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Community Bridges celebrates 40 years of service

Santa Cruz County, Calif. — Community Bridges is kicking off the agency’s celebration of 40 years serving the community, representing a journey to become one of Santa Cruz County’s largest nonprofits. The agency’s 10 human services programs include Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County, Lift Line, and its four family resource centers, among others. With twenty locations county-wide, Community Bridges serves 27,000 local children, families and seniors each year.

When Sam Karp was hired in 1977 as the Executive Director of Food & Nutrition Services (the former name of Community Bridges), he would not have predicted that 40 years later, the need for these services would still be in such high demand. “We believed then that hunger and poverty were political problems, not simply problems of individual or family circumstance,” said Karp. “We thought with enough political will, these conditions could be dramatically improved. Yet today, more than 40 million Americans still live in poverty.”

Over the past four decades, Community Bridges has maintained its core function of nutrition services and health care for the most vulnerable members of the community. Thanks to the dedicated support of the public, the agency’s programs have continued to expand to serve an even wider population, with recent mergers including Mountain Community Resources in Felton and Familia Center and Beach Flats Community Center in Santa Cruz.

“Throughout its history, Community Bridges has stood for equity, inclusiveness, support, and collaboration,” said Raymon Cancino, the fourth Chief Executive Director since Community Bridges was founded. “As we gear up for our next forty years, these values will continue to drive every decision we make. Although these are challenging times for many in our community, we know that by working together, anything is possible.”

Today, Community Bridges’ core services empower seniors to live with independence and dignity, increase access to medical care and quality nutrition, prevent child abuse through parent education and support, and work to close the academic achievement gap through subsidized preschool programs and free after-school and summer support for grade-school children.

“We’ll have some exciting announcements about our agency’s future soon. For now, we hope you’ll join us in ensuring our next 40 years are even better than the first by helping us secure it through our agency endowment which was started last year,” Cancino said.

To learn more about Community Bridges, visit communitybridges.org.