



BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Wednesday, March 17, 2021,
5:00 PM to 7:30 PM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/613973795>, Meeting ID: 613 973 795

DRAFT AGENDA

- 5:00 1. CLOSED SESSION**
- 5:45 2. Adjourn Closed Session**
- 5:50 3. Call to Order/Establish Quorum**
- 5:50 4. Agenda Review (5 min)**
- 5:55 5. Announcements/Program Updates (5 min)**
- 6:00 6. *CONSENT AGENDA – Action Items (5 min)**
In approving the consent agenda, the Board is approving recommendations within each committee's minutes listed below.
*6.1 Draft Minutes of the March 17, 2021 Board Meeting**
a) Michael/Jack moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. MSP.
6.2 Draft Minutes of the June 9, 2021 Development Committee Meeting
a) Lee/Michael moved to recommend approval of the 21/22 Development Plan.
6.3 Draft Minutes of the June 10, 2021 Finance Committee Meeting.
a) Michael/Jack moved to recommend approval of the 21/22 Agency Budget to the CB Governance Committee. MSP.
6.4 Draft Minutes of the June 10, 2021 Governance Committee Meeting.
- 6:05 7. Receive comments from members of the public on “Items not on the Agenda” (5 min)**
- 6:10 8. BOD Chair Report – Jack Jacobson (15 min)**
- 6:35 9. CEO Report – Ray Cancino (20 min)**
9.1 CDD Program Report – Lisa Hindman Holbert
9.2 MOW Relocation Summary - Lisa Berkowitz
*9.3 Action Item: RESOLUTION 2021-06-01 CDE**
- 6:55 10. Development Report– Anna Vaage /Jayme Ackemann (15 min)**
*10.1 Action Item: Approval of the 2021/22 Development Plan**
10.2 Development Committee Report – Michael Babich
- 7:10 11. Finance Committee Update – Doug Underhill (25 min)**
11.1 Financial Report from the June 10, 2020 Finance Committee Meeting
*11.2 Action Item – Approval of 21/22 Agency Budget**
- 7:25 11. Newspaper Articles**
- 7:25 12. Items for Next Agenda (5 min)**
- 7:30 13. Adjourn Regular Meeting**

Next Meeting: Wednesday August 18, 2021, 5 pm - 7:30 pm Meeting Location TBD – Zoom will be offered.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Wednesday, March 17, 2021,
5:00 PM to 7:30 PM
Zoom Meeting

DRAFT MINUTES

Members present: Brenda Griffin, Lee Slaff, Jack Jacobson, Michael Babich, Amy McEntee, Sara Siegel, Silvia Morales, Nicolette Lee, Stephanie Connor Kent

Staff present: Ray Cancino, Tyler Smith, Seth McGibben, Lois Sones, Doug Underhill, Lisa Hindman Holbert, Deutron Kebebew, Lisa Berkowitz.

Notes: Tonje Wold-Switzer

5:00 1. CLOSED SESSION

6:20 2. Adjourn Closed Session

6:20 3. Call to Order/Establish Quorum

5:50 4. Agenda Review

5:55 5. Announcements/Program Updates

As of yesterday 100% of ELD staff had received the COVID-19 vaccine along with a large number of participants and caregivers. ELD is preparing to open the program for in-house services in a few months. The Child Development Division (CDD) is one of seven programs participating in a county-wide Inclusive Early Education Program grant that looks at current infrastructures to operate inclusive programs for all children regardless of ability, language or other barriers.

6:00 6. *CONSENT AGENDA – Action Items

In approving the consent agenda, the Board is approving recommendations within each committee's minutes listed below.

*6.1 Draft Minutes of the March 10, 2021 Development Committee Meeting **

*6.2 Draft Minutes of the March 11, 2021 Governance Committee Meeting **

Michael/Jack moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. MSP.

6:05 7. Receive comments from members of the public on “Items not on the Agenda” (5 min)

6:10 8. BOD Chair Report – Nicolette Lee

8.1 Committee Reports

a) Development Committee Report – Michael Babich

The nation-wide Meals on Wheels (MOW) Community Champions week event where local leaders are invited to join in delivering meals to seniors starts on Monday and runs through 3/26. The event raises local awareness about MOW and CB. So far, three Watsonville city

council members, a Scotts Valley city council member, the Watsonville fire chief and the mayor of Capitola are signed up to participate in what will be a 2-hour caravan due to COVID restrictions. Board members are invited and encouraged to participate and can RSVP to info@cbridges.org. The COVID Vaccine Forum was offered with simultaneous translation in four languages. 40 people registered and there were 100 attendees. February 2021 we raised \$56K compared to \$35K February 2020. The 2020 Farm to Fork event was virtual due to COVID and we are now in discussions about indoors vs outdoors venue and lunch vs dinner for this year's event, which effects ticket prices.

6:35 9. CEO Report – Ray Cancino

9.1 Action Item* Resolutions:

LL receive TDA funding on an annual basis which makes up a significant portion of their operational funding. CDBG is also received on an annual basis for our Nueva Vista Community Resources program through the City of Santa Cruz. There are additional County CDBG funds available this year from COVID relief funds.

a) RESOLUTION 2021-03-01_TDA

b) RESOLUTION 2021-03-02_CDBG_Santa Cruz County CDBG

c) RESOLUTION 2021-03-03_CDBG_Santa Cruz County 2021 CDBG

Michael/Jack moved to approve Resolutions 2021-03-01, 2021-03-02 and 2021-03-03. MSP.

9.2 LISC Project

This is the \$60MM SB 91 grant for tenant and landlord rent relief support. The agency put in a close to \$1MM collateral grant and Deutron will be lead on that project with several community partners.

9.3 Vaccination Call Center – Update

We have managed close to 2000 calls so far, scheduling people's vaccine appointments. This week we received an additional \$20K from the Community Foundation of Monterey for the effort. Through the system, we are able to prioritize by age, zip, and other risk factors such as preexisting conditions. This small project with two staff members is so far accounting for about 1/3 of the FRC total year's budget.

6:55 10. Development Report– Anna Vaage / Amy Hanley (15 min)

10.1 Progress Report for February 2020

Seventy-one percent of MOW clients live below the federal poverty level, 70% are considered at nutrition risk, 54% live alone and 58% have a disability. This year MOW has served over 160,000 meals to close to 1700 seniors which is double the number of deliveries in 2019. An additional breakfast meal was added to seniors' regular meal deliveries and MOW also provided emergency preparedness assistance to seniors this year for the CZU fire and for power shut offs thanks to funding received from Meals on Wheels America as well as other sources. We found ways to continue providing services to the unhoused seniors we were serving prior to the shutdown by going out to find them, identify their needs and make sure they have shelf stable meals since they can no longer come to the dining sites. The development team created and shared a participant profile from a marketing standpoint

based on client demographic data collected across the programs that exemplify how one person can have multiple agency touchpoints. Board asked how to diversify MOW enrollment since the majority of participants are white, female and from North County, and an issue around cultural appropriate meals has been identified. The cost is 30% higher for adding more variation to the diet and Lisa is working hard with her with funders to figure out ways to break down barriers to access, including availability of culturally appropriate meals.

7:10 11. Finance Committee Update – Doug Underhill (15 min)

a) Financial Report from the March 11, 2020 Finance Committee Meeting

The agency 5-year trend report follows our audit every year to visualize where we have been and where we are moving as an agency. We are on the upswing in every single year out of the last five, and have increased revenues and expenses on a near equal basis until this past year which received additional boosts from COVID related funding. The top section shows total personnel expenses for each fiscal year. Over the past five fiscal years this has increased by 14.29% which is mainly a reflection of 3.5% annual steps increases. The next section shows our supplies and service expenditures, which has seen a 53% increase with total expenses growing by a total of 20%. The report also breaks down revenue sources into county, municipal, state and federal funding as well as foundations funding, donations, fundraising, and earned income. Earned income was \$1.8MM five years ago and \$2.3MM last year. CFO presented the highlights for each of the programs.

The preliminary program budget summary for next fiscal year is in the packet. Last year we saw significant one-time funding which present areas of potential shortfalls for the following FY that we are actively trying to meet between today and July 1. The 21/22 fiscal year budgets will be presented for approval at the June 16 Board meeting.

7:25 11. Newspaper Articles

7:25 12. Items for Next Agenda (5 min)

7:30 13. Adjourn Regular Meeting

Next Meeting:

Wednesday June 16, 2021, 5 pm - 7:30 pm by Zoom



Finance Committee Meeting

Thursday, June 10, 2021, 3:00-4:00 PM

Zoom Meeting

Santa Cruz County, CA

Draft Notes

Members Present: Lee Slaff, Michael Babich, Jack Jacobson,

Staff Present: Doug Underhill, Ray Cancino

Notes: Laura Romero

3:00 Agenda Review

3:05 CFO Report – Doug Underhill

a) Program Budget Summary / Program Updates & Analysis

Community Bridges has received full forgiveness for our PPP loan and the note is 'paid off in full'. All programs are currently in a gain except for Live Oak, which is close to breaking even. CACFP was in the negative a few months ago, and are now in the positive due to employee turnover that has taken some time to fill. Admin also experienced gains due to employee turnover. The grant writer position was filled and they are starting soon. Despite not having a grant writer, we have successfully brought in \$350K of new funding in the past few weeks. Admin and fiscal has been scheduling meetings with PDs so they can get more urgently on track with current funding opportunities. Overall, fiscal year program gain is \$1MM+, and total Agency gain should exceed +\$1.5 MM.

b) Investments and Funds – Status Review May 31, 2021

c) Cash Flow and Line of Credit

Cash tracking is looking strong.

*d) **Action Item:** FY 2122 Agency Budgets**

All budgeted revenues are secured funding and overall the budget is a very slight increase to last years' budget, however, excluding the PPE funding in last years' budget, the Agency budget is showing a 4.98% growth. Admin is coming in the same as last years' budget, Development is showing an increase in budget of 36.72%, adding a fourth member to that team with 20 hours to spend in development and 20 hours in admin. We feel it is important to invest in the development department, due to a greatly expanded donor base and COVID donations. CACFP, remains flat and is challenging to increase, but they have a balanced budget with 1.32% growth. Live Oak and WIC are also challenging to grow, due to funding, with WIC running on a 3-year contract. LMCR has grown due to CA rental relief funding. LL

has a 22% increase due to the Measure D dollars and TDA funding coming back to pre-COVID numbers, along with the return of congregate services. MOW is projecting 7% less than last year, due to less one-time funding, however, they tend to be very conservative. There is a large CDBG ask for MOW that has not in the budget but may be awarded. MCR experienced a 22% drop, however, that is due to the fixed asset project to fix bathrooms in last years' budget. NVCR is seeing a 14% drop partially due to the phasing out of Red Cross funding that was part of the La Familia property. They are seeing a drop in expenses due to now sharing program managers with NVCR. CDD is expected to grow by 4% from quality improvement dollars that come through the CA department of Education that were deferred from 2021 to 2122. We are currently running too high of an Admin surplus due to PPP dollars, and in order to sustain and possibly increase our Indirect Rate, we need to spend out our reserves. One thing we should keep in mind is it is a tight labor market right now, and having multiple missing staff creates a very challenging situation. We know we have a certain percentage of turnover, however, when we build these budgets, they are built with full staffing in place.

Michael/Jack moved to recommend approval of the 21/22 Agency Budget to the CB Governance Committee. MSP.

e) Closed Session

3:50 Closing Items

a) Closed Session

b) Items for next agenda

4:00 Adjourn

Next Meeting July 8th, 2021



Governance Committee Meeting

Thursday June 10, 2021

4 pm-5 pm

DRAFT MINUTES

Members present: Jack Jacobson, Lee Slaff, Michael Babich,

Staff present: Ray Cancino, Tyler Smith, Doug Underhill, Seth McGibben

Notes: Laura Romero

4:00 1. Meeting to order/Establish Quorum

4:00 2. Agenda Review

4:05 3. CB Client Advisory Committee - Next Steps

Client advisory committee has not been consistent due to a combination of PD capacity/engagement and lack of client participation. In the past, there was one committee for all programs and this is easier to manage. Final stages of approval and committee selection is identifying interested parties.

Suggestions:

- Set up one committee and have quarterly meetings on one topic.
- Break up committee by services offered. Seniors, Children/Nutrition, FRCs.

Next steps: Further discussion at next BOD meeting.

Topics for discussion: Frequency of meetings. What are we looking for? Where are the gaps? What are the current needs and what kind of feedback are we looking for?

4:10 4. BOD Liaison to the Programs – Next Steps

Tonje made a list of what BOD requested. When a new member is on boarded, the Board needs to find out what that person is interested in to make better use of their skills.

4:15 5. Closed Session

4:55 6. Items for next GC Agenda/BOD Agenda (5 min)

Further discussions on BOD Liaison, CB Client Advisory Committee and situational leadership training.

5:00 7. Adjourn

Next Meeting: Thursday July 8, 4-5pm

AGENCY BOARD RESOLUTION
RESOLUTION # 2021-06-01

At the duly noticed regular meeting of the Community Bridges Governance Committee meeting held on June 16, 2021 the following resolution was made:

Be it resolved that the Board of Directors of Community Bridges (CB) hereby authorizes Community Bridges to enter into funding contract CSPP-1580 with the California Department of Education for the purpose of providing child care and development services.

It is further resolved that the officers and the President/CEO and/or designees are authorized to execute contracts, including any amendments necessary to fulfill the intent of this Resolution.

Jack Jacobson, Chair

, Secretary**VERIFICATION**

Each of the undersigned declares under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the statements in the foregoing certificate are true and correct of his or her own knowledge, and that this declaration was executed on June 19, 2019, at Santa Cruz, California.

Jack Jacobson, Chair

, Secretary

COMMUNITY BRIDGES FY 21/22 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Review Timeline

Development Comm Review	April 14, 2021
Management Team Review	April 28, 2021
Management Team Approval	May 26, 2021
Development Comm Approval	June 9, 2021
Board Review & Approval	June 16, 2021

Individual & Business Support						
Donations & Campaigns	21/22 Goal	20/21 Goal	20/21 Projected Actual*	19/20 Actual	18/19 Actual	17/18 Actual
Unrestricted	\$133,000	\$102,913	\$251,040	\$268,206	\$135,032	\$136,748
CACFP	\$4,000	\$2,350	\$10,404	\$7,610	\$3,732	\$3,685
CDD	\$5,900	\$7,112	\$5,490	\$8,410	\$6,332	\$6,491
WIC	\$2,650	\$1,550	\$4,481	\$3,729	\$3,664	\$1,607
ELD	\$7,600	\$5,773	\$9,647	\$18,318	\$7,240	\$9,765
LL	\$15,100	\$12,209	\$16,953	\$16,694	\$6,757	\$18,351
MOW	\$337,000	\$243,000	\$549,191	\$459,686	\$315,596	\$346,729
LMCR	\$2,700	\$3,252	\$5,228	\$4,976	\$9,000	\$1,435
LOCR	\$7,500	\$24,508	\$50,643	\$30,418	\$56,970	\$29,091
MCR	\$60,000	\$54,549	\$106,498	\$95,507	\$75,417	\$68,186
NVCR	\$7,500	\$4,890	\$8,594	\$8,061	\$15,973	\$14,306
TOTAL	\$582,950	\$462,106	\$1,018,169	\$921,615	\$635,712	\$636,394
Appeal & Campaign Summary*	21/22 Goal	20/21 Goal	20/21 Projected*	19/20 Actual	18/19 Actual	17/18 Actual
Board Member Gifts to CB	\$4,000	\$5,000	\$3,450	\$5,450	\$3,700	\$3,900
CACFP Fundraiser Events	\$500	\$866	\$324	\$962	\$703	\$573
CB Annual Report	\$9,350	\$9,998	\$8,670	\$8,390	\$10,617	\$4,160
CB Calendar Appeal	\$30,900	\$36,038	\$18,750	\$45,911	\$35,090	\$31,748
CB Calendar Sponsors	\$4,000	\$4,500	\$3,500	\$5,000	\$3,500	\$6,500
CB Farm to Fork Gala	\$52,000	\$8,000	\$40,488	\$72,980	\$62,667	\$60,159
CB Giving Tuesday	\$13,200	\$10,540	\$25,250	\$11,097	\$13,385	\$13,291
General Donations	\$141,000	\$126,299	\$324,726	\$87,791	\$150,717	\$132,419
LL Van Sponsorship	\$10,000	\$9,468	\$9,500	\$10,520	\$2,760	\$12,010
Major Gifts \$1,000-\$5,000+	\$81,000	\$75,666	\$177,013	\$166,331	\$129,832	\$136,037
MCR Mountain Affair	\$21,500	\$0	\$0	\$21,650	\$21,592	\$21,618
MCR Phone-a-thon	\$12,000	\$16,731	\$8,000	\$18,604	\$16,652	\$17,475
MOW Client Contributions	\$8,500	\$5,000	\$8,258	\$10,257	\$6,854	\$5,406
MOW Coin Drive	\$5,000	\$3,500	\$5,452	\$5,452	\$4,118	\$3,439
MOW Fall Mailer	\$100,000	\$90,000	\$182,674	\$101,438	\$88,676	\$102,918
MOW Food from the Heart	\$35,000	\$10,000	\$500	\$19,875	\$37,321	\$36,575
MOW Spring Mailer	\$55,000	\$45,000	\$147,742	\$140,206	\$47,528	\$48,166
COVID-19 Relief	\$0	\$5,500	\$53,872	\$189,701	n/a	n/a
Grand Total	\$582,950	\$462,106	\$1,018,169	\$921,615	\$635,712	\$636,394

*20/21 Projected include 9 months actual, 3 months estimated based on prior year.

**Major gifts shown separately: \$5,000+ for CB & MOW, \$1,000+ All Other Programs

COMMUNITY BRIDGES

Program Budget Summary

April 30, 2021

Projections for Year Ending 6-30-2021

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	J	K
PROGRAM NAME:	6/30/20 Audited Balance	Annual 20/21 Projected Budget	Current Projected Expenses	Current Projected Revenues	As Yet Unsecured Revenues	(E-D) Net 2020-2021 Gain/Loss	(B+G) Cumulative Gain/Loss	Goal 25% Reserve %	Change from Prior Mo	% Change	14.53% Gen'l & Adm Exp
WIC (Oct-Sept FFY)	191,246	2,401,683	2,180,273	2,180,273	0	-	191,246	8.8%	-	0.0%	316,122
Child Development Div	303,657	2,047,702	1,913,719	2,018,399	53,553	104,680	408,337	21.4%	(1,869)	-0.1%	277,659
Elderday	333,766	2,265,643	2,372,783	2,459,095	39,996	86,312	420,078	17.7%	67,966	2.9%	196,279
Meals on Wheels	1,036,084	2,383,534	2,442,751	2,743,857	115,838	301,106	1,337,190	57.1%	(18,056)	-0.7%	354,479
Lift Line	(233,526)	1,969,592	2,275,549	2,295,550	32,000	20,001	(213,525)	-11.1%	(4,154)	-0.2%	263,905
La Manzana Commtty Res	195,379	702,137	791,964	843,144	24,404	51,180	246,559	31.7%	8,440	1.1%	104,196
Mountain Commtty Res	249,368	715,114	979,233	979,233	16,000	-	249,368	25.7%	-	0.0%	117,385
Nueva Vista Commtty Res	96,440	409,768	455,401	479,681	8,615	24,280	120,720	26.8%	7,883	1.7%	64,592
Live Oak Commtty Res	134,881	391,398	429,407	425,899	15,671	(3,508)	131,373	30.6%	(2,140)	-0.5%	61,443
CACFP (Oct-Sept FFY)	5,615	4,178,223	3,995,633	4,023,882	32,120	28,249	33,864	3.7%	12,871	0.3%	63,563
Administration	82,419	2,085,124	2,084,985	2,164,017	0	79,032	161,451	7.8%	3,155	0.2%	4,921
Philanthropy	154,484	235,479	243,567	288,694	13,000	45,127	199,611	82.0%	8,647	3.6%	30,066
TOTAL PROG OPERATIONS	2,549,813	19,785,397	20,165,265	20,901,724	351,197	736,459	3,286,271	20.88%	82,743	0.4%	1,854,610
LOCRCapital Campaign	443,594	27,240	34,070	112,006	0	77,936	521,530	NA	7,081		0
CBHQ FY 20/21 Activity		-	245,235	238,734	0	(6,501)	(6,501)	NA	(1,739)		0
Fixed Assets & Gen'l Agy	3,088,549	-	1,780	206,503	0	204,723	3,293,272	NA	14,317		0
TOTAL AGENCY	6,081,955	19,812,637	20,446,350	21,458,967	351,197	1,012,617	7,094,572	20.88%	102,402	0.5%	1,854,610

Fixed Asset purchases and Pass-Thru expenses exempt from Indirect; Revenues and Expenses include all pass-through

Program Budget Summary
April 30, 2021

PROGRAM NAME:

WIC	-44K proj expenditures, many EE short-term COVID leaves (-29K personnel)
Child Development Div	+1K Capitola, -2K private fees, deferring 49.8K QRIS
Elderday	-ADA at 63, VA rev received +63K, 900K Facility Reserve (+100K), Deferring 50K CF SCWOL
Meals on Wheels	Deferring 61K Capitola CDBG and 80K CARES, -21K personnel and 12K other expenses.
Lift Line	+78K TDA FY 2021 Funding, Deferring 37K 5310, 7K CARES, CARB + 44K, +35K TDA equip reserve
La Manzana CR	-6K personnel, +2K Program Income, minimal other changes
MCR	41K prior year vs. 152K BOD approved, -5K personnel, +5K CF, +8.7K phon-a-thon, deferring 134K to FY 2122
Nueva Vista CR	-2K personnel, -3.5K Maint, +1K Investments, minimal other changes
Live Oak CR	+8.4K Ardea, -20K donation not expected, deferring Kaiser 42.5 to 2122, rev/exp removed
CACFP	-9K personnel (hiring), -180K DCH pass-through rev, -DCH count, +13K FFY Carry-forward
Administration	Decrease G.A. -42K, Decreased Expenses (mostly personnel) -46K
Philanthropy	-6K personnel, slight decrease year end expenditures, donations stable
LOCR-Cap Campaign	Actual YTD less proj FY 20/21 expenses, 4/30/2021 \$525,100
La Manzana Property	Actual Revenue/Expense through April 30, 2021
FAs & Agy Unrestr.	Includes grant funds, includes \$94K endowment donation, Endowment Balance 4/30/2021 \$668,321
Total Agency	Proj Program +736K, Proj Agency +1012K, +900K Facility
Total PPP Funding FY 2021	941,000
One-time CARES (CORE)	112,700
One time Deferred/COVID/FIRE	1,632,000 estimate
Total One-time FY 2021 Funding	\$2,685,700
	18.80% of FY 2021 program expenses (less CACFP pass-through and G.A.)

COMMUNITY BRIDGES		AGENCY BUDGET July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022											Budget	
		ADMIN	DEV.	CACFP	LOCR	WIC	LMCR	LL	MOW	MCR	NVCR	CDD	ELD	Total 21/22
REVENUE:														
4001 Contributions from Individuals		77,000		4,500	6,000	4,144	2,700	5,100	321,160	35,500	5,500	5,650	6,100	473,354
4002 Contributions from Business		20,000			1,500			10,000	50,000	3,000	2,000	250	1,500	88,250
4003 Contributions from Other Fdns	70,000	100,000			67,500		37,250	40,000	25,000	66,250	60,250		49,376	515,626
4200 Special Events		35,000							29,000	22,000				86,000
4300 Legacies & Bequests									10,000	1,134				11,134
4700 United Way Allocations					20,600					75,000				95,600
5000 Gov Agencies-Other													91,276	91,276
5501 County of Santa Cruz				15,000	60,000		163,000	15,000	415,000	154,000	15,000	145,000	145,000	1,127,000
5501 County of SC-Summer Lunch							28,711							28,711
5501 County of Santa Cruz-Other					23,840			875,159	87,000	8,000		114,600		1,108,599
5503 City of Santa Cruz SSP											53,000	73,000		126,000
5503 City of SC/Capitola CDBG					5,521			61,000			100,000			166,521
5503 City of Santa Cruz - TDA								775,247						775,247
5505 City of Watsonville							3,000		2,000					5,000
5600 State Government					37,431		189,544	309,648	579,925	35,475	2,549	1,620,428		2,775,000
5700 Federal Government				4,203,676	19,224	6,640,024	136,991	82,717	564,341	10,930	22,035	27,675	49,777	11,757,390
6200 Program Service Fees	1,922,116				69,550		85,490	281,304	73,418	55,992	77,224	130,019	1,687,730	4,382,843
6500 Investment Income						6			3,091	24	5,606			8,727
6900 Miscellaneous Revenue					23,844	1,800	36,089	19,565		16,880	9,289			107,467
Transfer from Reserves	79,121	89,957							5,485					174,563
Community Foundation of SC	15,000			10,000	5,000		18,127			31,873			50,000	130,000
First 5 Santa Cruz County					34,771		194,703			40,656		13,320		283,450
TOTAL REVENUE:	2,086,237	321,957	4,233,176	374,781	6,645,974	895,605	2,413,740	2,226,420	556,714	352,453	2,129,942	2,080,759	24,317,758	
		ADMIN	DEV.	CACFP	LOCR	WIC	LMCR	LL	MOW	MCR	NVCR	CDD	ELD	Total 21/22
PERSONNEL EXPENSE:														
7000 Salaries Total	1,335,428	93,327	254,172	185,774	1,261,583	394,157	872,717	664,683	275,593	183,107	1,105,177	738,083	7,363,801	
7100 Employee Health	138,354	14,726	40,742	36,715	151,964	66,754	106,725	107,601	56,622	37,009	191,541	113,878	1,062,631	
7100 Employee Retirement	47,550	3,232	5,807	4,454	54,258	9,022	16,806	27,949	4,591	3,751	26,679	25,704	229,803	
7200 Payroll Taxes	123,830	8,545	25,126	17,835	116,629	37,041	118,914	76,835	25,466	17,068	147,926	77,863	793,078	
TOTAL SALARIES/BENEFITS:	1,645,162	119,830	325,847	244,778	1,584,434	506,974	1,115,162	877,068	362,272	240,935	1,471,323	955,528	9,449,313	
SERVICES/SUPPLIES EXPENSE:														
8000 Professional Fees: Audit	32,589		8,669					2,800					44,058	
8010 Indep. Prof. Consultants	126,069	76,987	28,514	25,536	20,849	36,745	78,817	75,024	19,807	6,128	19,631	90,097	604,204	
8100 Supplies	55,374	49,257	5,828	5,296	82,640	3,994	18,218	724,287	14,427	5,497	75,862	144,862	1,185,542	
8200 Telephone/Communications	13,295	1,860	2,402	9,836	47,869	12,201	22,532	9,835	5,187	9,169	41,093	7,531	182,810	
8300 Postage & Shipping	2,604	4,676	6,091	421	8,890	424	2,228	14,182	1,363	110	256	4,257	45,502	
8400 Occupancy Total	94,093	252	28,754	16,794	252,481	75,973	186,218	115,584	55,818	26,882	141,588	281,324	1,275,761	
8500 Rent/Maintenance of Equip	7,344			8,274	1,916	3,205	13,540	8,315	2,658	1,183	5,640	608	52,683	
8600 Printing & Publications	9,639	13,277	2,861	1,267	2,392	1,679	2,143	7,901	1,432	321	841	3,000	46,753	
8700 Travel & Transportation	6,574	832	3,075	1,439	5,000	2,626	177,879	43,563	1,912	1,435	8,899	257,219	510,453	
8800 Conferences and Meetings	41,305	2,257	1,298	826	13,000	1,217	1,203	1,368	856	466	9,963	3,401	77,160	
8900 Assistance to Individ.					4,257,496				3,000				4,260,496	
9000 Membership Dues	9,653	100	250	181	3,744	110	3,720	865	0	204	410	6,120	25,357	
9300 Insurance/Bond	11,200		930	4,345	10,709	5,447	82,413	22,137	4,880	8,961	17,746	15,995	184,763	
9400 Miscellaneous	20,085	5,844	906	1,327	7,475	3,851	13,350	6,593	2,204	1,296	10,262	8,454	81,647	
9400 Fixed Assets	1,806						462,539	8,000					472,345	
9600 Dist. of Program Costs	9,445	46,785	70,631	54,461	347,079	111,354	230,978	311,698	80,898	49,866	306,558	302,363	1,922,116	
Program Reserve											19,860		19,860	
9691 Payment/Affiliated Orgs.			3,747,120			129,805							3,876,925	
TOTAL SERVICES/SUPPLIES:	441,075	202,127	3,907,329	130,003	5,061,540	388,631	1,298,578	1,349,352	194,442	111,518	658,619	1,125,231	14,868,445	
TOTAL EXPENSES:	2,086,237	321,957	4,233,176	374,781	6,645,974	895,605	2,413,740	2,226,420	556,714	352,453	2,129,942	2,080,759	24,317,758	
		ADMIN	DEV.	CACFP	LOCR	WIC	LMCR	LL	MOW	MCR	NVCR	CDD	ELD	Total 21/22

The Little Free Pantry - Santa Cruz

March 14 ·

We now have 3 locations to serve our Live Oak community:

- The original, located at 1859 Encina Drive, SC 96062
- Chanticleer Park/Leo's Haven, located at 1975 Chanticleer Avenue, SC 95062
- Our newest addition, located at Live Oak Community Resources, 1740 17th Avenue, SC 95062 (see photo below)

Open to everyone, 24/7. ❤️❤️❤️



NOWCAST

Watch on Demand



RAYMON CANCINO
COMMUNITY BRIDGES EXECUTIVE OFFICER

 HIDE TRANSCRIPT

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY RENTERS EXPERIENCING HARDSHIPS DURING THE PANDEMIC... MAY NOW BE ELIGIBLE FOR SOME RELIEF. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS GIVING SIXTEEN MILLION DOLLARS TO ASSIST LOW-INCOME RENTERS AND LANDLORDS IN THE COUNTY. THE CALIFORNIA COVID RENT RELIEF GIVES FUNDING TO HOUSEHOLDS WHO MAKE FIFTY PERCENT OR LESS OF THE MEDIAN INCOME. IF THE APPLICATION IS APPROVED, LANDLORDS COULD RECEIVE 80-PERCENT OF TENANTS UNPAID RENT. "We're asking for folks to be patient as the state rolls this out and understand it's not a first come first serve. It's really based on need and eligibility." COMMUNITY BRIDGES IS ONE OF SEVERAL SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO HELP WITH THE APPLICATION PROCESS. APPLY OR VERIFY ELIGIBILITY AT [HOUSINGISKEY.COM](https://housingiskey.com)

TRACKING THE COVID-19 VACCINE

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LOCAL NEWS

Santa Cruz County community steps up throughout pandemic

From battling food insecurity, to assisting residents who've faced a loss of income, nonprofits and residents have been a part of public health response



The Second Harvest Food Bank truck pulls up in front of a food and supply distribution held by the Center for Farmworker Families. The Community Foundation has provided over \$1 million to Center for Farmworker Families to help with food, rental, or household financial assistance for farmworkers. (Jeremy Lezin — Santa Cruz Sentinel)

By **HANNAH HAGEMANN** | hhagemann@santacruzsentinel.com |

PUBLISHED: March 17, 2021 at 4:29 p.m. | UPDATED: March 17, 2021 at 4:33 p.m.

SANTA CRUZ — Roughly a year has passed since Bay Area and Santa Cruz County health officials implemented a stay-at-home order to protect residents from COVID-19. As authorities jumped into action, applying rapidly emerging information on the virus to their response, so did local community based organizations.

“Right away we started thinking about low-wage workers who were going to have to give up shifts to take care of their kids. We also didn’t know how kids who were getting school lunches were going to be fed,” said Susan True, CEO of Community Foundation Santa Cruz. “And so that was kind of our first moment of ‘we need to deploy resources so that we avoid a crisis.’ ”

For True, March 12, 2020 — the date of Santa Cruz County schools closing — marked the beginning of the Community Foundation's ongoing work to address the pandemic. The organization supplied Second Harvest Food Bank, Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County, Community Bridges, and other organizations, with emergency grants to get food to families.

"The defining moment for me was looking at the car line up at Beach Street for food distribution at the Boardwalk parking lot, and thinking, these are people who have been able to figure out how to make it happen in Santa Cruz County for years, in mostly hospitality-oriented jobs, and now can't," True said. "Our community has to step up and also, get ahead of this," True recalled saying to herself.

The Community Foundation, along with other local nonprofits, quickly identified how Santa Cruz's most vulnerable could be impacted by coronavirus and its deep impacts on day-to-day life. Two major areas of need emerged: community members struggling to make rent, and put enough food on the table, with reduced or cut work hours. Nonprofits, volunteers and residents, filled a crucial role to provide services to vulnerable residents this last year of the pandemic, officials and community members told the Sentinel.

"We could not do it without them," said Jason Hoppin, county communications manager, of community-based organizations. "That's not just a symbolic relationship, it's something we need to in order to reach the people who need help the most."

Coming together

In the early days of the pandemic, the Community Foundation also identified that additional support was needed by the County Public Health Division. In April 2020, the foundation provided funds to hire Margaret Lapiz, a public health professional, to assist in the county's response to COVID-19. To date, the organization has supplied Santa Cruz County nonprofits and agencies with nearly \$3.7 million to assist residents with urgent financial needs, such as paying utility bills and rent.

Second Harvest Food Bank has led the response in getting fruits, vegetables, frozen meals and pantry goods to Santa Cruz County residents facing food insecurity. Suzanne Willis, chief development officer with Second Harvest Food Bank, said the demand for services exploded when shelter-in-place orders were implemented.

"We're hearing from people who've never used food bank services and people that previous to the pandemic had been food bank donors, who are now needing services in our community," Willis said.

Since the pandemic hit, the food bank has been serving 20,000 to 25,000 residents per week. Santa Cruz County residents have met the increased financial need to supply food to those who need it, Willis said.

"The amazing thing about the Santa Cruz Community is the residents who stepped up and said food insecurity is unacceptable, and really made sure we had the resources we needed to meet that increased demand," Willis said.

South County response

The Latino community, particularly in South Santa Cruz County, has been the hardest hit by the impacts of coronavirus. Agricultural workers saw their hours cut, or jobs delayed. Some students struggled to gain access to the online classroom. More than 34% of COVID-19 deaths in Santa Cruz have been amongst the Latino Community while Latinos make up just under 35% of the total Santa Cruz County population.

"It's heart wrenching for me," said MariaElena de la Garza, who heads the Watsonville-based Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County. "It's our most vulnerable, our families, people who are incredibly important in the fabric of the community."

De la Garza said South County leaders have been running full speed since the beginning of the pandemic to address the disparities. The CEO referenced a partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank and the Community Foundation that resulted in more than 50 tons of food being provided to South County residents in need. Community Action Board, Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County and others, including Salud Para La Gente, Community Bridges, Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance, banded together and formed the South County Triage Group early.

"That was the strength of the response," de la Garza said. "We all came together to create the best possible scenario for our vulnerable communities. I don't think that's going away."

Other Santa Cruz community members felt the brunt of the COVID-19 burden, including seniors, and small business owners. Santa Cruz County nonprofit Community Bridges had to tweak how it delivered meals to senior citizens they served, to prevent the spread of COVID-19. With assistance from the city and county of Santa Cruz, as well as the Community Foundation, the organization also bought and distributed 2,000 Amazon Fire tablets to local seniors.

"What we understand is there's a real digital divide, compared to other demographics with seniors," said Raymon Cancino, CEO with Community Bridges. "Seniors are using these tablets to meet with doctors, go to physical therapy, counseling and to see their families."

Residents play a role

Residents also have picked up the call to assist in community recovery. Especially during the beginning of the pandemic, when PPE shortages gripped hospitals around the nation, including in Santa Cruz County. Penny Cotter, a lifetime Santa Cruz resident, launched a SC Mask Sewers Facebook page. The group is 420 members strong, and more than 20,000 masks have been sewed. The demand has slowed a bit, she said, but there are still weekly mask orders being placed in the hundreds.

"Every night I was counting masks until midnight, getting them ready for pick up the next morning," Cotter said, recounting the early days of the pandemic.

Even though Cotter, who works full-time running a day care, said the extra work was tiring at times, it's been worth it.

"There was a need for it, to protect our community, to make people feel safer," Cotter said.

Coming Saturday

The brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic has weighed heavily on Santa Cruz County's Latino, immigrant, Indigenous and unhoused population. Read this story in Saturday's Sentinel and online at santacruzsentinel.com.

NEWSHEALTH

Communities of color still hardest hit by COVID-19 in Monterey Bay Area

Latino, Indigenous have suffered during the pandemic



At Salud Para La Gente, last summer, a woman receives a COVID-19 test. (Jeremy Lezin – Santa Cruz Sentinel)

By **HANNAH HAGEMANN** | hhagemann@santacruzsentinel.com |

PUBLISHED: March 19, 2021 at 4:49 p.m. | UPDATED: March 19, 2021 at 5:27 p.m.

SANTA CRUZ — While some in the Monterey Bay Area have fared through the last year of the pandemic with day-to-day inconveniences, for many Latino and Indigenous residents, the public health crisis has marked the beginning of a deeper struggle.

“Money plays a big part in how well you did in COVID,” Raymon Cancino, CEO with Community Bridges, said. “The more money you had the more ability you had to stay home, not go to work, social distance yourself, order door dash. When you’re living on a budget, you’re not going to spend four dollars on food delivery. That four dollars could have been translated into one meal for your family.”

Advocates say during the last year of the COVID-19 pandemic, families have fought to retain housing, get food on the table and keep their jobs. Living and working conditions have put Santa Cruz County Latino community members in higher-risk scenarios for contracting the virus. Data exemplifies these inequities: Latino residents account for more than 54% of the total documented COVID-19 cases in Santa Cruz County, while making up around 33% of the region’s population. As of Friday, Latinos accounted for 35% of COVID-19 deaths in Santa Cruz.

“When you add all these things together, when you have everything in English, everything online, when you live in an area that’s a lot less saturated with medical professionals when you have those types of structural inequities, it plays out in these ways,” Cancino said.

Community leaders the pandemic’s impact on families’ finances, work-situations and well being overall, won’t lift any time soon. And while new coronavirus case numbers have improved slightly, in recent weeks, communities of color continue to bear the burden of infections. Indigenous language-speaking communities such as those who speak Triqui, or Mixteco, have also taken a hit.

Pandemic reveals inequities

For Cancino, the COVID-19 pandemic laid to bare local Latino families’ already-strained housing, and exhausting working conditions. In order to live in the Monterey Bay Area, the nonprofit leader said many “double up,” sharing rooms, smaller homes and apartments, to make ends meet.

“What the COVID era really showed was the conditions that people have to survive in Santa Cruz County, make public health spread more predominant and more aggressive than in other communities where it’s not as prevalent,” Cancino said.

The nonprofit leader said the Santa Cruz County Latino community predominantly works in essential-service sectors, such as rest, child care, agriculture, hospitality. Throughout the pandemic, the stability of those jobs ebbed and flowed. Workers saw hours cut, or were laid off.

Still, many in those industries continued to have to show up to in-person work. That Cancino said, puts the Latino community at further risk of infection.

“We quantify a lot of these folks as essential only in terms of the pandemic,” Cancino said. “The wages that we pay for some of these positions, relative to the work they have to do is undervalued. They’re unrepaid, and they have to make other decisions, like go without healthcare, or seeking medical care.”

The nonprofit leader pointed to the fact that all Santa Cruz County residents who were 30 or younger, and died due to COVID-19, have been Latino. Housing inequities, he said, have played out in the way the virus spreads. In Santa Cruz County 78% of COVID-19 cases are likely to have stemmed from person-to-person transmission in households.

Communities impacted

The Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County surveyed more than 910 undocumented immigrants whom the board provided financial assistance to during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of those surveyed, 97% experienced cut work hours and 67% were struggling to adapt with closures of child care facilities, or schools.

More than half of the immigrants surveyed said they were experiencing food insecurity. More than 90% said they were also faced with unmet housing needs, and nearly half were struggling to pay utility bills.

“To me, those numbers tell a story and they should be guiding a future response for us,” MariaElena de la Garza, executive director of the Community Action Board, said.



Agricultural workers walk from their Casserly Road job site last month to get their COVID vaccines. (Shmuel Thaler – Santa Cruz Sentinel)

Part of that continued response, according to de la Garza, includes cultivating work opportunities that better protect Latino and Indigenous communities from COVID-19, and providing more job security. In many instances, unemployment benefits did not meet the need for Monterey Bay Area families struggling, she said. Families of undocumented immigrants were unable to even qualify for unemployment support.

Reflecting on the beginning of the pandemic, de la Garza said not enough public safety information on COVID-19, or PPE was emerging rapidly enough in Spanish. Language barriers continue to exist, for Spanish and Indigenous-language speakers, she said.

“How do we make sure our vulnerable communities, day workers, agricultural workers, people who have reduced work hours, how do we make sure their pathways in recovery are same as English speaking counterparts...that includes those most invisible to the system, our Indigenous language speakers,” de la Garza said.

Vaccinations a priority

As the race to provide vaccinations to Santa Cruz County community members rolls on, advocates continue to worry about an equitable distribution of shots. Nearly 22,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been given to Latino residents, accounting for about 19% of vaccines administered in Santa Cruz. That figure has dropped about 1% from the previous week.

“The Latinx community isn’t getting vaccinated at the same rate that other races are,” Cancino with Community Bridges said. “They’re concentrating vaccines where COVID-19 cases are greatest, but that’s not a replacement for race.”

That’s partly due to the fact that the Santa Cruz County Latino population is younger than the white population, according to county officials.

Another factor is geography. Vaccines, have been largely distributed based on where high case-loads have been documented. And while many Latino community members live in South County, that doesn’t mean they’ve been able to get a shot yet.

“South County is where the biggest concentration of COVID infections has been, and we’ve seen great strides in vaccination rates of South County, but location-based data is not a replacement for race,” Cancino said.

For its part, county health officials say they’re working to get more doses to the Latino community.

“While it may appear that a number of vaccinations are going to a non-Latinx population, a lot of what we’re doing right now is only second dose vaccinations. And we’re following up with those first doses for our Phase 1A health care worker populations and over 65, which are heavily weighted to be white,” Mimi Hall, director of Santa Cruz County’s Health Services Agency, said in a press conference Thursday. “We’re limited by our resources and our capacity and timing and competing interests. But the Latinx community and our South County communities have always been and will continue to be our priority.”

Although this week marked the year anniversary of shelter-in-place orders being implemented in Santa Cruz County, de la Garza said, she, officials and other advocates are still in the height of their response.

“I think we need to get through vaccination. We’re still in it,” de la Garza said. “I’m hopeful that we’re collectively all moving in a better direction, and I’m worried about the disparities, even in the recovery.”

Coming Sunday

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced a ‘pause’ on many milestone events. Perhaps, one of the most difficult, has been dealing with the death of loved ones. Read this story in Sunday’s Sentinel and online at [santacruzsentinel.com](https://www.santacruzsentinel.com).

Central Coast

By [Jocelyn Ortega](#)March 30, 2021 7:05 PM Published [March 30, 2021](#) 11:38 AM

The need to feed struggling communities continues



SANTA CRUZ, Calif. (KION) Many people across the country, including here on the Central Coast, still struggle with food insecurity during the ongoing pandemic.

Local food banks say they are still in need of funding. Second Harvest Food Bank in Santa Cruz County says the COVID-19 pandemic led to many more food distributions than they've seen before.

"We're serving about 95 thousand people in our county and remember, Santa Cruz County is only about 270 thousand people so we're serving quite a bit of people and the need has not gone down," says Suzanne Willis, Chief Development Officer at Second Harvest Food Bank in Santa Cruz County.



With help from FEMA and other county resources and organizations, Second Harvest says they've been able to continue feeding those most in need including agricultural workers, families with children, the unemployed and even CZU fire victims.

"Every year we start off our base at zero and we have to raise the funds that we need in order to meet payroll, in order to buy the food, in order to have those distributions, our need for funding is continuing, it's not going to go away," says Willis.

Willis says Second Harvest receives between \$5 million and \$6 million in funding annually to feed community members in need, but with increasing numbers of people experiencing food insecurity, she says she expects to see the economic impacts of the pandemic and an increase in food distributions for the next 3 to 5 years, which will require long-term funding.

Willis says a portion all funding also goes towards hiring additional staff and volunteers with now more and more people are lining up at food distributions. In the meantime, organizations like Community Bridges in Watsonville are doing what they can to meet demand.

Community Bridges is just one of the locations throughout the county providing food pantry services closer to the people in the community.

"We're probably seeing about 350 to 400 families, we also run a summer lunch program every year which is when schools close and we provide lunch for those children who are outside of school," says Community Bridges CEO Raymon Cancino.

Second Harvest says they will no longer have their weekly drive-through food distribution at the Santa Cruz Boardwalk after April. Instead, Willis explains they have what they call Nutrition Homes throughout the county to give people the food they need without having to travel far.

To find out more about food resource or to volunteer or make a donation, visit <https://www.thefoodbank.org> and <https://communitybridges.org>

NEWSHEALTH

Creating connection: Downtown Senior Center and partners help community avoid isolation



Santa Cruz Parks & Recreation facility attendant employee Isaac Steinbrook teaches computer skills to a senior at Loudon Nelson Community Center in 2019. In the last year, the Downtown Senior Center has worked with local organizations to keep seniors online and connected. (Dan Coyro — Santa Cruz Sentinel file)

By **MELISSA HARTMAN** | mhartman@santacruzsentinel.com |

PUBLISHED: March 31, 2021 at 4:39 p.m. | UPDATED: March 31, 2021 at 4:40 p.m.

SANTA CRUZ — Kelly Mercer-Lebov, the senior programs coordinator of the Downtown Senior Center at the Loudon Nelson Community Center, gets queries these days from eager seniors about when classes such as line dancing will be held in person again.

It wasn't always that way. Mercer-Lebov and her staff had been running more than 30 daily virtual classes since March 2020 and saw palpable tension and frustration from the elderly they check in with daily, especially around access to the coronavirus vaccine.

The seniors that took online classes including memoir writing and yoga were used to using Zoom and other platforms to maintain some semblance of normal life, but many had friends and family with no access to the internet when vaccine doses were becoming available to them.

"It was virtually impossible for them to schedule (appointments)," Mercer-Lebov said Wednesday. "We were keeping our ears to the ground for any openings that could be able to help."

Eventually, representatives of the County of Santa Cruz Health Services Agency reached out to the Downtown Senior Center to help navigate the process. They created a simple signup for seniors, then prioritizing only those 75 and older with complex health issues, and shared it with many senior advocates.

Watsonville-based Community Bridges, which partners with the Downtown Senior Center already for the Senior Center Without Limits program, stepped on to the scene in mid-February to offer a hotline designed to reach out to seniors without internet access who could be helped over the phone. A Google Voice number is provided, where individuals can leave messages asking for help.

The partnership was strengthened when the Health Services Agency reserved appointments specifically for seniors so that the partners could book those times. Mercer-Lebov said that Community Bridges made around 2,000 appointments for seniors in two months. Those 65 and older with complex health issues are still being served. The hotline is being used regularly to work out existing kinks, such as situations where seniors have had their second vaccine appointment canceled and they are unsure how to rebook it.

"It has changed over the last couple of months quite a bit, especially with more and more people being able to access the vaccine and the supply (increasing)," Mercer-Lebov said. "Among the seniors we work with, about 100% that have wanted the vaccine has gotten (the vaccine). That's just those that we work with on a daily basis."

Coming together

Mercer-Lebov credited the City of Watsonville, namely its Parks and Recreation Department, and the Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County for the ability to keep so many seniors connected and reassured in the last year. As of June, low-income seniors 60 and older can participate in the Senior Center Without Limits online program through the distribution of free Amazon fire tablets. Local internet provider Cruzio helped by providing internet to these seniors as a part of its Equal Access Santa Cruz initiative, a cooperative to help families that need affordable internet.

Today, the nearly 10,000 seniors that have taken classes have been vaccinated for nearly a month. However, Mercer-Lebov has seen the benefits of giving seniors hope before vaccines were distributed as a light at the end of a dark tunnel. She devoted three years prior to the pandemic to raising awareness around senior loneliness and isolation, an issue inflamed as family members stayed away from seniors to preserve their health.

"That loneliness and isolation has really been hard for so many, and so many of our programs that were in person we couldn't really adapt to the online platform. We kept the time space just to have time to check in, like the walking adventure group," Mercer-Lebov said. "We hold that space and talk about walks we've been on in our neighborhoods and we assign scavenger hunts for them to do every week."

Because of worry around the solemnity of the holiday season, the Downtown Senior Center adapted to the then-active shelter-in-place order to deliver cookies, cocoa and connection kits. The connection kits included the name of another senior and their contact information with prompts such as two truths and a lie and Mad Libs so they could touch base at least three times during the often arduous time of year. Mad Libs is a word game that allows players to fill in blanks in place of words to be as silly as they want.

"We were thankful so many of our seniors took the bait," Mercer-Lebov said.

Similar to the phone pal opportunity, Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County established a "Stay Connected" hotline that seniors can call or schedule calls on a weekly basis. The line is still live at 831-427-5070, ext. 115.

"It's like a friendship line where they can talk to someone, they can catch up and have someone to bounce ideas off of," she said. "It's run by trained volunteers."

The coordinator said she is grateful that loneliness and isolation has been addressed in a timely manner, but she feels there is still a lot of work to be done.

"We are working hard to bridge the digital divide," she said.

A letter to the editor of Good Times

BY **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

POSTED ON APRIL 7, 2021

Upon Thursday's Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) 6-6 vote not to pursue funding for a train on the rail corridor, Friends of the Rail Trail (FORT) announced that this "vote serves as an alarm bell for anyone in our community who is concerned about climate change, air pollution, South County commuters stuck in traffic, bike-plus-transit commuters, or seniors and disabled riders in need of more public transit options."

Really? Too bad FORT and their offshoot Coast Connect never heard of Santa Cruz County METRO, Lift Line and ParaCruz, which address all these concerns. And guess what? We already have them in service with no requirement for additional county taxes or "state and federal dollars," as does a train. METRO *already* "address[es] social equity, environmental sustainability and economic justice in transportation" with their new electric buses. Now! Not in 20 years!

Additionally, FORT notes that this "vote at the RTC may result in delaying construction of the highly popular Rail Trail that is already underway." Actually, the excessive cost of excavation, concrete retaining walls, and heritage tree removals due to construction that detours around the tracks and requires retrofitting the trestles is what has been delaying the "highly popular Rail Trail!"

Nadene Thorne | Santa Cruz

This letter does not necessarily reflect the views of Good Times. To submit a letter to the editor of Good Times: Letters should be originals—not copies of letters sent to other publications. Please include your name and email address to help us verify your submission (email address will not be published). Please be brief. Letters may be edited for length, clarity and to correct factual inaccuracies known to us. Send letters to letters@goodtimes.sc.

USDA Boosts Food Assistance for Homeless Young Adults Seeking Refuge in Shelters

Press Release

Release No. 0070.21

Contact: USDA Press**Email:** press@usda.gov

WASHINGTON, April 9, 2021 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced that young adults under the age of 25 experiencing homelessness will now be able to receive meals at emergency shelters participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Under normal circumstances, USDA only reimburses shelters for meals served to children through age 18, but the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act expanded several nutrition assistance programs to reach the most vulnerable populations experiencing food hardship due to the pandemic, including homeless young adults.

CACFP is a federal program that provides child care centers, day care homes, and adult day care centers reimbursements for nutritious meals and snacks they serve to eligible children and adults enrolled at their facilities. CACFP also provides reimbursements for meals served to children and youth participating in afterschool care programs, children living in emergency shelters, and adults over the age of 60 or living with a disability and enrolled in day care facilities.

“The pandemic has exposed how hunger can afflict anyone during tough times — including young adults who may not be equipped to cope with the financial challenges that this global pandemic may throw at them,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “The American Rescue Plan not only is proving to be one of the most powerful anti-poverty pieces of legislation in history, it is also driving down food insecurity with a host of new tools that help the most vulnerable among us.”

This provision of the ARP ensures CACFP facilities will be reimbursed by USDA for the meals they serve these residents for the duration of the public health emergency.

The risk of hunger has increased throughout the pandemic, with recent data suggesting approximately 23 million adults and as many as 12 million children are living in a household where they may not always have enough to eat. The pandemic has also worsened longstanding inequalities in food insecurity: Black and Latino adults are more than twice as likely as white adults to report that their households did not get enough to eat.

ARP includes more than \$12 billion to bolster food security during the pandemic with a variety of programs and interventions, from nutrition assistance programs to purchase food commodities for donation to food banks, to help and support for workers in the food supply chain.

“The Act ensures that we get the economy on track for everyone, especially those who have been marginalized, who are hurting, who have been overlooked or shut out in the past,” said Stacy Dean, deputy undersecretary of food, nutrition, and consumer services. “USDA stands ready to implement these important provisions and is providing states with new guidance to help them put these new benefits in place.”

For more information about CACFP, visit: www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp

To see the Implementation Guidance for State Agencies on Reimbursement for Meals and Snacks Served to Young Adults in CACFP, visit: www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/implementation-guidance-reimbursement-meals-and-snacks-young-adults.

More information on USDA’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic can be found at www.fns.usda.gov/coronavirus

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America’s food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the

Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

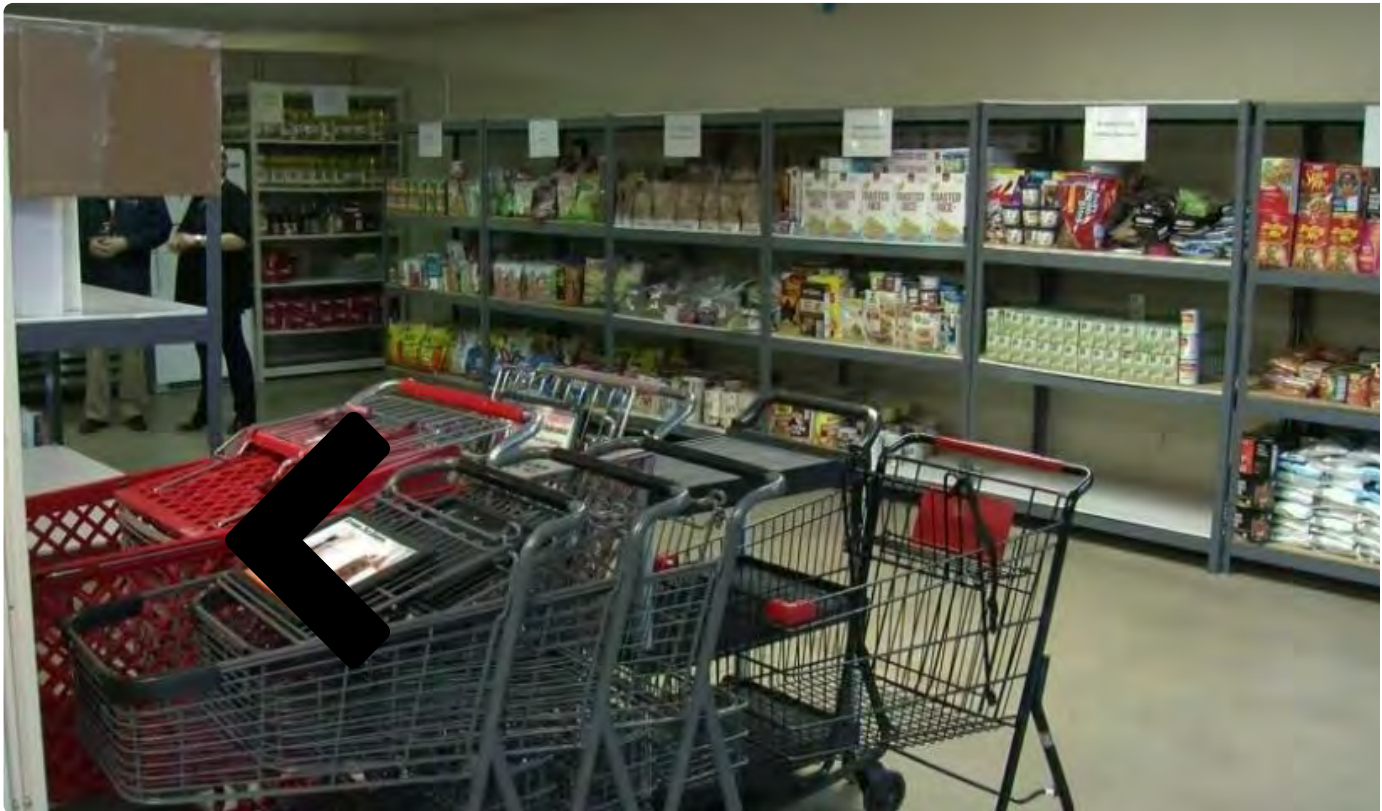
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By **Stephanie Magallon**

Published April 16, 2021 12:09 PM

Centros de distribución de comida y asistencia por la pandemia en el Condado de Santa Cruz



CONDADO DE SANTA CRUZ, Calif.

Organizaciones como el banco de alimentos Second Harvest del Condado de Santa Cruz y Community Bridges en Watsonville son la fuente de comida de miles de residentes con recursos limitados y que no tienen acceso a un método de transporte. Estos les proporciona comida a centros dentro de las comunidades.

“Por eso existen estas ubicaciones, para asegurarse que las comunidades vulnerables tengan acceso a un centro de distribución de comida dentro de cinco millas de donde viven, estos ofrecen oportunidades de distribución semanalmente o bisemanal”, dijo el Director Ejecutivo de Raymon Cancino en Watsonville.

ADVERTISING



Las ubicaciones incluyen:

El Centro de Recursos para Familias

Horario:

Lunes – Viernes: 9am a 12pm, 1pm a 4:30pm

[521 Main Street, Suite Y, Watsonville, CA 95076](#)

831-724-2997

Centro de Recursos Familiar Live Oak

Drop-in hours:

Lunes – Jueves: 9am a 5pm (cerrado entre 12pm-[1pm](#))

[1740 17th Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95062](#)

831-476-7284

Centro de Recursos Comunitario Mountain

Drop-in hours:

Lunes– Jueves: 9am a 4pm (cerrado entre 12:30 to 1pm)

Citas disponibles entre Lunes- Thursday 9am a 5pm.

[6134 Highway 9, Felton, CA 95018](#)

831-335-6600

Nueva Vista

Lunes –Viernes: 9am a 1pm, 2pm a 5:30pm

[711 East Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz, CA 95060](#)

831-423-5747

Cacino dijo que también proveerán una línea telefónica de asistencia que le ofrecerá información a personas de 16 años y más que buscan vacunarse en el Condado de Santa Cruz.

“Hay varias estrategias y grupos de personas asegurándose que las vacunas lleguen a nuestras comunidades, puede ser confuso, a veces tenemos el suministro y se terminan rápidamente y a veces tenemos a esas personas que las necesitan pero que no entienden o saben cómo obtenerlas y no pueden salirse del trabajo o usar el internet”, dijo Cancino.

Cancino dijo que solo tienen que llamar al 831-219-8607 para conectarte con alguien que te pueda ayudar.

“Solo te pedimos tu nombre, número telefónico, edad y su código postal. Nuestro equipo luego le llamará para hacerle una cita dentro de 48 horas”, dijo Cancino.

Cancino agregó que esperan extender la línea telefónica para que pueda servir a todos los condados en la Costa Central.

Noticias / T23 Asistencia por la pandemia

News

By **Jocelyn Ortega****April 15, 2021 7:21 PM** Published **April 15, 2021** 11:56 AM

Santa Cruz County organizations bring resources straight to the community



KION



WATSONVILLE, Calif. (KION) Organizations like Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County and Community Bridges in Watsonville are designating food hubs to make access to food pantries and distributions easier for those with limited resources or who cannot travel far.

"That's why these locations exist is to make sure that underserved parts of our community have access within at least five miles of another one of our centers, they offer these weekly, sometimes bi-monthly opportunities at each one of the locations," says Raymon Cancino, CEO of Community Bridges in Watsonville.

Locations include:

ADVERTISING



La Manzana Family Resource Center

Drop-in hours:

Monday – Friday: 9am to 12pm, 1pm to 4:30pm
[521 Main Street, Suite Y, Watsonville, CA 95076](#)
831-724-2997

Live Oak Family Resources

Drop-in hours:

Monday – Thursday: 9am to 5pm (closed for lunch 12pm-[1pm](#))
[1740 17th Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95062](#)
831-476-7284

Mountain Community Resources

Drop-in hours:

Monday – Thursday: 9am to 4pm (closed for lunch from 12:30 to 1pm)
Appointments are available Monday – Thursday 9am to 5pm.
[6134 Highway 9, Felton, CA 95018](#)
831-335-6600

Nueva Vista

Main Office

Monday – Friday: 9am to 1pm, 2pm to 5:[30pm](#)

711 East Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

831-423-5747

Hours of operations may differ depending on each location.

Cancino says they are also providing helpline to provide easier access to information for groups of people aged 16 and over in Santa Cruz County as they are now able to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

"There's so many different players in how we're getting the vaccines in our community, it's confusing, sometimes when the availability is there they go back really quickly and sometimes those folks that are sometimes most in need are the people that are less likely to understand or to know or to be able to take time off or look online," says Cancino.

Cancino says all you have to do is call (831) 219-8607 to get connected with someone who can help.

"We just ask for name, phone number, age and zip code and then our staff will call you back and try to work with you to get you an appointment in 48 hours," says Cancino.

Cancino adds this help line is extending over to other Central Coast counties to help anyone in need.

LATEST HEADLINES

Yvette Brooks, Mayor's message | Volunteers are vital to Capitola

By **YVETTE BROOKS** |

April 24, 2021 at 2:30 p.m.

As we move beyond the one-year mark of the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been thinking a lot about all of the people who volunteer in our community. Volunteers in our community have been the glue to keeping our community afloat this past year and I am so thankful.

In this month's article, I will highlight just a few volunteers in our community who I have interacted with the past few months while I have been mayor.

Capitola City Clerk Chloe Woodmansee volunteered her time organizing our City's Second Harvest food drive. Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County works hard to feed people who have immediate nutrition needs. Because of her efforts, Capitola was able to feed thousands of families and become one of the 2021 Hunger Fighter award recipients.

Meals on Wheels volunteers generously spend its time organizing, preparing and delivering meals throughout our community. I recently had the opportunity to observe during its Community Champions week-long celebration to honor the brave seniors that have experienced extraordinary challenges over the past year. This event is part of a nationwide campaign to raise awareness for services that give voice to seniors experiencing isolation, food insecurity and poverty. It was truly a special day.

Capitola/Aptos Rotary President Michelle Bassi and all members of the Capitola/Aptos Rotary club are hard at work every month and I truly appreciate their efforts and their support of our youth in our community. This group recently awarded several student scholarships and organized a beach cleanup.

American Red Cross of the Central Coast volunteers were the heroes who stepped up and supported our displaced families during the fires this last summer. In March, the City of Capitola declared March 2021 American Red Cross Month. Every day, people in our community depend on the American Red Cross and its volunteers, donors, and community partners. Their lifesaving work is vital to strengthening our community's resilience.

COVID 19 Volunteers at the COVID vaccine clinics throughout our community who keep showing up to ensure that all community members who want a vaccine can receive one. These clinics are supported by countless volunteers to help keep them running smoothly. If you would like to join the fight against COVID-19 and be part of this historic national effort, visit scvolunteercenter.org to volunteer at a clinic.

I also want to spend some time highlighting the volunteers in our community who have offered their time to serve on our City commissions as well. The City Council appoints citizens to serve on boards, commissions, and committees to assist and advise in formulating policy. These advisory bodies play an important role in helping the City set good policy. In addition, community members may be appointed to represent the city's interests on other agency boards.

HOUSING

How much is rent relief helping Californians?



BY MANUELA TOBIAS

APRIL 26, 2021



Blanca Esthela Trejo has foregone treatment for lingering pain caused by COVID-19 to pay rent on her family's apartment.
Photo by David Rodriguez, The Salinas Californian

IN SUMMARY

Complex rules and landlord resistance are limiting the success of an unprecedented effort to help tenants. Advocacy groups are concerned what will happen after a statewide eviction moratorium ends June 30.

Lea este artículo en [español](#).

When Blanca Esthela Trejo, 46, lies down to sleep, what feels like shards of glass stab her back and cut into her lungs — a lingering effect of COVID-19.

"I'd like to be crouched down, hunched over all the time, because the pain is too much," she said.

But Trejo is foregoing medical treatment because she has put paying the rent on her Salinas apartment above all else — to keep a roof over her three children's heads.

A state law passed in January [extended eviction protections for tenants through June 30](#), as long as tenants show they lost their income due to COVID-19 and pay a quarter of what they owe.

The law also allocates a whopping \$2.6 billion in federal money for rent relief.

Trejo, however, is one of many desperate Californians who won't benefit because her debt is not to a landlord.

After losing her packing shed job — where she believes she caught the virus — she also lost her health insurance. Her husband has been out of work for most of the pandemic. Too scared to test the law, she paid rent in full every month with loans from friends. The couple now owes about \$3,000, a debt Trejo wouldn't dare deepen, even to cover medical needs.

"Could you imagine?" she asked in Spanish. "We haven't paid them and we're going to ask for more?"

With the eviction moratorium set to expire in two months, the verdict is still out on the biggest rent relief program in the country. But legislators and tenant and landlord groups who complained about [the 11th-hour compromise](#) worked out by Gov. Gavin Newsom and legislative leaders say their biggest fears are coming true.

"I am very concerned about tenants who sacrificed everything to pay the rent but went into extreme debt," said Assemblymember David Chiu, a Democrat from San Francisco who helped craft the original eviction moratorium last year as the economy cratered during the pandemic. "How we assist those individuals is something that (the new law) did not contemplate."

To assess the success and shortcomings of the unprecedented rent relief effort across the state, CalMatters interviewed more than two dozen officials, advocates, landlords, tenants and volunteers, and reviewed several surveys and studies. That analysis found:

- Tenants who voluntarily move to less expensive housing or take out loans to pay off rent are not eligible to receive relief.
- Some landlords are turning down rent relief and still evicting their tenants.
- Many mom-and-pop landlords, either struggling to cover their costs or tired of heavy regulations, are leaving the rental market.
- While there are strict regulations to ensure only the neediest tenants get money, there are no restrictions on the landlords who can benefit. That favors larger and corporate landlords.
- Strong legal protections for tenants are being undermined by a lack of understanding of the law and lack of access to legal representation.
- The total need for rent relief remains largely unknown, but bigger cities say the funds are already insufficient.

Landlords are in charge

The new law allows landlords to collect aid totaling [80% of unpaid rent from April 2020 to March 2021](#), as long as they forgive the rest. Tenants can also apply for relief to pay utility bills and 25% of future rent, covering April, May and June 2021, if funding allows.

But the back rent relief doesn't cover people who moved out to stay with family or pay cheaper rent, or those who paid with credit cards or other forms of debt, because the law is only designed to protect people from eviction.

Tenant groups say the law isn't effectively doing that, either.

Landlords can turn down the 80% deal, in which case tenants can collect 25% of the rent they owe and have the rest of their debt relegated to small claims court.

"It legally allows them to pick and choose the fate of that person's life and whether or not they're going to be saddled with thousands of dollars of debt," said Anya Svanoe, communications director at the [Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment Action](#).



Dylan Domingo, 8, sits next to his mother Blanca Esthela Trejo, center, and his older brother Illian Domingo, 18, inside their home in Salinas on April 22, 2021. Photo by David Rodriguez, The Salinas Californian

That's exactly what happened to [Patricia Mendoza, a single mother of two in San Diego](#). Her landlord told her he won't apply for the funds because he wants to remodel her unit. She has received three eviction notices to date.

"As a single mom, I'm not working right now," she said, her voice scratching from asthma and stress. "I'm trying my best to get you your rent. And right now you want nothing."

Svanoe said the law still gives landlords access to the "full breadth of tools they use all the time to try to get a tenant out," including owner move-ins, renovations or selling the unit.

It's unclear how many landlords are turning down the aid across the state. But when Los Angeles implemented a similar rental assistance program last year, just 56% of landlords opted in, according to data from the mayor's office. As a result, the city made

the funding — a one-time \$2,000 rental subsidy — available directly to nearly half of tenants.

Advocates want tenants to receive more than just 25% of back rent if their landlords reject the state deal because they are already seeing scenarios similar to Mendoza's play out.

In Los Angeles, tenants say they're facing harassment from their landlords to pay up or leave, said Katie McKeon, staff attorney at the [Public Counsel Law Center](#). The pressure is particularly high for people in rent-controlled units.

"So if you have a tenant who is paying significantly below market rate, you might be comfortable eating that loss if you can get that tenant out and re-rent that unit at market rate," she said.

In a [survey of more than 25,000 tenants](#) who applied to the Los Angeles rent relief program last year, researchers at the [Housing Initiative at Penn](#) found that nearly half of tenants faced landlord harassment. More than half took on debt or delayed other bills, and like Trejo, more than a quarter went without medical treatment to stay afloat during the pandemic.

Small landlords are also hurting

Bryant Phuong bought his eight-unit apartment building in the Tenderloin neighborhood of San Francisco in 1987, a decade after emigrating to the United States from Vietnam.

It was a steady source of income, until the pandemic turned it into a liability.

One tenant went five months without paying rent before disappearing, he said. Another hasn't paid rent in over a year. Owed around \$26,000 in arrears, Phuong has had to dip into his savings to cover expenses on the property.

He's desperate to get help, but says he has been waiting in the dark after submitting his application over a month ago. That wait has him considering selling the building through which he hoped to retire and build generational wealth for his two kids.

"That was my American dream," he said. "Now it looks like we might as well let it go."

In another [recent survey of nearly 1,300 landlords in Los Angeles](#), University of Pennsylvania researchers found that more than a third of landlords with one to five properties couldn't survive for another three months under current conditions.

“That was my American dream. Now it looks like we might as well let it go.”

BRYANT PHUONG, WHO SAYS HE MAY HAVE TO SELL HIS APARTMENT BUILDING IN SAN FRANCISCO

David Haas, managing broker at Ernst & Haas Management Company in Long Beach, said nearly a fifth of the company's 1,100 clients have left the rental market over the past year. That's not so much because of people who fell behind on rent, but because of perceived risk.

“Houses, condos, the stuff we manage, that stuff is coming off and being sold,” Haas said. “With all the statutes and regulations, they're not seeing the risk as worth the higher rents. So what it's doing is it's driving rents through the roof.”

Groups around the state are worried about what it will mean for rent prices, tenant welfare and generational wealth for people of color if mom-and-pop landlords call it quits.

Jimar Wilson, Southern California market leader at Enterprise Community Partners, remembers growing up in the historically Black neighborhoods of South Los Angeles with his two brothers and single mom. The threat of eviction, he said, was always looming.

“It could've been a lot worse had it not been for the property owners who were indigineous to the community, who were willing to work with the community,” he said.

Wilson said low-income neighborhoods of color will need a lot more aid to prevent further gentrification and economic devastation.

His organization has partnered with the [Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and others](#) to put \$5 million in the hands of struggling landlords in the 90011 ZIP code of Los Angeles in a program that [launched April 15](#). The program illustrates a key point experts make about the new law.

"We can't view any one thing as a singular solution," said [Vincent Reina](#), assistant professor of city and regional planning at the University of Pennsylvania. "There's a need for us to face the housing affordability crisis that predates the pandemic."

Unprecedented scale brings big problems

The state has offered jurisdictions three options to roll out the rent relief program: The state can do it for them, the city or county can do it themselves or the jurisdiction can distribute its share of federal dollars using its own rules, and let the state distribute the rest.

Officials admit it's complicated — and landlords agree.

San Francisco, where Phuong lives, opted for the third option. But officials there have [yet to roll out their program](#). People can submit applications to the state, but the state won't review them until San Francisco sets its eligibility requirements. In some cases, the state money will only go out once the local money is spent, to prevent duplication.

The application is long and requires applicants to upload several documents, including federal tax withholding forms, lease and mortgage information from landlords and proof of loss of income from tenants.

That's necessary, according to state officials, to prevent a repeat of California's unemployment department debacle, where [fraud may have totaled more than \\$31 billion](#). But it's also making it more difficult to get the help to those who need it most.

Zaid Tahan, a landlord in Riverside, said his tenants are struggling to prove they lost income because of COVID-19. The rules in the city of Riverside and Riverside County allow landlords to get 100% of the back rent owed. Tahan only hopes to get half of the \$40,000 total his tenants owe, at most.

“Let’s make sure that, before you award these funds, there is a level of cultural competence and language access so that everyone can benefit, not just those who pay lobbyists in Sacramento or San Francisco.”

CONNIE CHAN, MEMBER OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Nanette Fowler, executive director of [Shores of Hope](#), a small nonprofit helping people in West Sacramento sign up for the program, says one tenant had to meet with her staff three times to complete his application. Most people haven’t heard of the program, or don’t know they’re eligible.

“I can’t imagine doing this in a rural community,” she said. “I mean, we’re across the bridge from the Capitol.”

Some landlords keep their lease on a napkin, and many rural tenants don’t have access to reliable broadband or a scanner, so that requires far more time and handholding, according to Katie Wilbur, executive director of RH Community Builders in Fresno.

“That was one of the conversations we had with Fresno County early on,” Wilbur said. “The allocated money (under the new law) was not going to be enough to make the program successful.”

Community-based organizations across the state helping to roll out the program repeated the same message: There’s simply not enough funding to help them reach those most in need.

“It doesn’t bring us confidence to know we’re underfunded yet expected to serve,” said Deutron Kebebew, a program director at [Community Bridges in Santa Cruz](#).

Kebebew said his organization didn’t get enough money to fund two full-time positions. Yet medium to large property management companies often have more staff members to help tenants submit applications.

That could create an uneven playing field for the mom-and-pop landlords who most need aid, according to Connie Chan, a member of the San Francisco Board of

Supervisors.

Chan introduced a [resolution](#), passed unanimously by the board, to track which landlords benefit from their local program — which the state isn't set up to do. She's also urging corporate landlords to negotiate their own rent relief with tenants, to prioritize funds for small property owners.

"Let's make sure that, before you award these funds, there is a level of cultural competence and language access so that everyone can benefit, not just those who pay lobbyists in Sacramento or San Francisco," she said.

Moving forward

No one knows exactly how much tenants across California owe their landlords. But if applications so far are any indication, the need for rent relief is enormous.

In just a few weeks, the city of Los Angeles received more than 124,000 applications, requesting about \$330.5 million, compared to the \$235.5 million available for this round of assistance, according to the mayor's office.

As of April 23, state-administered rent relief programs had received more than 51,000 applications requesting nearly \$355 million in assistance. The bulk of those applications were submitted by tenants, according to Russ Heimerich, deputy secretary of communications at the state Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency, which is rolling out the "Housing is Key" program.

Another nearly 100,000 applications are in progress, with more than \$907 million available in total. Some of those funds, however, won't be available until local programs' funds dry up.

More money is on the way. California expects to receive about \$2 billion more for rental assistance from President Joe Biden's [American Rescue Plan](#), Heimerich said.

The guidelines for those funds have not been laid out yet. That matters, Heimerich explained, because many of the requirements of money allocated through the new state law were set by the federal government. That includes, for example, that the money goes to landlords first, and that the bulk be used for back rent, instead of other forms of debt.

With statewide eviction protections set to expire June 30, advocates worry that landlords will file evictions in droves starting in July. While the law will continue to protect those who paid at least 25% of their back rent, tenants still have to defend themselves in court. Lawyers are hard to come by in most parts of the state, and winning a case in court without representation is very unlikely, advocates say.

"If we had a really well-oiled legal tenant support system, it could be better," said Svanoë, from the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment Action. "But that's not where we are right now. So people are going to fall through the cracks."

If the courts are unfriendly to tenants, the state Capitol isn't an easy place to move legislation protecting renters, either.



Ryan Furtkamp and his wife moved to a smaller apartment in Oakland after his wife lost her job amid the pandemic. Because they moved voluntarily, they are ineligible for relief to pay the \$25,000 in rent they owe to their previous landlord. Photo by Anne Wernikoff, CalMatters

Assemblymember Chiu said he and other supporters have to wait and see how well the new law is working before negotiating another deal to prevent evictions. That's difficult to measure when the majority of checks haven't been cut and evictions the law has prevented aren't being tracked.

"All that being said, my colleagues understand how catastrophic it would be if we were to end eviction protections and see a tsunami of evictions occur," Chiu said. "I'm hopeful that if we need to extend eviction protections past June, we'll be able to do that."

In the meantime, tenants left out by California's rent relief rules are still waiting.

Ryan Furtkamp, who works at UC Berkeley in communications, and his wife moved out of their pricey Oakland apartment in February to save on rent. The couple lost more than half their income at the start of the pandemic when most of her dog-walking business dried up.

His landlord, San Francisco-based Mosser Companies, told him over email that his debt totals more than \$25,000. But because he moved voluntarily, he isn't eligible for state rent relief.

"It feels like we're being punished for making that decision," Furtkamp said.

When he first heard the state of California was taking action to protect tenants, "it was a huge relief," Furtkamp added. "Now, it feels that people are powerless in terms of what's going to happen to them."



How Equal Access Santa Cruz County is Bridging the Digital Divide

Could this be a model for fixing the injustices of the digital divide?

<https://goodtimes.sc/cover-stories/equal-access-santa-cruz-county-bridging-digital-divide>

By Liza Montoy

Posted on April 27, 2021

When distance learning began at the outset of the [pandemic](#), former farmworker Aracely Fernandez, a resident of the Buena Vista Migrant Center in Watsonville, had no reliable internet access. Her fifth grade son, a student in the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, would need it to continue attending public school.

Dependent on her husband's income from his job picking strawberries since an injury had taken her off the fields, Fernandez knew that \$70 a month for broadband service was not an option for the family's budget. So when remote learning began in March 2020, she would drive around with her 11-year-old, trying to find a signal strong enough that he wouldn't get booted from [online classes](#). "We were so frustrated," she says. "It wasn't our fault he would get kicked out. We thought, 'This is how it is.'"

The Pajaro Valley Unified School District, where 79.2% of students are socioeconomically disadvantaged and 40.3% are English learners, set up 4,200 hot spots and distributed over 20,000 Chromebook laptops.

In some cases, hot spots worked, depending on the strength of the cell signal. For those who couldn't rely on that, the district developed "safe spaces" where students could come to campuses and learn in stable cohorts at the school sites. Still, "students not being able to rely on their internet or hot spot continued to be off of their classroom," resulting in a "lack of continuity with their education," PVUSD Superintendent Michelle Rodriguez says.

The hot spots were "nice as a Band-Aid solution," says Juan Morales-Rocha, a UCSC graduate who is an activist, community organizer and design analyst with Microsoft's Xbox Game Studios Publishing. But hot spots were never going to work for the Buena Vista site. In a place so remote, "it doesn't fit as intended," unable to consistently support Google Classroom and Zoom.

This year, that finally changed.

"They gave us internet," Fernandez says, sounding both pleased and a little surprised. "It is fast; the signal doesn't go away." Fernandez is satisfied that she no longer has to drive her son around, searching for a reliable connection they may or may not be able to find.

"This internet works well for us," she says. "All the neighbors have it. We have no more signal problems."

Where did it come from? She wants to check, and takes a moment to go examine *la caja*—"the box"—that had been placed in her home, at no cost to her family.

"It says 'Cruzio.'"

A BRIDGE TO EQUAL ACCESS

More precisely, it took a unique partnership between the community, private industry and philanthropy—Cruzio, the Rotary Club of Watsonville, Pajaro Valley Unified School District and the [Community Foundation Santa Cruz County](#)—to birth [Equal Access Santa Cruz](#)

[County](#), or EASC, which launched in September of last year. The innovative initiative demonstrates a local-level, grassroots solution toward bridging what has become known as the “digital divide.” It’s a huge [community effort](#), a project that brought a number of people and organizations together.

Morales-Rocha knew the problems that Fernandez and her family had been facing well. He grew up in the Buena Vista Center and understood the depths of the digital divide long before the pandemic that disproportionately affected his community, which is majority Latinx (and has had nearly [60% of all Covid-19](#) cases, even though it is only 29% of the county’s population).

“I knew because my folks are still there,” he says. “A lot of my family lives there.” Well before Covid-19 forced the issue into the spotlight, Morales-Rocha was trying to do something about it.

A search on [Google Maps](#) highlights the issue. The Buena Vista Center is “next to a prison and a dump,” he says. “There’s definitely some history there in terms of the displacement of people, putting the people far from amenities.”

As someone “who’s been looking at it bird’s-eye-view,” he says, “I was personally trying to make something happen in the camp in 2019. I did organizing in my undergrad, tried to make something happen.” Back then, he says, “nothing happened.”

Looking for some way to get the camp connected, Morales-Rocha contacted the Center for Farmworker Families, UCSC and DigitalNEST—an organization serving Watsonville and Salinas youth, teaching digital skills for greater economic opportunity. After a couple months, though, nothing concrete had panned out. “My little sister was about to start middle school,” he says. “I’d go visit them and the internet was super-slow, she was getting booted off Zoom.”

Interestingly, once upon a time the camp *had* been wired: Morales-Rocha had internet access during his time there. He used YouTube to learn how to play guitar and ultimately became so interested in computers he went to UCSC to study game design and cognitive

science. “With my first financial aid check, I bought parts for a computer,” he says. Morales-Rocha went on to study human-computer interaction, games and playable media, graduating with dual degrees. “There was internet access at the camp,” he says. “AT&T used to service it as a DSL provider. Whatever the reason, they stopped servicing the internet.”

Buena Vista’s location behind the treeline made for a tough place to build the necessary infrastructure. The need for equal access existed before the pandemic, but as with many social injustices, Covid-19 served to spotlight the problem. Once the virus hit and daily life moved almost entirely online, the consequences of the inequities became obviously dire. Online school attendance for children of farmworkers like Fernandez plummeted, becoming as irregular as internet access in their area. The year represented a major disruption in the education of students already at a disadvantage.

The problem wasn’t limited to children attending school. Farmworkers lacking connectivity for accessing digital platforms were excluded when things like medical appointments—that would have taken place in person—moved largely online. Farm work is notoriously taxing on health and well-being, even debilitating, so access to health care is key. This community least likely to reliably get online was also one with the most to lose.



Tony Guizar Orozco holds the broadband wiring being installed at Buena Vista by Equal Access Santa Cruz County. The group’s stated purpose is to ‘bridge the digital divide and bring true high-speed broadband to every family in the Santa Cruz community, regardless of income level.’
PHOTO: ALANA MATTHEWS

DIGITALLY DIVIDED

Since the mid-1990s, this connectivity inequity has been widely dubbed the digital divide. Back then, a 1995 report by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce, “[Falling Through](#)

[the Net: A Survey of the 'Have Nots' in Rural and Urban America](#),” revealed “widespread inequalities in national ICT [information and communication technologies] access, with migrant or ethnic minority groups and older, less-affluent people living in rural areas with low educational attainments being especially excluded from internet services,” [writes Eva Johanna Schweitzer](#), a contributor to SAGE Publications’s Encyclopedia of Political Communication.

In the stone age of the internet, all you needed to connect was a phone line—a public utility like water, gas and electricity. Now, online access is made available when a private company builds the infrastructure, thus creating the inequality of access. While equal access needs to be made a priority, the idea of making the internet a public utility is a hot-button topic involving factions like those seen in the [net neutrality](#) debate.

Infrastructure investments can be controversial as well, and President Joe Biden’s proposed plan to invest \$100 billion in providing fast internet has already led to some communications companies worrying the plan might favor fiber over their own means of providing online access, [Politico](#) reports.

Grants are available for companies to wire rural areas, but as Peggy Dolgenos, CEO of local internet service provider (ISP) Cruzio, says, “old infrastructure was falling apart, and new infrastructure was being built in profitable places as the internet is not a public utility. Everybody could get the early internet, but now you can only get it when a private company builds infrastructure.”

The grants available to wire rural areas tend to be for large regions: Montana, Oklahoma, Wyoming. “A big grant will cover the whole place,” Dolgenos says. “Our rural areas are small—in-between two hills, in-between Soquel and Aptos. Also, the low-income areas are fairly small where we are—[mobile home parks](#) right in the middle of other neighborhoods, but an area that’s lower income. Migrant labor camps are both low-income and hard to reach, far away.”

Currently home to 103 farmworkers and their families, the Buena Vista Center, made up of freestanding adjacent units, fits that description precisely. With hard-to-reach places such as Buena Vista, Dolgenos

says, “economically it didn’t make sense [to build the infrastructure], but the grants were not available.” The result, she says, was “pockets of inequality of access, where surrounding neighborhoods would have better internet.”



Luis Ruelas works on installing high-speed broadband at the Buena Vista Migrant Center in Watsonville. The result of a collaboration between business, civic and philanthropic

groups that came together to form Equal Access Santa Cruz County, the project was completed this month. PHOTO: ALANA MATTHEWS

FOUNDATION OF VALUES

Dolgenos and James Hackett, Cruzio’s director of business operations and development, call themselves “scrappy innovators”—“Cruzio was one of the first private ISPs in the whole country back in 1989,” Dolgenos says.

The Santa Cruz County Office of Education had reached out to Cruzio to say, “We have students with no home internet, they can’t afford an internet connection, what are we going to do about it?” Cruzio offered discounted service, but it wasn’t something they could handle on their own.

“We were being asked by other community partners about issues of the digital divide with homeschooling,” Hackett says. “What can we do to help?”

Through EASC, fundraising for the Buena Vista Migrant Center was completed in December 2020. The money came from donors as large as

Driscoll's and the collective fundraising efforts of the Rotary Club of Watsonville, to anonymous individuals and Cruzio customers voluntarily adding \$10 to \$15 a month to their bill to help subsidize the project. Cruzio started to build out new wireless distribution points in South County and the Pajaro Valley Unified School District and wired the Buena Vista Migrant Center.

Though it came together quickly, relief provided by this step toward digital equity was a long time coming. This entirely local project involved many hands: the visionaries, the technicians, the donors—who often overlapped.

“We went from a lot of people talking and disparate efforts to having concerted fundraising, awareness, technological skill, education,” says Susan True, CEO of the Community Foundation. “Everything came together so fast.”

Buena Vista residents like Fernandez now have free internet access for at least five years.

“Jesus Lopez on our own staff, whose parents are migrant workers, now he’s running it and helping other families,” Hackett says. “The kids in Buena Vista could be future leaders of the county. We have to make sure they don’t get left behind.”

That was the point where the Community Foundation entered the picture. “Now we had a model to get donations,” Hackett says. EASC’s funding comes through the Community Foundation, while Cruzio builds out the technical components for internet access.

“I’m such a believer that when we can bring the community together we can get things done,” True says. “From our perspective, as soon as superintendents announced school closures, we thought, ‘Where are kids going to eat? What are moms going to do about their jobs and education when they lose their shifts and wages because they’re home with the kids?’ From the beginning, our community has known we can’t wait for people outside to help us. We did that on so many issues in 2020. The American Rescue Plan and all the stuff around high-speed internet and infrastructure and broadband ... it’s exciting, but when is it going to get to us?”

Meanwhile, the Rotary Club of Watsonville had also been aware of the problem and simultaneously working on fundraising. “When it became apparent kids weren’t in school and that disadvantage was escalating, we started putting out feelers to see if there was a way we could help,” says Carol Turley, 2019-2020 president of Watsonville Rotary.

Deutron Kebebew, founder and president at MENtors: Driving Change for Boys, Men & Dads, who is now the EASC project lead for Watsonville Rotary, was the one who ultimately connected with Morales-Rocha.

“We all knew the challenge of Wi-Fi,” says Kebebew. Morales-Rocha started listening in on those meetings, “taking questions about the camp,” he says. “I took on a liaison role with folks there.” The Rotarians quickly raised \$20,000. Watsonville Rotary President Kristin Fabos notes the speed at which the Rotarians stepped up and exceeded their fundraising goals, “almost overnight.”

“That basically got Cruzio the seed money needed,” says Kebebew. “At the same time, they were talking with the Community Foundation to launch the project. They contacted a large donor saying, ‘Rotary’s doing this, could you consider a larger fund?’”

PATHWAYS FORWARD

“All those different partners came in to develop this EASC initiative so our families weren’t impeded by the digital divide,” says Superintendent Rodriguez. The quick upload and download speeds needed to stream and download information and videos “takes a whole other level, and it was an opportunity for an entire community to come around to something we knew was an equity issue all along. The pandemic shone a light on it.”

As of this month, the Buena Vista Migrant Center project was completed.

Chris Frost, director of infrastructure and technology at Cruzio, explains that now Buena Vista residents have “the same tech connections we deliver to our full retail customers,” Frost says, “fully bridging the digital divide.” The center has the “same equipment used in downtown Santa Cruz outside our fiber footprint.”

EASC is working with Facebook Connectivity Accelerator and Geeks Without Frontiers to expand its reach. “It’s something that could be replicated up and down as long as there’s a community foundation and ISP that are willing to help,” says Jesus Lopez, Cruzio’s sales and marketing manager. “It’s unfortunate it was something as horrible as Covid that pushed a lot of this forward, but it brought a lot of this stuff to light.”

The EASC initiative sets an example for programs of the same kind nationwide, says True, demonstrating the power that community efforts to address local problems and issues can have. “Any community that has a local ISP, and a community foundation” can recreate this, she says. “Everyone’s got Rotaries, a school, a rooftop.”

The Cruzio team reports on the positive effects of the center’s internet access. “Juan [Morales-Rocha] has sisters in there using it, and super-stoked with it,” Frost says. It’s a very different scenario from the pandemic’s frustrating early days of being booted off mid-class. Even when learning is fully in-person again, the opportunities internet access provides remain.

And as Kebebew prepares to step into the presidency role of Watsonville Rotary this July, he looks to the future and sees the work ahead to be done. “What is the digital literacy capacity? Now that you’re wired, look at the potential you have to do your banking, to learn new skills It’s not just giving the tool but communicating how you use it. That becomes the next conversation. We are not done.”

Morales-Rocha’s father is using Duolingo on his phone. And Fernandez is taking her own first online class—in computer literacy.

To donate to EASC, visit cfscfcsuite.com/erp/donate/create?funit_id=1961. To add it to your Cruzio bill, go to cruzio.com/equal-access-santa-cruz-county.

Community Corner

Santa Cruz County: Vaccine Interest Survey For The Homebound

Those interested in having medical professionals visit their home to administer a COVID-19 vaccine can visit the Public Health website.

Posted Thu, Apr 29, 2021 at 8:54 am PT

Press release from the County of Santa Cruz:

April 29, 2021

If you are a homebound resident of Santa Cruz County and have not yet received a COVID-19 vaccination, Santa Cruz County Public Health would like to hear from you.

If you are interested in having medical professional visit you in your home to administer a COVID-19 vaccine, please visit <https://www.santacruzhealth.org> and click the "homebound vaccination" survey link near the top of the page. The survey is available in English and Spanish.

This survey helps Public Health assess vaccine needs for homebound individuals. Personal information provided will be treated as private health information and will not be shared with outside parties.

If you need assistance filling out the survey, call or text Community Bridges' Bridges to Access Vaccination Helpline at (831) 219-8607. Leave your name, phone number, age and zip code, and Community Bridges' staff will call back within 48 hours.

Subscribe

This survey is intended to be completed by, or on behalf of, Santa Cruz County residents. The survey takes about ten minutes to complete, and Public Health staff will reach out directly to homebounds individuals to schedule appointments in the home once the delivery of vaccines is ready to begin.

For local information on COVID-19, go to www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirus, call 211 or text "COVID19" to 211211. Residents may also call (831) 454-4242 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

<https://patch.com/california/santacruz/santa-cruz-county-vaccine-interest-survey-homebound>

New Mask Guidelines, Wildfire Warnings And Happy Birthday NPR

By KAZU NEWS STAFF · APR 30, 2021

[Share](#)[Tweet](#)[Email](#)

Volunteers pull weeds at Pacific Grove's Perkins Park. The "Magic Carpet" is in full bloom. Read on for more details.

ERIKA MAHONEY

Welcome to KAZU's weekly news roundup for 4/30/21. Here you'll find the top local stories of the week and a few select national stories from NPR.

The Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine is being used again in the U.S. In a statement, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) said, "After a thorough review of very rare adverse events following the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, the [Western States Scientific Safety Review Workgroup supports](#) the recommendation of the FDA and CDC to lift the pause on the vaccine." The statement did add that clinics in the state can administer the

vaccine as long as they provide educational materials about the low risk of associated health effects and offer other available vaccines. NPR's Scott Simon from *Weekend Edition* [spoke with health reporter Pien Huang](#) about the lifting of the pause.

Closer to home, a joint statement by the Bay Area Health Officers, which includes Santa Cruz County, echoed the CDPH's recommendations and added that "culturally and linguistically appropriate informational materials in an accessible reading level" should be made available so that members of the public can make an informed decision about the J&J vaccine.

California is in the process of aligning with the CDC's new mask-wearing recommendations. Under the new guidance fully vaccinated people can:

- Visit with other fully vaccinated people indoors without wearing masks or social distancing;
- Visit with unvaccinated people (including children) from a single household who are at low risk for severe COVID-19 disease indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing;
- Participate in outdoor activities without a mask, except in certain crowded settings and venues;
- And resume domestic travel without the need for testing before or after travel, and self-quarantine after travel.

More guidelines can be found on our coronavirus resource page, check under the "California Noticeboard." NPR also outlined what vaccinated people can do safely, answering questions about hugs, vacations and more.

More and more walk-in COVID-19 vaccination clinics are popping up in our region. This week Montage Wellness Center in Marina hosted three days of walk-in clinics where all three vaccines were administered. In Santa Clara County, which includes the City of Gilroy, health officials announced that most county vaccination sites would be accepting drop-ins all week. Providers are though encouraging residents to book a vaccine appointment so that you are guaranteed a shot. [California's vaccine sign-up](#). [Monterey County](#). [Santa Cruz County](#). [Santa Clara County](#).

New economic recovery programs came online this week to help venues and restaurants. Called the "[Shuttered Venue Operators Grant](#)" and the "[Restaurant Revitalization Fund](#)," the programs hope to provide emergency assistance to small businesses affected by the pandemic. Cal Coastal, our region's small business development center, is [offering help to businesses looking to apply](#). It says the application process is long and recommends that you "don't go it alone." Cal Coastal adds that these aren't the only financial programs currently available — PPP and the [California Small Business COVID-19 Relief Grant Program](#) are still accepting applications.

A slight increase in its COVID-19 case rate is what held Santa Cruz County back from entering the Yellow Tier in the state's reopening plan. Dr. Gail Newel, the county's health officer, said they've seen a slight fluctuation in overall cases, possibly due to Spring Break or youth sports. The county was poised to move into the Yellow Tier along with four other counties, but only one moved forward — Mendocino. Now, Santa Cruz County must meet Yellow Tier metrics for two weeks before they can move forward.

Homebound seniors in Santa Cruz County can let officials know whether they'd like to get vaccinated in their home in a new survey. Responses will help Public Health plan for homebound vaccination efforts. Residents can [fill out the survey online](#) or call/text Community Bridges' helpline at 831-219-8607. Leave your name, phone number, age and zip code, and someone should get back to you within 48 hours.

In case you missed it, *This American Life* featured two local public health officials in their recent episode "The Herd." The show dove into this question — "What happens when your own community suddenly turns on you?" Dr. Gail Newel, Santa Cruz County's health officer, and Mimi Hall, the director of the county's health services agency, opened up about the harassment they've endured throughout the pandemic. During a press briefing yesterday, Dr. Newel said the episode has garnered a lot of attention, not just in California but across the nation, and thanked everyone for their support. She said she hopes the story will raise awareness about how difficult it has been for public health officials. [You can listen to the episode here](#); we'd like to warn that it may not be appropriate for children and bad words are not bleeped out. *This American Life was the first radio show/podcast to be awarded a Pulitzer. Catch it 12 p.m. on Saturdays, 3 p.m. on Sundays, and 8 p.m. on Wednesdays on 90.3 KAZU or kazu.org.*

COVID-19 Case Data at time of publishing:

- [Santa Cruz County Cases](#)- 15,984 total, 204 deaths
- [Monterey County Cases](#) - 43,454 total, 381 deaths
- [San Benito County Cases](#) - 6,012 total, 63 deaths

COVID-19 Vaccination Tracker:

- [California](#) - 39.1% of all residents fully vaccinated, 19.8% partially vaccinated (as of Thursday)
- [Monterey County](#) - 58% of residents (16+) received at least 1 dose (as of Monday)
- Santa Cruz County - 62% of all residents received at least 1 dose (as of Monday)



The homeless encampment in San Lorenzo Park in Santa Cruz in December. (Kevin Painchaud / Lookout Santa Cruz)

GOVERNMENT

Emergency sheltering for homeless could get a much-needed extension thanks to new federal funding



BY PATRICK RILEY

Source: Lookout Santa Cruz



Quick
Take

To date Santa Cruz County has funding secured through September for a 275-unit emergency shelter program that reserves hotel and motel rooms for people experiencing homelessness. Additional federal funding that could soon come the county's way should help officials keep about 100 units operational for another three months.

APR 30, 2021 | 4:25 PM



Fears of a post-pandemic gap in homeless housing services are looking less dire thanks to an expected surge in federal funds.

Santa Cruz County could be in line for close to \$2.16 million in federal funding, which would allow officials to extend a portion of the emergency shelter program through the end of the year and buy them more time to transition people experiencing homelessness from hotel rooms to more permanent housing.

County supervisors on Tuesday unanimously voted to apply for the pot of funding, which is reserved for Santa Cruz County and would be split among four programs. The biggest sum — nearly \$1.36 million — would be used to extend a state program called Project Roomkey.

That program was established by state officials last year in an effort to reduce the spread of the coronavirus among people experiencing homelessness by sheltering them in hotel and motel rooms.



Cleanup of San Lorenzo Park to begin Friday as homeless camp moves next door to Benchlands



The county participates in the emergency shelter program by leasing and operating six Project Roomkey hotels and motels and to date has secured funding through September.

The additional funding should help county officials keep about 100 units operational for another three months after September, according to Dr. Robert Ratner, the county's director of the Housing for Health Division. Overall, the program totals 275 units currently.

"We may make adjustments to the plan depending on other funding opportunities and the status of the different Roomkey sites in September," Ratner said in an email to Lookout after Tuesday's vote.

Understanding the 'rehousing wave'

This spring the county launched a “rehousing wave” with supervisors allocating about \$8 million to help with a transition from emergency shelters to more stable housing as the pandemic appears to ebb. The additional federal funding will help act as a bridge before more permanent housing can be found for some of the hotel and motel guests.



PROMOTED CONTENT

UC Santa Cruz and United Way partner to empower youth through research in local communities



PRESENTED BY UC SANTA CRUZ

Additionally, supervisors signed off on the following funding allocations:

- About \$350,000 for COVID-19 support services for low-income and homeless residents on the North Coast of the county. The nonprofit Community Action Board through the Davenport Resource Center will provide case management to address COVID-19 impacts to that population. Services will include health, education and vaccination support “in an area that has very limited and spotty WIFI and/or cell phone reception” and limited transportation, according to county documents.
- About \$348,000 for Live Oak school-based COVID-19 services to provide “social and emotional support” to low-income Live Oak School District students and families affected by the pandemic. “The project includes hiring an on-site community health outreach worker and social worker who will lead group sessions for students, check in with students, and serve as a training resource for teachers, to help students with depression, disempowerment, isolation, anxiety, frustration, and boredom that they have experienced as they readjust to classroom-based instruction,” according to the proposal.
- About \$100,000 for Meals on Wheels — an allotment directed by supervisors Tuesday amid worries that not enough attention was being paid to the southern portion of the county. The program had originally requested more than \$570,000 to cover food costs

associated with continuing the expansion of a 5-day breakfast pack for seniors sheltering in place, but program representatives said Tuesday that any amount of funding would help.

Need for Meals on Wheels boost

Initially, county staff had recommended to allot even more money for the Project Roomkey program — close to \$1.46 million in total — but county supervisors on Tuesday said they wanted to take \$100,000 from that pot and put it toward the Meals on Wheels proposal.

Meals on Wheels, along with the Second Harvest Food Bank — which also applied for funding but county officials said wasn't able to provide the data needed — are "great assets" to South County, said Supervisor Greg Caput who proposed funneling some money toward the meal-delivery program.

His biggest concern, Caput said, was that with the pandemic people have been more isolated than they've ever been.

"And then you have programs like Meals on Wheels, (which) sometimes along with the mailman is the only actual personal touch where people have contact during ... the times we've gone through," he said.

County staff said the funding opportunity limits them to submitting no more than four proposals and that the three programs initially recommended were the strongest ones out of the five they received. They also had some concerns about whether or not other federal funding sources would be available for the food programs.



With COVID-related funding to end, county allots \$8 million for 'rehousing wave,' but not without questions



"We felt that the Roomkey proposal was really a very critical and very urgent need," Suzanne Ise, a principal planner with the county's planning department in the housing division, told supervisors, adding that some money could potentially be carved out of the Project Roomkey pot.

Lisa Berkowitz, the program director of Meals on Wheels for the nonprofit Community Bridges, said that by May 2020 her organization had seen an 86% increase in the average daily number of seniors it was serving.

"COVID-19's impact has been felt most significantly by seniors and those served by Meals on Wheels are among the most vulnerable," she told supervisors.

LATEST HEADLINES

Second Harvest Food Bank – Riding Out The Pandemic

Q&A with Willy Elliott-McCrea, CEO Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County

By **SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL** |

PUBLISHED: May 1, 2021 at 1:52 p.m. | UPDATED: May 1, 2021 at 1:53 p.m.

Submitted by Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County

Q&A with Willy Elliott-McCrea, CEO Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County

Q: What were you thinking as the pandemic hit?

A: It was similar to the challenges we faced in the floods of '82 and '95 and the Loma Prieta quake of '89. But its a much longer event and recovery. We had those experiences behind us which taught us to just kick it into gear, don't over-think things, just do what's needed and have faith in positive outcomes.

During the first 10 weeks or so, there was a lot of panic about food supply. People were over-buying, which was much worse for food-threatened people. We reassured the community there would be food and that we're there for the duration. Count on us. We'll do what necessary.

I find that there's more abundance than we realize. Abundance begets abundance.

Action plans

We responded to the day-to-day needs. Handled more than 1,600 calls in a day, one at a time.

We had to protect older volunteers. We shut down some programs. The food banks reached out through Representative Panetta's office resulting in National Guard support

^r deployed state-wide.

We initiated a hybrid food distribution program with both mass distributions at the boardwalk and fairgrounds as well as through existing partner agencies including Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD), and Twin Lakes Church. We had other great partners like KSBW who was very helpful communicating the extent of the problem and how people could obtain help. The Board of Supervisors went to FEMA for financial support to purchase more food. The Santa Cruz Health Center increased the food they distributed 10x Mountain Community Resources really stepped up and so many other organizations and people working together made it successful. Because of these strong networks of partners and volunteers Second Harvest is able to distribute 4 healthy meals for every dollar donated.

Q: Ah Ha! Moments?

A: We realized that mass distributions, which worked initially, were not sustainable. We needed to link families with long term nutrition homes/distribution programs and support stronger community agency cooperation replacing mass distributions at the fairgrounds and boardwalk which was going to reopen at some point.

We were reminded that the food bank is the distribution hub. Community partners are the spokes in the wheel that can most effectively get food to where it's needed. And because of that, we need to invest in our agency partners to make them stronger. It's essential. The food bank can't do it all.

Q: Disappointments?

A: It's been a very hard year. So much sadness. Our staff is exhausted.

Q: What Worked Well?

A: I'm so proud of what was accomplished. Our partner agencies and the community truly came together in the face of a crisis.

We had the advantage of many experienced non-profit managers who had the confidence and faith to not hesitate.

Q: Preparing for the future?

A: We must put more energy in building up our partner agencies. Increased storage, handling, refrigeration, a range of improved capabilities. This needs to happen through community-driven programs.

We can increase coordination and communication and work smarter.

We're now transitioning from the emergency to a recovery. As mentioned, we've got to help increase community partners' strengths. It's a time for reflection. We're looking at a three-year business plan. The effects of the pandemic will be felt for at least three years.

We're investigating needs, infrastructure investments and building up our neighborhood food pantry network for sustainability and improving the use of technology are some of the things that should be worked on. Neighborhood pantries are what makes the system work long-term.

Low-income communities were hit twice as hard by the pandemic and increased unemployment. Creating a new normal is essential. We cannot return to the old normal. We must create change and shorten the line.

Public policy strongly impacts hunger and food insecurity. Stronger federal food programs like school meals and CalFresh are essential. Federal nutrition programs provide 20 meals for every meal that the emergency food bank network does. These programs are the front line of defense. The food bank is the safety net.

OPINION

Letter | Rail corridor: Enhancing 'social equity'

By **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR** | Santa Cruz Sentinel

May 2, 2021 at 7:00 a.m.

The “point counter point” in the rail corridor debate doesn't focus sufficiently on what can be done in a reasonable time frame. Here's my proposal to move forward and enhance social equity: railbank the corridor and do the following: 1) prioritize and build Segment 17 in South County first; 2) do not increase taxes on the hard working families in South County; 3) invest in METRO, Lift Line and ParaCruz with existing Measure D funds to improve and modernize public transit for the most people; 4) build a network of protected bike lanes that tie into the coastal trail backbone, the Slough Trails and Pajaro River Levee; 5) do not gentrify Watsonville and instead invest locally in jobs, economic development, health care, education, affordable housing, parks and the arts.

Let's find the things we can agree on and make them happen now. Time is an element of social equity!

— Della Davis, Watsonville

The Sentinel welcomes your letters to the editor. Letters should be short, no more than 150 words. We do not accept anonymous letters. Letter-writers should include their full name as well as a street address and telephone number. We don't publish those details in the newspaper, but need the information for verification purposes. Occasionally, we reject letters simply because we've had so many on the same subject. Submit your letters online at www.santacruzsentinel.com/submit-letters.

LATEST HEADLINES

Food trucks take center stage at Watsonville City Council meeting

Many community members said there isn't enough support for businesses currently

By **HANNAH HAGEMANN** | hhagemann@santacruzsentinel.com | Santa Cruz Sentinel

PUBLISHED: May 12, 2021 at 4:35 p.m. | UPDATED: May 12, 2021 at 4:42 p.m.

WATSONVILLE — The Watsonville City Council held an open discussion on food truck regulations Tuesday, bringing a chorus of voices to the meeting, many saying current rules are too restrictive and that more opportunities should be developed for the businesses.

To operate legally in Watsonville, food trucks must obtain permits, a business license, as well as environmental health and fire inspections.

According to Watsonville Police Capt. Jorge Zamora, currently just eight food trucks are fully permitted, while 10 are operating unpermitted. Five of those trucks started the regulatory process, and stopped midway through, Zamora said.

As it stands, the police department takes lead on regulating and inspecting food trucks.

City Councilmembers Aurelio Gonzalez, Francisco Estrada and Rebecca Garcia, along with various community members, advocated that a different agency, or group, should be doing that work.

"I think it's just critically important that as you look at your policy, you look at it from a third party perspective where it's actually one of the most restrictive out of any of the cities around," Ray Cancino, CEO with nonprofit Community Bridges, said Tuesday night.

"You limit where they [food trucks] are actually able to even park and only allowing parking on private property while all the other ones allow parking in different areas beyond the 10 minutes that you currently allow in your parking ordinance," Cancino said.

Multiple food truck owners and operators said the current permitting process is difficult to understand and challenging to get through.

"I found the process to be extremely onerous, especially when you come to think I have to be fingerprinted, background checked, and any of my employees do, too," Craig Hammond, a Watsonville food truck operator, said.

Other residents voiced that there should be more opportunities for food truck-get-togethers where residents could support businesses in one central place. Santa Cruz's Food Truck Summer Series was also mentioned by community members, as an example of how Watsonville could further support the food truck industry.

"Identifying spaces within Watsonville where we could house those types of things ... Pinto Lake is a great spot. When we go back and open up, Ramsey Park is a hot spot for soccer," Watsonville resident Gabriel Medina said. "Can we get some food trucks out there to help support those businesses? I think we need to get a little more innovative and creative."

City Manager Matt Huffaker also brought up Pinto Lake as a potential area to host food trucks.

That region, according to Estrada is in need of more fresh food options.

"That whole area is considered a food desert. Maybe we can have food trucks there so people that don't have an automobile to travel really far into the city can go to Pinto Lake, get some food, Estrada said. "Maybe we entice the food trucks to have some healthy options as well, I think we can get creative."

One resident spoke out against opening up things further to food truck business owners.

"In terms of regulation, some of them are in feet of other restaurants, many of them are in very high traffic pedestrian locations that the city hasn't really acknowledged," Fernando Muñoz said Tuesday evening.

Eduardo Andrea, a Watsonville food truck Tacos El Jerry partner, spoke up as well.

"All these people are fighting for their business, they live off their business and they support the economy," Andrea said.

Former Watsonville Mayor Felipe Hernandez said the permitting process should be made simpler and streamlined.

Others voiced that food trucks are a lower-cost way for local residents to start up a food business.

"Limiting the ability of law abiding food entrepreneurs is an issue of inclusion and equity," Carmen Herrera-Mansir, executive director of the El Pajaro Community Development Corp., said. "Many brick and mortar businesses in the community started as trucks or home-based businesses. Food trucks make business creation more affordable."

City councilmembers agreed that more education and outreach was needed, as well as furthering business opportunities for food truck operators. Still, councilmember Gonzalez said there should continue to be some limitations, such as trucks should not be running late into the evening near residential neighborhoods.

"We will be moving forward with doing some additional engagement with our community members as well as our business stakeholders," City Manager Matt Huffaker said. "And we'll look for some ways that we can streamline the process as well as rethinking the way that we are enforcing the rules because I think there's opportunities around all of that."

Letter | A better plan for social equity for South County

By **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR** | Santa Cruz Sentinel

May 14, 2021 at 7:00 a.m.

It's amusing to read train proponents' admonishments about social equity without evidence. Let me get this straight: a train plan with fares three times those of bus fares to bring workers to low wage jobs in Santa Cruz is socially equitable? It gets better: the entire population of South County will pay disproportionately for a train that will be used primarily by North County riders!

A better plan would be to improve the transit system we have – METRO, Lift Line and Community Bridges – and create a new active transportation network to get people moving. This plan is affordable and doable in the next five years. In addition, public policy and private initiatives should focus on creating jobs and economic opportunity in Watsonville so folks don't have to commute.

Imagine the benefit of getting back two hours per day! The county is already exploring a South County building. Others will follow.

— *Neal Woods, Santa Cruz*

THINGS TO DO ARTS

Photo Gallery | Creativity shines in Watsonville on murals throughout city



By **SHMUEL THALER** | sthaler@santacruzsentinel.com | Santa Cruz Sentinel
May 26, 2021 at 4:27 p.m.

A mural under renovation by Watsonville artist Yermo Aranda draws the attention of a passerby on the wall of the home of Women Infants and Children (WIC) program on West Lake Avenue in Watsonville. Aranda usually invites community members to participate in the design and painting of his murals which can be seen throughout the Pajaro Valley and elsewhere in northern and central California. Watsonville is filled with murals and other works of public art that burst with color as well as messages of strength, courage and resilience. One such endeavor is Watsonville Brillante, an ongoing community mosaic project spearheaded by Kathleen Crocetti and Community Arts Empowerment on the six-story parking garage on Rodriguez Street, which is attached to the Watsonville Civic Plaza. (Shmuel Thaler – Santa Cruz Sentinel)

<https://www.santacruzsentinel.com/2021/05/26/photo-gallery-creativity-shines-in-watsonville-on-murals-throughout-city/>

Mountain Community Resources Expands Services

by Resource Center Staff

The destruction and displacement from the CZU Lightning Complex fire, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic left the residents of the San Lorenzo Valley and Scotts Valley with limited options for services to get back on their feet. With many community members needing support, Mountain Community Resources expanded services and created new programs to assist the most vulnerable populations in their community.

"The mountains of San Lorenzo Valley, Felton, Boulder Creek, Ben Lomond are already a very rural, marginalized part of the county with limited resources," says Ray Cancino, CEO of Community Bridges of which Mountain Com-

munity Resources is one of ten programs.

"Many who were already dealing with economic troubles suddenly needed help to recover from the pandemic and rebuild from the fires," he said. MCR staff and volunteers have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic and CZU Fire response, and their ability to quickly adapt services to meet the urgent needs of the community has been unprecedented.

"It's been beautiful to see the community come together," Cancino said. "As things open up, the most vulnerable people are going to need ongoing assistance. We've been working to address the needs as they come up, and as people experiencing crisis are informing us about what they need."



This tremendous response is nothing new to these communities. Founded in the wake of the Storm of 1982, MCR continues to remain ready to respond to any crisis at hand. Last year, the center connected more than 850 local residents with essential resources and service support, and distributed 5,463 bags of food at its weekly pantry program.

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Mountain Community Resources - Cont.

When community members, who were already burdened with the economic aftermath of the pandemic and the area was devastated by the CZU wildfires, MCR increased efforts to provide direct financial assistance to 641 families. "It is very disorienting to have to start over from zero—arranging food, clothing and shelter for ourselves while also being in total shock at the scale and scope of what we lost in the fire," said one fire survivor. "The staff at MCR listened patiently as we tried to process this all and figure out what comes next for us."

Within one month of the CZU August Lightning Complex fires, Community Bridges worked with a handful of local foundations and businesses to assemble a free mobile laundry trailer to aid fire victims. The trailer rotated among various SLV locations for months after the fire.

"When you have bad smoke damage, you need to wash your stuff a bunch of times, and it can get expensive doing that at a laundromat. That's when we came up with the idea for the mobile laundry trailer," said outgoing Program Director Roxanne Moore. The program was also able to complete construction on hygiene facilities and storage for individuals who lost homes, and continued the case management program to assist those clients with housing support.

Some come in simply for a cup of coffee, or to use a computer. One client was able to get a cell phone through a state program and collect mail at the center, which helps him manage appointments and find work while on the waiting list for transitional housing. At one

appointment, he told staff it was the first time in years he felt it was worth it to try to get off the streets. MCR's full range of services pre-pandemic included community advocacy, counseling, emergency preparedness, East West Natural Health Clinic, food distribution, parent education workshops, hygiene facilities for houseless and help with public assistance enrollment. Most services have continued to operate remotely or socially distanced throughout the past year. The center is located at 6134 Highway 9 in downtown Felton, and open Monday through Thursday 9am to 4pm (closed 12:30 to 1pm) for drop in services and one-on-one appointments. Food distributions are held every Thursday 10:30am to 12pm. Anyone is welcome to attend. Call 831-335-6600 for information.

As Mountain Community Resources looks to the future, efforts to support community members affected by the pandemic and CZU fires remain underway. The program's annual fund drive occurs each spring, and the center relies on community support and local grant funding for more than half of program services, with the other half offered through government contracts. This year's phone-a-thon fundraiser was limited with volunteers unable to gather onsite. To support these vital services in San Lorenzo Valley, please visit communitybridges.org/donate and designate your support to Mountain Community Resources. "The people here are really nice, really good," said one client. "I was a tree cutter for 25 years, and I go out and pull weeds when I'm here and clean up the yard. I'm not asked to, I just do it. It's a way of saying thank you to Mountain Community Resources."

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WATSONVILLE

Lunch program kicks off Monday

The annual Summer Lunch program, sponsored by La Manzana Community Resources, a program of Community Bridges, will kick off on Monday.

Kids up to age 18 can pick up a free lunch from noon to 1 p.m. daily at sites in Santa Cruz and Watsonville through mid-August. Santa Cruz sites are open through Aug. 6 and most Watsonville sites open through Aug. 13.

Through Community Bridges, the Summer Lunch program served more than 17,000 meals last year. Community Bridges seeks to ensure no child goes hungry throughout the year with other agency programs such as the Child & Adult Care Food Program.

A combination of federal, state, and local funding supports most of the Summer Lunch Program costs. But approximately 30% of the cost of this program is covered through donations. Those interested in making a donation to support the program may do so by visiting communitybridges.org/donate and selecting “La Manzana Community Resource Center.”

Lunches will be available from Monday to Aug. 6 at the following sites:

- Boys and Girls Club of Santa Cruz, 543 Center St., Santa Cruz.
- Sycamore Street Apartments, 125 Sycamore St., Santa Cruz.
- YWCA, 340 E. Beach St., Watsonville.
- Nueva Vista Beach Flats Park, 131 Liebrandt Ave., Santa Cruz.

Lunches will be available from Monday to Aug. 13 at the following sites:

- La Manzana Community Resources, 521 Main St., Watsonville.
- Stone Creek Apartments, 300 Bree Lane, Watsonville.
- Vista Verdi Apartments, 45 Steward Ave., Freedom.
- Corralitos Creek Apartments, 125 Pajaro Circle, Freedom.
- Pajaro Park Apartments, 27 San Juan Road, Watsonville.

Lunches will be available from June 21 to July 30 at the following sites:

- Sunny Meadows Apartments, 220 Ross Ave., Freedom
- Pippin Orchards Apartments, 56 Atkinson Lane, Watsonville.
- Schapiro Knoll Apartments, 33 Minto Road, Watsonville.