



301 E. Ocean Boulevard, Suite 1720
Long Beach, CA 90802
T. (833) 290- 7452

www.mccalla.com

Office Hours: Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm (Pacific)

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Volunteering with World Central Kitchen

Michael Gonzales, Managing Partner of CA/NV Foreclosure and Litigation,
Michael.Gonzales@mccalla.com

I know I am not alone when I say this, but the past few months have been the most mentally challenging of my life. Early April found me quarantined, laying off people that have worked with me for a decade, going stir crazy, consumed by the uncertainty of what the future held. I struggled with what to do, how to counter the frustration I was feeling. Thankfully, my thoughts settled on how I could be of service, knowing a lot of people were far worse off than me.

Just prior to joining MRLP, I was in Puerto Rico cooking meals for thousands of people affected by the hurricane, which was the beginning of World Central Kitchen's mission to show up to disaster areas and serve hot meals in times of devastation. Steinbeck said it best "Wherever there's a fight so hungry people may eat; we will be there."

Since that time, World Central Kitchen expanded its mission worldwide and provided millions of meals in disaster areas. If anyone would know how I could help – it would be my dear friend Josh Phelps, who I met in Puerto Rico way back when and now runs WCK's international relief missions. Rather than accept a donation, he presented me with a challenge. WCK was starting a new project to fund local restaurants on a per meal basis to provide meals for people unable to feed themselves.

Within days, two local Long Beach restaurants (The Ordinarie and Lola's Mexican Kitchen) were producing a thousand meals a day for seniors in local facilities cutoff from their normal food supply. We have since added two additional restaurants (Roxanne's and the Breakfast Bar) returning 35 local service industry jobs and have served over 45,000 meals to date! So many big smiles replacing fear on seniors' faces has never failed to brighten the most stressful of days.

We are still wading through uncertain times in the wake of COVID-19 but playing my small part amongst a group of people driven by the desire to help others might be the only thing that has kept me sane. There is always a way to help, neither size nor scale matter. A little empathy and kindness go a long way in tough times and just might be the jolt of happiness we all need.