Santa Barbara, CA – Donors, philanthropic institutions, and environmental community leaders were invited to learn how grassroots organizations have been growing a powerful environmental justice movement on California’s Central Coast — the site of what was once considered the greatest environmental disaster in U.S. history. Fifty years ago, the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill sparked a nationwide movement to protect our environment. On the Central Coast, this disaster led to a broad array of landmark environmental victories that continue to protect our natural resources, open spaces, coastline, and oceans.

Simultaneously, in more recent years, grassroots community organizations have led the fight for environmental justice, particularly for low-wage workers, immigrants, and communities of color. These local environmental justice efforts include campaigns to stop the development of polluting power plants near low-income communities of color, as well as to limit expansion of oil extraction, protect the quality
of our air and water, expand and increase the efficiency of public transit, and regulate hazardous pesticide use.

In an effort to shed light on this critical environmental justice work, the Fund for Santa Barbara, in collaboration with the James Bower Foundation, the McCune Foundation, the Community Environmental Council, the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA), and the Central Coast Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE) held a daylong funders briefing on the matter. The event was held at Direct Relief’s headquarters in Santa Barbara, CA.

The event opened with remarks from Dr. Marcos Vargas, Executive Director of the Fund for Santa Barbara, who welcomed everyone to the briefing for a day filled with discussion and shared learning about the development and impact of the region’s environmental and climate justice movement. Recognition was made of the need to be mindful that the location of the day’s proceeding is the home of the Chumash people, the original stewards of the region’s land and water, as well as to recognize the important role indigenous people are currently playing in the development of the global climate justice movement. Throughout the day, leaders from environmental and social justice groups from around the region shared their movement building efforts—including the recent establishment of the Central Coast Climate Justice Network (C3JN)—and explored how funders, donors, and other ally organizations can be strategic in their support.

The following is a summary of the convening, including action steps for funders to consider.
Sigrid Wright, CEO of the Community Environmental Council, opened and moderated this panel featuring Damon Taugher, Vice President of Global Programs at Direct Relief, Lucas Zucker, Policy and Communications Manager for CAUSE, and Alan Kwok, Director of Disaster Resilience at Northern California Grantmakers. Sigrid opened with a definition of climate resilience: “the ability of our social and ecological systems to withstand and adapt to the variable and extreme conditions associated with climate change.” Although our region has seen extreme disasters such as wildfire and debris flow, the Central Coast region has yet to feel the full effects of other high potential disasters, such as extreme heat, sea level rise, and storm surge damages. Sigrid emphasized that the Central Coast region is at a tipping point, with the potential to mitigate the frequency and effects of these disasters. She noted that cities in our region are moving towards change through committing to 100% renewable energy, and developing collaborative working relationships with groups and leaders from broad sectors of the community—relationships that can come about through such inclusive spaces as today’s funders briefing.

Damon Taugher of Direct Relief highlighted three major needs that have been identified in response to the increase in domestic disasters such as wildfires and hurricanes: power generation, mobile healthcare units, and behavioral health support. He pointed out that those feeling the greatest impact of such disasters are those already at high risk—including the elderly, the disabled, and low-income residents—and that for many, evacuation in advance of a disaster is a “luxury.” As the lack of power generation becomes increasingly commonplace during wildfire related blackouts, services to meet dire health needs become critical, with particular impact on clinics serving low-income residents, as they do not have the capital and reserves required by hospitals.
Lucas Zucker of CAUSE raised the question, “who are the folks that are given the life raft last?” For example, during the recent wildfires and debris flow, language access to emergency information was a critical concern with vital emergency response information unavailable or unreliable to the significant population who are Spanish or indigenous monolingual speakers. Another critical concern for the Central Coast region is farmworkers’ access to information about disaster threats as this population is most often on the frontlines of the immediate impact of climate change. Many farmworkers in our area are also undocumented and barred from unemployment benefits and disaster insurance. Some grassroots organizations that have worked to address this problem locally include CAUSE, Future Leaders of America (FLA), MICOP, and the Ventura County Community Foundation. These groups came together in the wake of the Thomas Fire and subsequent debris flows to create the 805 UndocuFund and raise over $2 million for working individuals and families affected by the disasters but who do not qualify for federal aid—in large part because of their legal status. Lucas emphasized that ultimately, CAUSE and other organizations cannot be a substitute for FEMA. Rather, we must change policy to open federal aid to everyone, regardless of legal status. Moreover, Lucas stressed that when reflecting on inequitable access to disaster relief and preparedness, we simply must recognize that “existing injustice is a disaster.”

Alan Kwok expressed that his philanthropic organization, Philanthropy California—an alliance of Northern California, Southern California, and San Diego Grantmakers—serves numerous philanthropic organizations throughout the state, with an equity thread throughout all of their work. He expressed
that disaster responses are currently undertaken in a non-equitable way, favoring those with greater access to wealth and power. He also expressed that currently, the bulk of needed public and private funding is not going to the right places. Areas outside of major metropolitan regions in California, namely Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area, need significant more support and that those resources should be given to the appropriate programs, and at the right time. Alan also emphasized the importance of disaster support before these hazardous events occur, not rushing in after to clean up the mess.

During the question and answer period, it was acknowledged that much of the limited resources for disaster response are by default going to the existing network of established providers, such as in the area of health provision, instead of the providers on the ground, who could be more effective in serving at-risk populations. Also discussed was the need to create spaces for different issue-based funders to talk among other funders on how these issues relate and where there might be opportunities for collaboration. Recognition that greater popular awareness of climate issues in general is providing a greater opportunity for engagement among funders and donors around the intersectionality of climate and other social and economic issues. Therefore, spaces like this briefing are increasingly important. Panelists also expressed that universities need to fundamentally change how they research climate disaster prevention, response, and resilience efforts, providing a greater emphasis on the intersectionality of social, economic, and environmental issues—and the need for great collaboration among academics and community organizations.
Manuel Pastor, Distinguished Professor of Sociology and American Studies & Ethnicity at UCLA, spoke on the subject of climate justice in relation to changing demographics locally and nationally, and the recurring theme of intersectionality of social, economic, and environmental issues in addressing environmental degradation and climate change and their disproportionate negative impact on low-income residents and communities of color.

Manuel pointed out in his demographic analysis that when you have an older generation not seeing itself in the younger generation, there is a tendency to bring the drawbridge up behind them. As a consequence, the bigger the racial generational gap, the lower the spending on education and other public services. Arizona serves as a prime example of this sentiment with their adoption of strong anti-immigrant and anti-ethnic studies state initiatives. California experienced this same political trend during the racialized and xenophobic anti-immigrant initiative, Proposition 187 (1994), which sought to bar undocumented residents from nonemergency services like public education and healthcare. Manuel argued that the rest of the country is experiencing their own “Prop. 187 moment” now. He elevates the importance of centering race and this generational chasm when discussing policy, particularly around environmental and climate change.

Even as we recognize the importance of the roles that race and class play in understanding issues of inequity and environmental injustice, race generally gets understated. For example, in regards to the influence of class and income inequality on environmental inequity, data documents that as household income goes up, environmental inequities go down. However, even when accounting for income, race is generally the dominant factor in identifying the population most disproportionately impacted negatively by environmental and climate change.
Toward addressing the root causes of environmental injustice and climate change’s disproportionate negative impact on high-risk communities, particularly communities of color, Manuel further stressed the importance of investing in the power-building ecosystem—the advocacy, communications, research, alliance/coalition-building, and leadership development, which are all essential elements of the work of effective organizing and base building.

**POWER-BUILDING STRATEGIES**

- Alliance and coalition building
- Arts and culture
- Campaigns
- Communications and narrative change
- Healing
- Inside-outside strategies
- Integrated voter engagement
- Leadership development
- Litigation
- Lobbying and grassroots lobbying
- Movement building
- Organizing and base building
- Research
- Social services

When asked about the trends in philanthropic funding for environmental justice organizing, Manuel shared that he sees it as going from “abysmal to bysmal.” That is, while it has improved to a small degree, it has a very long way to go. Overall philanthropic dollars have not moved much beyond some limited investment at the national level among mainstream environmental groups.
Manuel also linked the importance of the 2020 Census and the need to have a substantially large enough campaign to ensure people are counted—particularly in this dangerous moment in this country when DC politics has become evidence adverse. Moreover, there are many populations aside from undocumented individuals that are traditionally and systemically under counted and therefore under served.

City of Oxnard Mayor Pro Tempore Carmen Ramírez shared a wealth of insight into local grassroots-led environmental justice fights in recent decades, addressing important intersections between powerful private interests, community, and the political landscape. Carmen focused primarily on the 2007 community-based campaign to stop the proposed liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal off the coast of Oxnard, and spoke to the influence of money in local environmental planning. The proposed facility would have been the largest polluter in the region, with the onshore portion of the proposed pipeline running directly through the predominantly Latina/o community. The multi-billion dollar global mining corporation proposing the facility worked to elevate their influence locally by donating to low-income- and Latino-serving organizations, many already struggling financially. These organizations in turn put pressure on elected officials to approve the proposal, despite the significant health risks and environmental degradation to the surrounding communities and their own constitutions.

In response, community members and organizations organized a broad coalition to oppose the project. At one point in the campaign, over 3,000 organized residents showed up for a typically-unattended State Lands Commission hearing, many speaking on their legitimate fears about the proposed project. Carmen stressed that we must keep reminding the younger generations about these types of fights for
hope, inspiration, and strategic historical knowledge. She also stressed the importance of organized and politically-engaged communities in electing and working directly with officials that have shown their responsiveness to community needs. This continues to be particularly important in regions such as North and Mid-Santa Barbara County, where big oil interests continue to invest significant resources to influence public opinion at the local level.

Lucas Zucker, Policy and Communications Director at CAUSE, spoke to the element of community organizing in achieving any policy changes. He posed the question, “Why do these attacks on the health and environment occur time and time again—why do power plants love Oxnard?” His rhetorical comment spoke to the fact that companies and industries continue to target communities they see as less resourced and politically connected. Why do polluting power plant proposals not appear in the significantly wealthier and whiter communities of Malibu and Montecito, for example? Lucas shared the story of a similar local David-and-Goliath environmental justice fight that occurred much more recently on the Oxnard shore: the successful, but uphill, defeat of the proposed Puente Power Plant. Despite overwhelming and energized community opposition to the proposed project, similar to grassroots opposition to stopping the LNG project in 2007, conventional wisdom saw the project on track for inevitable approval consistent with the rubber stamp generally given such projects by state agencies.

CAUSE, in collaboration with other established environmental groups and emerging grassroots organizations new to environmental justice space, worked to put public pressure on the California Energy Commission (CEC), the agency ultimately tasked with deciding on this project. Among their demands, they were successful in getting the CEC to agree to conduct a study regarding whether cleaner energy alternatives could be developed in place of the power plant, placing into motion a series of events eventually leading to the defeat of the proposed project. Lucas pointed out how this occurred only after the network of organizations organized a civil disobedience direct action during one of the Energy Commission meetings, drawing statewide and national attention to the fight.

As a result of this action, we may have seen the last fossil fuel power plant to be developed in California. Lucas emphasized that placing the negative health impact of these projects on the community front and center, as being key to building power around these issues—particularly when engaging everyday community members who are not well-versed in energy policy making. For Lucas, “it’s about driving home the point that plain and simple, it’s about health! It’s about clean air for Oxnard, and our family members and neighbors suffering from asthma.” Ultimately, he stressed that no well-crafted public messaging can replace people on the ground, talking one to one with their neighbors and building coalitions with other like-minded organizations.
Our closing panel was fortunate to have a broad array of powerfully-insightful community leaders across various local organizations working on environmental and social justice.

Moderator Dr. David Pellow, Chair of the UC Santa Barbara Environmental Studies Program, spoke on how we can effectively and aggressively address the tensions of race and racism in our work. He spoke to the importance of strengthening multi-racial, multi-national, and multilingual coalitions, and addressing the racially-uneven impact of climate change. Acknowledging that racism is a major driver in the struggle for environmental and climate justice in the first place, it is important we recognize that it is the carrying out of colonialism, conquest, genocide, and chattel slavery first and foremost. It is these historical systems of capitalism, and how they have contributed to the current capitalist system in place today, David argued, that has brought anthropogenic climate change to us today. Consequently, race and racism cannot be an afterthought in the environmental movement. They must be centered at the root of environmental work today. For example, there are a significant percentage of Americans who used to embrace the science of climate change, but do not any longer, because they associate climate change policies with the first Black president in America. Consequently, racism is not only killing people. It is also killing the planet.

Ana Rosa Rizo-Centino, Senior Organizer at Food & Water Watch, spoke to her experience navigating the two parallel tracks of mainstream white environmental groups, who are often seen as doing all the most important environmental work, while the work of people-of-color-led environmental groups and their grassroots-led work is seen as separate and not as critical to the broader environmental movement. She called for the need to hold trainings with leaders on how they can engage in thoughtful and effective diversity, equity, and inclusion work—to develop a common language—and, among other things, to be able to discuss about barriers to building movements and analyzing power and privilege. We must ask
ourselves, who is making the decisions on how we run these campaigns? Who sets the agenda? And who gets credit for the work? Ana Rosa has seen mainstream environmental organizations take credit for work done by predominantly people-of-color-led organizations, which impacts very real budget and funding disparities. Addressing these questions intentionally and upfront can prevent us from regretting, after the fact, that environmental campaigns are being lost due to division and conflict among environmentalists.

Linda Krop, Chief Counsel at the Environmental Defense Center, stressed the importance of the environmental ecosystem and that no one organization can do their work alone. This is demonstrated in the previously mentioned battles around the proposed LNG terminal and the Puente Power Plant. The Environmental Defense Center (EDC) provided expertise in the legal strategy while working as part of a broader coalition. Oftentimes the EDC provides unique environmental expertise that public agencies fail to provide whether because of lack of political will or lack of resources. However, it has been the diverse crowd of thousands of concerned community members showing up at hearings, which ultimately has made the difference in pressuring these agencies to reconsider their approval of environmentally-detrimental projects. Linda emphasized the importance of partnerships early in the campaign planning, so that participating organizations could identify what everyone’s needs and concerns are so that coalitions can be as strong as possible.

Linda pointed out that the biggest threat in Santa Barbara County is now the three oil companies who want to greatly expand in the Cat Canyon area near Santa Maria, which would triple all on-shore oil production in the county. Just like the battles in Oxnard, this is a community that is considered disempowered. It is already one of the most polluted in the state in the 100 percentile of groundwater contamination threat, and 97th percentile for pesticide use according to the CA Environmental Protection Agency’s standards.

Arcenio Lopez, Executive Director of the Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP), shared his personal-professional trajectory in his current role as a climate justice activist, which began as a recipient of MICOP services, then a volunteer, then a paid organizer around farmworker rights issues, and now the organization’s executive director. Arcenio discussed how the typical environmental and climate justice terms used in professional organizations often times fail to resonate with many indigenous people. He spoke about his own realization of how climate change and climate injustice has affected him and other indigenous migrants—pushing them off their land in Mexico and forcing them to migrate due to capitalist agribusiness and climate change, as they saw their water contaminated and their communities displaced. “We need to realize that we are not only immigrants, we are climate refugees.” In building an inclusive climate justice movement there is much internal work that needs to occur in decolonizing the minds of indigenous migrant people. Finally, Arcenio stressed the importance of funding and uplifting indigenous-led work, which is often taken for granted as volunteer work. “How can we effectively organize our people, when there is insufficient funding to pay an organizer?”

Katie Davis, Chair of the Los Padres Chapter of the Sierra Club, provided an overview of a number of local environmental battles. She spoke to the urgency of doing this type of environmental organizing
work, sharing that, for her, she “didn’t want to be in a position where my kids ask me, why didn’t I do more?” The Sierra Club benefits from its chapters being both led locally, while also having access to statewide resources. She also shared the benefits of having both a 501(c)3 and a 501(c)4 political arm as tools in electoral, lobbying, and advocacy work.

Sigrid Wright, Executive Director of the Community Environmental Council, discussed the organization’s roots in the ecology movement and understanding that everything is connected. Their holistic conversations recently around how to grapple with some of the justice dynamics around environmental work have been central—stemming from a conversation with the Fund for Santa Barbara, resulting in a convening on Earth Day, where many members of the now Central Coast Climate Justice Network (C3JN) initially met and began a dialogue that flourished into the network organization they are today. Today, one of the priorities of the Community Environmental Council is to build both their internal capacity and the C3JN’s collective capacity for engaging broader segments of the community in climate action, including the early planning of campaigns that they can move forward together.

Lucas Zucker, Policy and Communications Director of CAUSE, spoke to their current environmental justice priority: opposing the Port of Hueneme’s expansion. While fossil fuel use is going down in the energy sector, it is meanwhile going up in the shipping industry. As the surrounding community has experienced many times, these decisions around significant pollutants related to the Port’s expansion have excluded the local community that will be directly impacted—oftentimes led astray by the efforts of deep pockets, in this case a campaign led by the economic and political power and influence of the Port and its allies. CAUSE is working actively on a campaign to promote investments in alternative regenerative approaches to the land being discussed.

Drawing from the set of the day’s takeaways provided by Manuel Pastor, and possible action steps identified by the Funders Briefing on Environmental and Climate Justice Planning Committee, we conclude the summary with the following Takeaways and Action Steps to be considered by funders and donors:

1. Equity needs to be baked in, not sprinkled on. Support for environmental and climate justice work needs to focus on organizations and coalitions committed to achieving equity through integrated strategies for building power in marginalized communities.
2. Funders and donors need to be patient and willing to provide multi-year general operating support to those organizations that have a clear power building strategy. Power is built gradually, campaign by campaign – it is important to have a north star that you’re leading to, but it’s also key to think about what the next steps are, and to think of steps as victories.

3. Funders and donors should look beyond support for mainstream environmental organizations. While there has been some movement in the right direction, mainstream environmentalism continues to miss opportunities for establishing new alliances with organizations working on related social, economic and environmental issues.

4. Organizations led by working people and marginalized communities particularly need funding support. For example, if you see a value in getting indigenous people involved in climate justice work, philanthropy needs to be willing to pay for their work.

5. Building alliances takes time, and clear movement and coalition-building strategies must extend beyond the usual suspects. We often do not build into our funding strategies the time it takes to build these coalitions and networks and who should be brought to the table, for example, working to bring unions into the game.

6. The work we support cannot be just about fighting against what is bad. It also needs to be fighting for a vision of what is good, including projects and policy changes aligned with a broader mission to create a just and sustainable regional economy. This also means paying attention to efforts to heal our communities who have experienced trauma and decades of social, economic, as well as environmental assaults.

7. Support needs to go to creating spaces for different issue-based funders to talk among other funders on how these issues relate and where there might be opportunities for collaboration.

8. Just as the bulk of public and private funding for disaster response tends to focus on major metropolitan regions in California, the same appears to be the case in funding for environmental justice work. Funders and donors therefore should consider expanding their support beyond these urban areas to under-supported rural communities.

9. We need academic environmental research with a broader lens that emphasizes the intersectionality of social, economic, and environmental issues, including research on climate disaster prevention, response, and resilience. There is also a need for greater research collaboration between academics and community organizations.

10. The environmental and climate justice work on the Central Coast could be a model and serve to be an important leader in this movement. The region has a deep history of environmental work, with unique opportunities for investing in and learning from organizations with well-established environmental justice programs and experience, as well as organizations newly emerging into the environmental and climate justice space, but which are already having an impact.

11. Support is needed for organized collaboratives, coalitions, and networks that bring together committed organizations throughout the region that share a common power analysis and who work collaboratively to achieve specific goals. The Central Coast Climate Justice Network is made up of organizations with a “let’s win” attitude. Instead of focusing on how they have been beaten, they continue ready to move forward, learning and building power from their experiences, and seeing themselves as part of a much larger global climate justice movement.
Speakers

**Katie Davis** is Chair of the Sierra Club Los Padres Chapter, covering Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, and serves on Sierra Club’s National Marine Team and California Climate and Energy Committee. A former VP of Web and Ecommerce at tech company, Citrix, she was involved in corporate sustainability initiatives. In 2012 she trained with Al Gore’s Climate Reality Project, became a climate change speaker and activist. As a volunteer with the Sierra Club since 2014, she has helped lead successful campaigns to set local goals for 100% renewable energy and 100% electric buses, to stop fossil fuel expansion and to establish other climate-related policies.

**Linda Krop** serves as Chief Counsel of the Environmental Defense Center (EDC), a non-profit public interest environmental law firm that was formed in the aftermath of the 1969 Santa Barbara Oil Spill. Since 1989, Linda has represented dozens of community organizations in efforts to ensure clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment for people and wildlife. She has successfully defeated proposals to import natural gas, develop new offshore oil and gas leases, transport crude oil along the California coast, and threaten our communities with dangerous new onshore oil drilling. Linda has also helped preserve open spaces for public use, including Ellwood Mesa, Carpinteria Bluffs, Sedgwick Ranch, Oxnard Shores, Fiscalini Ranch, and Hearst Ranch. Linda and EDC work to empower our communities to meet the environmental and health threats of our time, whether it be by fighting a specific oil project or responding to broad threats to our climate.

**Alan Kwok** is the director of disaster resilience for Philanthropy California, an alliance of Northern California, Southern California, and San Diego Grantmakers. He seeks to strengthen and galvanize the philanthropic sector in California around investments in community-based climate and disaster resilience. Additionally, he leads Philanthropy California’s efforts to support local and statewide disasters, including the 2018 wildfires. He brings to his role a wealth of experiences in community health, youth and workforce development, and disaster management. He managed a FEMA award-winning community resilience initiative in the Bay Area American Red Cross and continues to do research on community disaster resilience. He earned his PhD in emergency management at the Joint Centre for Disaster Research at Massey University in Wellington, New Zealand.

**Arcenio J. López** is a Mixteco native from the village of San Francisco Higos, in Oaxaca, Mexico. When he arrived in Oxnard in 2003, Arcenio worked as a farmworker in the strawberry fields. In 2006, Arcenio was hired as MICOP’s first Community Organizer. Arcenio received his Bachelor’s degree in Accounting from Cal Lutheran.
Arcenio was hired as the Associate Director of MICOP in 2010. Eventually he was promoted in 2014, and became the first indigenous Executive Director for the organization. Under his leadership, MICOP has grown and flourished in size, scope and reach; from adult literacy classes to indigenous youth organizing to a community radio station. Because of his work, MICOP is the trusted voice of the indigenous community and a respected partner to dozens of local and statewide agencies.

Dr. Manuel Pastor is a Distinguished Professor of Sociology and American Studies & Ethnicity at the University of Southern California where he also serves as director of the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) and co-director of USC’s Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration. Dr. Pastor has received Guggenheim and Fulbright fellowships as well as the 2012 Wally Marks Changemaker of the Year award from the Liberty Hill Foundation in Los Angeles. He currently holds the Turpanjian Chair in Civil Society and Social Change at USC and lives in Los Angeles. Pastor’s research has generally focused on issues of the economic, environmental and social conditions facing low-income urban communities – and the social movements seeking to change those realities. His current research culminates in his latest book, State of Resistance: What California’s Dizzying Descent and Remarkable Resurgence Means for America’s Future.

David N. Pellow is the Chair of the Environmental Studies Program, the Dehlsen Professor of Environmental Studies, and Director of the Global Environmental Justice Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His teaching and research focus on ecological justice issues in the U.S. and globally. His books include: What is Critical Environmental Justice?; The Slums of Aspen: Immigrants vs. the Environment in America’s Eden (with Lisa Sun-Hee Park); Resisting Global Toxics: Transnational Movements for Environmental Justice; The Silicon Valley of Dreams: Environmental Injustice, Immigrant Workers, and the High-Tech Global Economy (with Lisa Sun-Hee Park); and Garbage Wars: The Struggle for Environmental Justice in Chicago. He has served on the Boards of Directors for Global Response, The Global Action Research Center, the Center for Urban Transformation, the Santa Clara Center for Occupational Safety and Health, Greenpeace USA, and International Rivers.

Carmen Ramírez, Oxnard Mayor Pro Tem has served on city council since 2010, having been elected to a third term in November 2018. In 1974, she graduated from Loyola School of Law in Los Angeles and has practiced law since that time, as a legal aid attorney, a coordinator for Ventura Superior Court’s Self Help Center, and now in private practice. She has many civic duties, including serving on the Clean Power Alliance Board of Directors and chairing its Energy Planning and Resources committee. She is proud of her efforts working for environmental and economic justice for the people of Oxnard, including leadership in fighting for clean-up of a Superfund site, stopping an LNG operation and a gas fired power plant on Oxnard’s coast.

Anna Rosa-Rizo graduated from UC Santa Barbara and has worked locally on many social justice efforts. A Maywood native, her work focuses on government transparency, support for working families, ensuring police conduct reform and environmental justice issues, such as clean drinking water. In addition, she formed a Community Cumulative Impacts Commission, passed a resolution against the suspension of AB 32, pushed for the planting of a thousand trees, continues to fight for more parks/green open space and fasted to prevent a bus fare increase in order to keep mass transit accessible to all. Prior to her work as an elected official, Ana Rosa also served as a Planning Commissioner for the City of Maywood, Executive Director for PUEBLO & PUEBLO Education Fund, California Lead Organizer for the National Farm Worker Ministry (based at Santa Rosa de Lima Church) and has served as the National Coordinator for the Student Labor Action Project for the U. S. Student Association and Jobs with Justice. Ana Rosa has received the “Women of Action” award from Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez, as well as awards from Supervisor Gloria Molina and Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard. She currently serves on the boards of La Casa de La Raza, S.B. County Action Network, S.B. Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE) and the City of Santa Barbara Creeks Commission.
Damon Taugher, Vice President, Global Programs at Direct Relief, began his career at Direct Relief in 2003 after graduating from the University of California Los Angeles, where he received degrees in Political Science and Geography. Damon founded Direct Relief’s program in the United States, which became the first nonprofit organization licensed to distribute prescription medicines to all 50 states and is now the largest of its kind in the country. Today, Damon oversees Direct Relief’s global programmatic initiatives for its network of thousands of healthcare facilities active in 100 countries, which includes the provision of more than $1 billion in medical aid annually.

Thomas Tighe has served as President and CEO of Direct Relief, a nonprofit humanitarian medical organization, since 2000. Since Tighe’s arrival, the organization has provided cash grants of more than $50 million and furnished more than $5 billion of essential medicines, equipment, and supplies to support health services for low-income people in 100 countries and in all 50 U.S. states, where the organization conducts the country’s largest nonprofit charitable medicines program. Prior to joining Direct Relief, Tighe served as Chief of Staff and Chief Operating Officer of the Peace Corps, overseeing day-to-day operations of the agency’s worldwide programs and a resurgent growth of the agency to a 27-year high.

Marcos Vargas is the Executive Director of the Fund for Santa Barbara. Prior to this, he served for fourteen years as the founding Executive Director of CAUSE, a social justice organization serving the California Central Coast. Marcos’ non-profit experience also includes serving as the Executive Director of El Concilio, a Latinx community advocacy and multi-service organization, and the Director of Planning for the United Way of Ventura County. He has also served on numerous boards, including the McCune Foundation, and the Common Counsel Foundation. Awards have including the Outstanding Citizen Award from the California Federation of Teachers, Cesar Chavez Leadership Award from the United Farm Workers, and Leadership Award from the National Women’s Political Caucus of Ventura County. Marcos has a doctorate and masters degree in urban planning from the UCLA. His dissertation addressed the expanding public policy and community development role of community based organizations of color in California.

Sigrid Wright has over 25 years of experience in non-profit environmental management, currently as CEO/Executive Director for the Community Environmental Council. She is co-founder of the Central Coast Climate Justice Network and steering committee member of the Central Coast Climate Collaborative and the Association of Regional Collaboratives for Climate Adaptation. For energy related issues, she is co-author and/or editor of more than a dozen CEC policy documents, including The Santa Barbara County Regional Energy Blueprint. For food system issues, she is on the executive team of the countywide Food Action Plan. She serves on the board of Leading From Within and is a commissioner for the Santa Barbara County Commission for Women.

Lucas Zucker is Policy and Communications Director for the Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE), a nonprofit community organization working to advance social, economic, and environmental justice in the Central Coast of California since 2001. He graduated from UC Berkeley with a bachelor’s degree in Political Economy. Lucas joined the CAUSE staff in 2012 as a youth organizer and researcher. At CAUSE he has worked on community organizing campaigns and policy advocacy around voting rights, healthy food access, public transit, environmental justice, education, immigrants’ rights, affordable housing, prison sentencing reform, tax/budget reform, and workers’ rights. Lucas serves on the board of the national Partnership for Working Families and lives in Ventura, CA."
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The Fund for Santa Barbara is a nonprofit community foundation advancing progressive change by strengthening movements for social, political, economic, and environmental justice.

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