

COACHELLA VALLEY

San Manuel tribe donates \$1M to small businesses

Amanda Ulrich
Palm Springs Desert Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK

The San Manuel Band of Mission Indians divvied up \$1 million among 50 small businesses in a live virtual event last Friday, surprising Inland Empire business owners who have struggled to stay afloat during the pandemic.

The 50 chosen businesses represent a few of the industries hit hardest by COVID-19, the tribe said, like restaurants, personal care services and others. Each business was given a \$20,000 grant.

Rhonda Moses from Party Plus Rentals in Loma Linda said the funding would help with payroll, rent, utilities and general daily expenses at the store.

"I'm emotional. We are all emotional, blessed and extremely thankful for this opportunity," she said. "Last year was very difficult on us, working in an entertainment-type business, so it hit us pretty hard. But we are going to do our very best. We've been in business for 39 years — we made it this far and we will be stronger after this."

The "San Manuel Cares \$1 Million Small Business Relief Fund" is a collaboration between the tribe and the Inland Empire Economic Partnership. San Manuel was motivated to aid small businesses located across its ancestral territories from San Bernardino to Barstow, the tribe said.

Other recipients include 29 Palms Inn in Twentynine Palms, Astoria Salon in Redlands, Big Mike Barbershop in Rancho Cucamonga, Empire Bowl in Redlands, Jovi's Diner in San Bernardino and dozens more.

"We all look forward to the day when you can fully reopen your doors for good



From left: Tribal Secretary Johnny Hernandez Jr., Chairman Ken Ramirez and Business Committee Member Audrey Martinez pose with a check.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SAN MANUEL BAND OF MISSION INDIANS

and welcome your customers back," Chairman Ken Ramirez said. "Until then, you have a hand up from San Manuel to cover expenses and keep your employees on the payroll."

Grants will provide assistance in paycheck protection to fund the current workforce, cover operational expenses, help with debt relief and make business improvements, according to a press release.

"Our San Manuel Cares team contacted each of these 50 businesses to learn more about their hardships and find the best way to provide assistance," Ramirez said. "I hope that what we do here today prompts others to do the same; support your local small businesses, give as much as you can, and do your part to keep our communities and

economy thriving."

Across the state and the region, many beleaguered businesses have struggled to make ends meet in the last year.

In late 2020, the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership estimated that virus-related shutdown orders could lead to the permanent loss of more than 650 local restaurant and accommodation businesses, along with 310 retailers. That translates to the livelihoods of about 16,600 people, or 11% of total jobs in the Coachella Valley.

Amanda Ulrich covers Native American issues in Southern California. She is also a Report for America corps member. Amanda can be reached by email at amanda.ulrich@desertsun.com or Twitter at @AmandaCULrich.

Pedestrian hit, killed by car in Palm Springs ID'd

Colin Atagi
Palm Springs Desert Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK

A Palm Springs man was identified as a pedestrian who died after being hit by a vehicle Friday morning.

Adan Martinez Salazar, 69, was crossing Ramon Road when he was struck by an eastbound sedan at 11:19 a.m. He was taken to Desert Regional Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead at 2:02 p.m., according to the Riverside County Coroner's office.

The coroner reported Martinez Salazar was struck 385 feet west of San Luis Rey Drive and police confirmed he was not in a crosswalk.

The collision scene is between Gene Autry Trail and San Luis Rey with shopping areas to the north and south. Ramon is lined with sidewalks and has three lanes of traffic in each direction and there's often a presence of vehicles and pedestrians in the area.

The driver, who police described as a Desert Hot Springs resident, pulled over and cooperated with investigators, Palm Springs police Sgt. Mike Casavan said.

Drugs and alcohol do not appear to be involved in the collision, he added.

The collision is the second fatality involving a Coachella Valley pedestrian this year. The first happened Jan. 7 when a woman was killed on Washington Street in Bermuda Dunes.

Last month's fatalities were down slightly compared to January 2020, when three people died after being hit on Coachella Valley roads.

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