

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County postpones Rotary and Community Champions Weeks**

WATSONVILLE, CA – Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County (MOW), a program of Community Bridges, serves some of the most vulnerable people in our community and is taking precautionary measures to ensure their clients are as protected as possible from COVID-19 (coronavirus). As the first confirmed cases of the virus were identified in Santa Cruz County this past week and additional guidance has come from the California Department of Public Health and Santa Cruz Public Health Department recommending limiting interactions for people over the age of 60, MOW has decided to postpone Rotary and Community Champions weeks.

Annually in March, MOW invites elected and community leaders and, this year, Rotary Club members to serve and interact with seniors across Santa Cruz County. This event allows community leaders to serve and engage with seniors in their communities, and the seniors receiving meals are able to interact with community leaders in a comfortable environment. While this is an important and valuable service opportunity, it is not worth the risk of the unintentional consequences that may occur. MOW is postponing the Rotary and Community Champions weeks that were scheduled for the weeks of March 16-20 and March 23-27, 2020 and will notify the community when new dates have been determined for these community service weeks.

“While COVID-19 has not currently spread thorough community contact, as part of general ‘social distancing’ measures suggested by the California Department of Public Health, we have decided to postpone the Rotary and Community Champions weeks.” Says Lisa Berkowitz, Meals on Wheels Program Director. “We are appreciative of the dozens of Rotarians and elected officials that have already signed up to serve seniors, however we need to put the health of our seniors and community first. Our goal is to limit contact and any potential cross contamination within our program and services.”

MOW will continue to implement procedures to ensure that seniors are protected, including monitoring participants for any signs of illness, both at congregate dining sites and during home deliveries, as well as educating volunteers and staff on proper hygiene and limiting social distance when feasible. Additional measures including use of alcohol based hand sanitizer and instituting two different meal times at the larger dining sites to limit congregation.

We will keep the community informed as more changes are implemented to balance continuance of essential nutrition services to at-risk seniors with the potential health risk to participants.

For nonprofit agencies like Community Bridges the ability to serve vulnerable community members during this crisis presents unique challenges. We must continue our critical work in providing essential services even when we experience greater need without added revenue, even when we have to cancel major promotional and fund raising events, and even when potential shut downs threaten to impact program

sustainability. We want to continue to serve the children, families and seniors in to Santa Cruz County without loss of governmental and individual support. Community Bridges operates with lean margins and has limited capacity to absorb the impact of this public health crisis. Please consider donating to help sustain the vital work that Community Bridges does to improve the health of our community.

[www.communitybridges.org/donate](http://www.communitybridges.org/donate).

### **About Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County**

Since 1976, Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County, a program of Community Bridges, has served nearly 9 million meals to 65,000 local seniors in need. Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County serves 1,600 seniors in need each year with nutritious meals and caring human contact. The tireless work of this program—supported by a dedicated army of 200 volunteers—allows thousands of Santa Cruz County residents to remain healthy, safe, and independent in their own homes.

### **ABOUT COMMUNITY BRIDGES**

Community Bridges envisions a thriving community where every person has the opportunity to unleash their full potential. Together, our family of programs delivers essential services, provides equitable access to resources, and advocates for health and dignity across every stage of life. To learn more, please visit [www.communitybridges.org](http://www.communitybridges.org).

The Community Bridges family of programs includes the Child & Adult Care Food Program, Child Development Division, Women, Infants and Children (WIC), La Manzana Community Resources, Live Oak Community Resources, Mountain Community Resources, Nueva Vista Community Resources, Elderday Adult Day Health Care, Lift Line and Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County.

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