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[Editor's note: pictures available upon request]

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## **Community Bridges program sites suffer losses due to theft, vandalism, accident**

Facilities that offer services to low-income children, families, and seniors in two cities in Santa Cruz County have suffered a spate of losses due to theft, vandalism and an accident in recent weeks.

"It's extremely rare and coincidental that these events have happened so close together," said Raymon Cancino, chief executive officer of Community Bridges, a local nonprofit organization that serves 27,000 people in the county through 10 programs at 20 sites. "Our programs are in safe areas, and are crucial to the communities they serve. But these unforeseen expenses could take a major toll on our annual budget if our insurance isn't able to cover the full cost."

Community Bridges' programs include Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County; Elderday Adult Day Health Care; Lift Line; a network of child care centers; the Child & Adult Care Food Program; Women, Infants & Children (WIC); and four family resource centers.

The most recent incident, an apparent accident, occurred Monday afternoon when a driver crashed his vehicle head-on into the Nueva Vista Family Resource Center, formerly known as Familia Center, in the Lower Ocean neighborhood of Santa Cruz. The driver was uninjured and no clients or staff were present, but the structure suffered severe damages.

Another incident occurred on Jan. 8 at about 10:30 p.m. The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program site in Watsonville was vandalized. Two large plate glass windows were shattered by a blunt object. The out-of-pocket-expense for these repairs will be approximately \$1,000.

A week earlier, on Dec. 29, the Vista Verde and Fairgrounds Child Care Centers in Watsonville were burglarized. Taken were laptops, stereos, and educational materials for the centers. The burglaries took place after hours when

the centers were vacant. Community Bridges estimates its out-of-pocket expense to repair damages and replace stolen items will exceed \$3,000.

In yesterday's incident, the Santa Cruz Police Department reported that initially the driver went to step on his brakes but slipped and hit the gas. After the driver tried to correct this, a bottle rolled underneath the brake, preventing him from stopping the crash into the building. Staff were out on holiday during the accident.

The full scope of damage to the building is still being assessed.

To help offset the cost of repairs, donations may be sent to Community Bridges, 236 Santa Cruz Ave., Aptos, CA 95003 or made online at [CommunityBridges.org](http://CommunityBridges.org).

### **ABOUT COMMUNITY BRIDGES**

Community Bridges operates ten programs and twenty sites throughout Santa Cruz County focused on children, families and seniors. Each year, they uplift the lives of more than 27,000 residents in need. The Community Bridges Family of Programs includes: Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County; Elderday Adult Day Health Care; Lift Line; Child Development Division; Child & Adult Care Food Program; Women, Infants & Children (WIC); La Manzana Community Resources; Live Oak Family Resource Center; Nueva Vista Family Resource Center; and Mountain Community Resources.