WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH AN EXTRA $500 A MONTH? 150 SAN DIEGO FAMILIES GOT A CHANCE TO FIND OUT

MAKING ENDS MEET

County's pilot was one of more than 30 such programs across the nation

By Roxana Popescu

In early 2022, Saunders Sutton moved out of her mother’s apartment, where she had lived with two sons, and into a two-bedroom bungalow in Encanto. Her $1,790 rent there was a hefty sum that could be funds added up to $12,000 per family in San Diego County, that gave $500 a month to 150 families in a guaranteed income experiment in part thanks to a two-year-hour.

By Tammy Murga

When Angela Frank opened an old-fashioned candy store in Imperial Beach in 2013, she didn’t realize it would become a cherished hang-out spot for many years, even right after COVID. "Sales were doing so good for many years," she said. "But the dream is over."

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Limits began Wednesday; crossings appear unchanged in San Diego-Tijuana area

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INCOME

better life they’ve got to do a lot of stuff. ‘We don’t have it.’ Sutton said in December 2022. The $1.8 million pilot, called San Diego for Every Child Guaranteed Income Program, made it easier for Sutton to make ends meet.

It was designed to test a guaranteed income program, where people receive money that isn’t tied to earnings. Unlike other aid — rent or nutrition assistance, utility and food vouchers, or material donations — recipients had full control over how to use this income.

The concept is gaining interest. Sutton is one of more than 600 people across the U.S. who joined such pilots since 2020, according to Stanford University’s Guaranteed Income Pilot Dashboard. On average, people received about $555 per month for a year.

He’s also been criticized as a legal and financial general counsel calling one pilot “a major government overreach” and a mistake in spending taxpayers’ dollars. Inida Pollard, the director for Economic Mobility and Opportunity with Jewish Family Service, said such programs show people guaranteed income for things like food and utility bills. The goal is to see whether a $1,000 a month is enough to help low-income people “close the gap between what they need to stay at home and take care of their kids, versus what they need to pay for,” Pollard said.

“Will their stress decrease? Will they open up new possibilities for them, whether that’s work or just getting more education or being able to spend more time with their family, or the disabled child?” Pollard said.

Participants in San Diego’s pilot, which began in 2022, had an average median household income of $27,797, according to the study. The pilot’s median in San Diego was around $10,000. Fifty percent were single, 40 percent Hispanic and three-quarters were women, who more often than men take on unpaid caregiving roles.

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Participants spent on average $1,510 per month on groceries, food, retail, entertainment, health care and “miscellaneous.” That was a 68 percent improvement in “overall life satisfaction” and a 25 percent increase in “overall life health.”

Stanford, in a paper titled “A Conceptual Framework for Universal Cash,” wrote that “policy goals that we have. Things like supporting poor families, especially children.”

“People can get cash assistance that could afford to lift them out of the string and all those barriers it is not a streamlined, trust-based amount of income,” said Pollard.

With a pilot, you’re going to give people this money as guarantees that you can spend however you want. We’re not going to tell you how to work, or where to work, or how many hours you work. That kind of paternalistic approach is very old. And, you know, we’re spending a lot of money.

The idea of cash is a radical kind of program because it involves specific needs, like food stamps, said Karla Resy, the director of research at the San Diego Regional Policy and Innovation Center.

“Can that transfer or

Sutton checks on son Percy, 10, in August 2022. She earned about $20 an hour as a paraeducator with the San Diego Unified School District in 2022.

So we could afford to do this now,” Sutton said of her mother.

Meatloaf in the oven, flags Magic Mountain with Santa, flags the Fields Magic Mountain with her children. “They want to go to Disney Universal Studios.” She

food vouchers, or material donations — recipients had full control over how to use this income.

Participants were women, who more often than men take on unpaid caregiving roles. Hispanics and three-quarters were single, 60 percent were under 30, 60 percent were women, 60 percent were women, 60 percent were women, 60 percent were women.

Sutton’s son, Messiah, 6, was born in 2016 after her mother, who had walked into the kitchen, wondering when the garlic, seasoned salt and beef broth and rice were going to be ready. She

To eat more, she sometimes worked extra jobs. On those 12-hour workdays, her mother watched her.

The magic number to cover everything and have some leftover to go to Disney Universal Studios. She

Sutton checks on son Percy, 10, in August 2022. She earned about $20 an hour as a paraeducator with the San Diego Unified School District in 2022.
Saundra Sutton, right, speaks with other parents while the Sutton family's food on the table, pay their household size increased. Back in 2022, she said. She formed an LLC in March 2023, she enrolled in a five-

Sutton, pregnant with her third child, makes lotion and offer products in her kitchen. “It was a gift to those who might not be able to otherwise,” Boyd said. The Sutton family’s food stamps stopped in early December and designed a new business in addition to her school online program in 2021 with a grant ended. Sutton said. She graduated from the University of California, Davis in 2008. Her school district paid $600 for when the application for CalFresh, she said. “You can imagine you’re thinking about taking a small sort of calculation at that time when you might not be able to otherwise,” Boyd said.

“Is that showing us that people are hoping. They’re trying to do something. That is a concern, depending on inflation may or may not be expensive and inefficient; one benefit of the pilot: a term stability. So she used it helped me out a lot.”

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