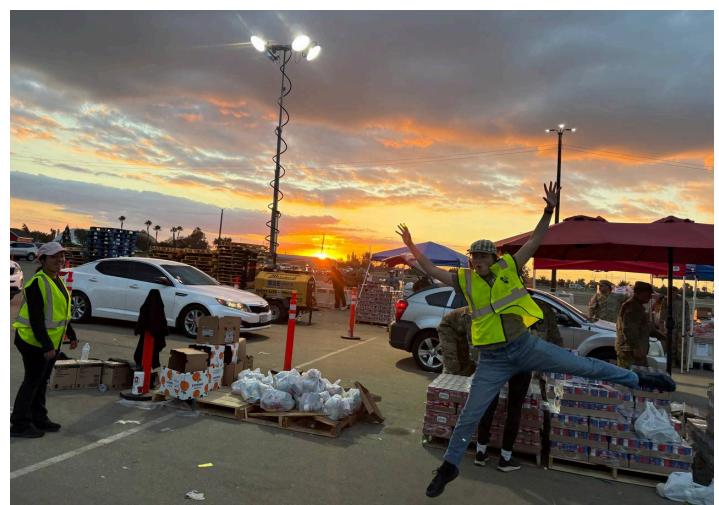
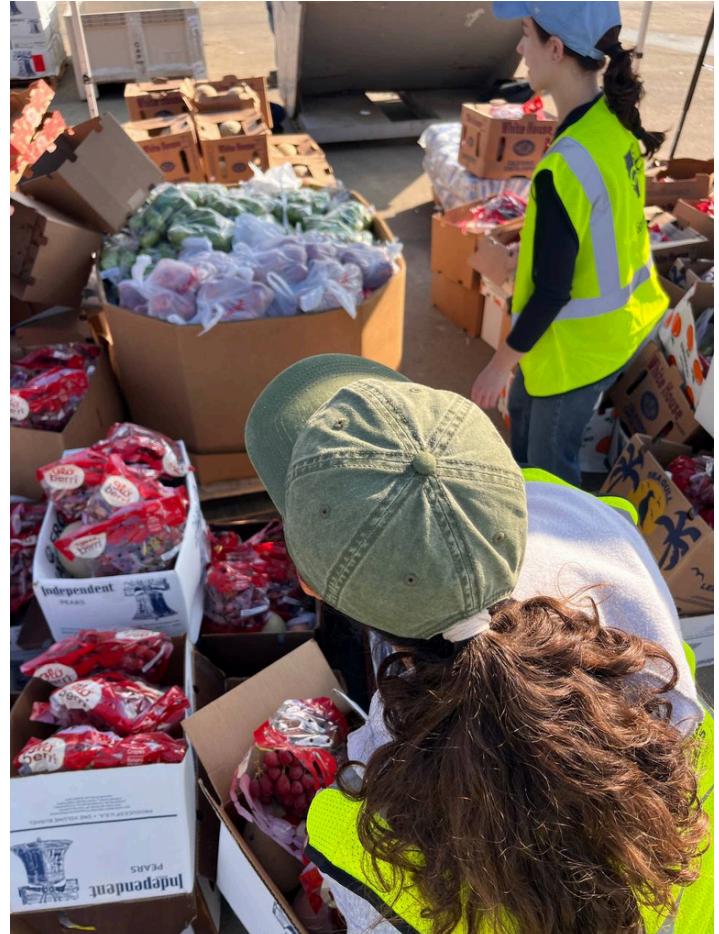
*25 members deployed • Drive-through operations, loading, and packing • Partnering with CAPK & the California National Guard*

Under a blazing sun and steady flow of cars, Bakersfield tackled one of the most complex operations of the month. Members rotated through dozens of roles: intaking forms for EBT recipients, packing

food bags, directing traffic, loading food into trunks and keeping the flow running smoothly alongside CAPK and the **California National Guard**.

Members described the days as long, dusty and deeply rewarding.

One member shared how impressed they were by the precision of the operation, "a choreography of forklifts, volunteers, and endless boxes."



**Kendal** reflected on the experience:

*"I'm really proud of how well our team did with being so organized and efficient...there were so many roles to fill and we were sometimes so spread out yet we made it work. It's refreshing to*

*work with people who truly care about helping others, and I'm grateful I can deploy with a group like this."*

Even on the hardest days, Bakersfield members kept the tone upbeat; checking on each other, swapping sunscreen and celebrating as each car pulled away with a full trunk.



## Fresno – Turning a warehouse into a neighborhood market

*14 local members deployed • Market-style distribution, sorting produce, stocking shelves*

In Fresno, the **Central California Food Bank** tried something new, and our members helped make it happen. Instead of a standard distribution line, they built a **market-style space** where community members could choose the food items they wanted.

Over the course of the day, **1,109 households** came through the doors, including 279 first-time participants. In total, members helped provide food to more than **8,298 household members**, distributing **over 31,000 pounds of produce and pantry staples**; the equivalent of nearly **26,000 meals**.

Members stocked shelves with fresh produce, sorted through crates of pantry staples, unloaded deliveries, and helped maintain an environment that felt welcoming, clean and familiar.

**Alejandra** shared:

*"The market is really clean and organized, just like a grocery store. Participants walk through with a cart and grab what they need."*

For many members, this deployment felt like the clearest reminder that food access is about more than calories; it's about choice and community.



## San Bernardino — 6,000 boxes, 6,000 moments of relief

8 members deployed • Packing boxes, labeling, snack-pack prep • Thanksgiving meal distribution

San Bernardino saw one of our most intensive behind-the-scenes operations of the month. Over two weeks, members helped pack 6,000 food boxes, prepare snack packs for neighbors experiencing homelessness, and ultimately distribute turkey dinners and holiday meal kits directly to families.

At the Holiday distribution event, members handed out **turkeys, apple pies, green beans, mashed potatoes, pumpkin purée**, and smiles that were every bit as important as the food.

**Yvonne** reflected:

*"I was proud of the CERC team working hard to distribute food to the community and I enjoyed working as a team at the food line."*



## Santa Barbara County — Two teams, one county, thousands served

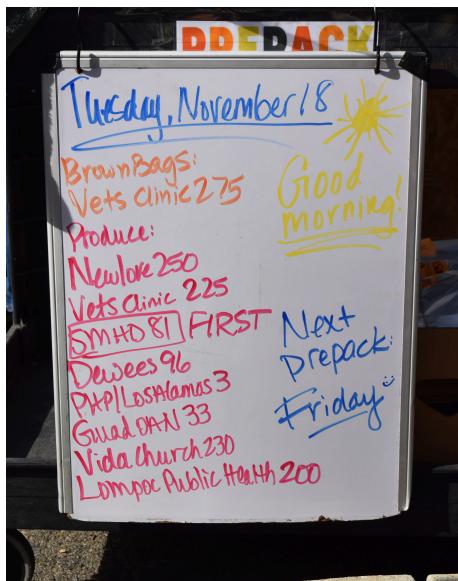
8 members deployed in Goleta & Santa Maria • Sorting, quality-checking, assembling food bags, transporting goods to partners

In Santa Barbara County, CERC members were split into two teams—one in **Goleta**, one in **Santa Maria**—to support the **Foodbank of Santa Barbara County**'s essential distribution operations. Members sorted mountains of donated produce, pre-assembled thousands of food bags, and transported food all across the county to ensure it reached partner sites efficiently.

**Maria** shared:

"This deployment left a lasting impact on me. Even though I was part of the team for just one week, I felt the strength of teamwork, hard work, dedication, resilience, and genuine care for one another. The team came together with incredible purpose to build, package, and deliver food. Before this, I thought food banks were simply about packing food—but there's so much happening behind the scenes that most people never see. It touched me deeply to witness how much this community cares for one another. I'm proud to have been part of this deployment."

Members described this deployment as "quietly powerful," the kind of steady, essential work that keep entire communities fed.





## Why These Deployments Matter

Across every site, one theme came up again and again in member reflections: **Community happens when we show up for one another.**

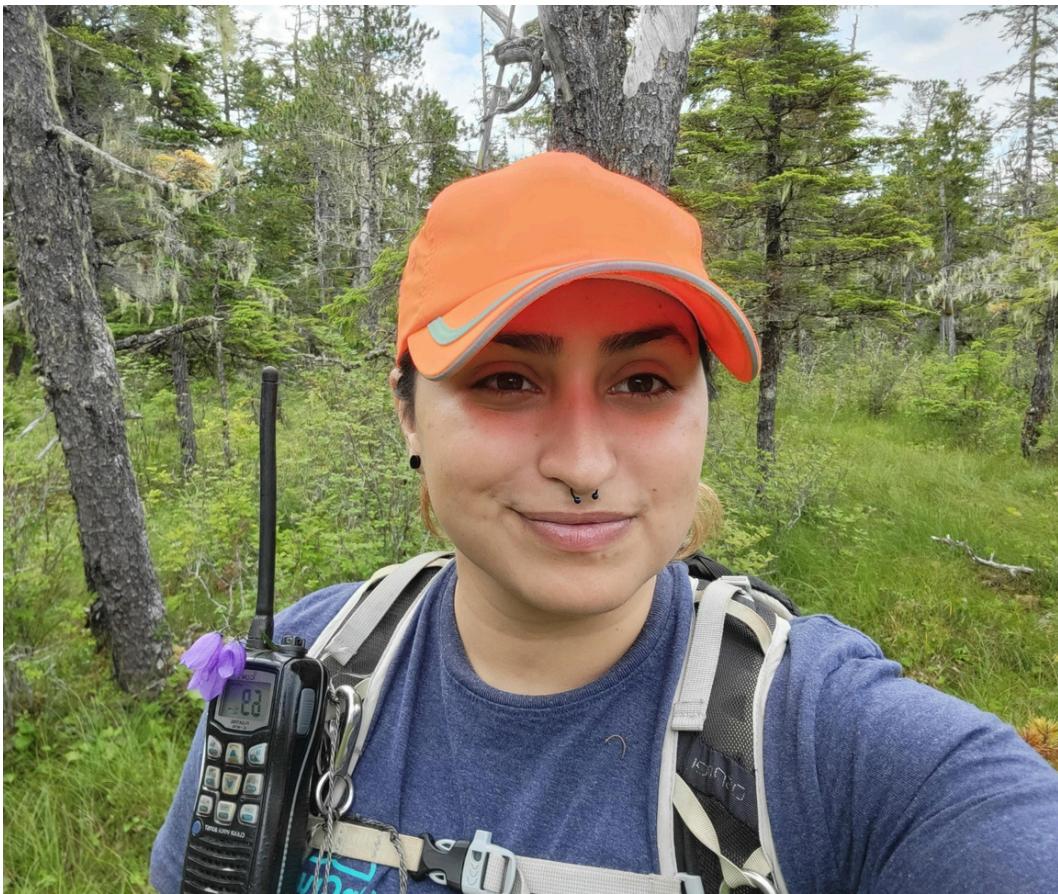
Whether it was organizing a massive drive-through under the Bakersfield sun, transforming a warehouse into a Fresno market, packing thousands of boxes in San Bernardino, or keeping food flowing across Santa Barbara County, members helped strengthening California's safety net from the inside out.

As alumni, you remain part of the **backbone of this growing network**. Your service helped lay the foundation for how CERC responds today, and your impact continues in every organized line, every connecting moment and every family supported. **These stories belong to you**, too.

## Member Spotlight



**MEET LAUREN, A RETURNING CERC MEMBER BACK TO FINISH WHAT SHE STARTED**



*"I came back because I wanted to pick up where I left off and actually finish what we started. Last year ended abruptly, but now we're back and stronger."*

After serving on deployment in LA during last year's wildfire recovery, Lauren returns to **San Francisco State University** with new energy and perspective. During her first year with CERC, she expanded emergency preparedness training at SFSU, wrote the campus emergency-preparedness newsletter, supported wildfire survivors and learned how vital accessibility and inclusion are in disaster response.

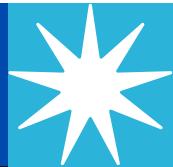
*"It's not just about responding to emergencies; it's about making sure everyone can be prepared, included and supported."*

Now, Lauren's returning for another year of service to help grow her site's impact, relaunch the newsletter and continue to explore how her love for the ocean and emergency response might come together in future work on coastal resilience.

*"My favorite part of serving with CERC is that while I'm helping my community prepare, I'm also being supported in my own growth."*

Lauren reminds us that resilience grows through people who keep learning and stepping forward. For our alumni community, her return shows that **service doesn't end when a term does**. Service can shift, deepen and call us back.

# Gratitude Through Giving



## Community in Action: Thanksgiving Outreach Event in Palisades

Just before the holiday week, a team of CERC members at **Global Empowerment Mission (GEM)** supported a major Thanksgiving recovery event in the Palisades. In partnership with the **Rotary Club of the Palisades** and the **Palisades Long-Term Recovery Group (LTRG)**, the effort sought to reconnect fire-impacted families with the resources, information and support they need as recovery continues nearly a year after the devastating fires.

## Preparing for the Community

In the days leading up to the event, members helped prepare hundreds of boxes filled with food, clothing, shoes, school supplies, and personal hygiene products to distribute during the event. Members also supported site setup at the **American Legion**: assisting local non-profit organizations set up their tables, decorating the community space and organizing logistics for case-management intake.

**Max** served as a volunteer captain, coordinating tasks between the partner organizations and ensuring both volunteers and guests were welcomed and supported throughout the flow of the day.

## A Day of Impact

On the day of the event, the community response exceeded expectations. Across a single afternoon, **695 individuals representing 277 families** from the Palisades, Malibu, Topanga, and Altadena came through the doors.

CERC members operated the check-in area for both clients and volunteers, ensuring that every guest was greeted, accounted for, and guided toward the 38 service providers offering assistance. Although there was barely a moment to pause for photos, the steady arrival of families reflected the trust and need within the community.

**Pamela** shared her reflection:

*"Many families, including children, attended seeking assistance, resources, and information as they continue rebuilding their lives. This experience was significant for me; contributing to the well-being of the community reinforced my sense of civic duty, strengthened my civic leadership skills, and...demonstrated the resilience, collaboration, and care shared throughout the event."*

## Rebuilding More Than Homes

Beyond distributing aid—nearly **half a million** dollars' worth in one day—the event served as a space for survivors to reconnect with neighbors, speak with long-term recovery partners, and feel seen

during a difficult holiday season. Many families are still navigating displacement, insurance struggles, and ongoing financial strain. This gathering reminded them that recovery is not something they have to face alone.

CERC members played a visible and meaningful role in **creating a warm, organized, and welcoming** atmosphere. Their presence helped restore a sense of normalcy and belonging for families who have spent months navigating uncertainty.

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## LOOKING AHEAD

- New **1200-hour positions** are open. If you know someone who would thrive in this work, your referral can help shape the **next generation of service**.
- In early 2026, we hope to launch **small alumni features** highlighting where your service has taken you. If you'd like to be featured, keep an eye out for a form in the next issue.
- Wishing you a **warm and restful holiday season**. This community exists because of you.

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