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COMMUNITY BRIDGES
PUENTES DE LA COMUNIDAD

FALL 2023

Elderday opens, Lift Line expands, and hunger increases



Elderday's Grand Opening Marks Significant Expansion of Local Older Adult Services

On October 12, we marked a momentous occasion with the grand opening of Elderday Adult Day Health Care's new state-of-the-art headquarters at 501 Main Street, Watsonville. This remarkable event signifies an expansion in response to the growing need for older adult services in Santa Cruz County and the Central Coast.

Since its establishment in 1981, Elderday has been a lifeline for countless older adults, offering essential services such as nursing care, therapies, mental health resources, activities, nutritious meals, and social interaction to prevent early institutionalization. Elderday's mission revolves around improving the well-being of vulnerable older adults, helping them live fulfilling lives at home.

In 2021, Community Bridges secured a substantial \$2.5 million capital grant from the Central California Alliance for Health to acquire the impressive 12,591-square-foot property in downtown Watsonville. Construction began in April 2022, and as of September 2023, the facility stands as a testament to Elderday's and the Alliance for Health's commitment to the older adult community.

The new location offers 3,600 additional square feet, allowing for a 30% increase in capacity fostering transformative intergenerational activities with other Community Bridges programs. The proximity to Community Bridges headquarters at 519 Main Street enables collaboration with programs like La Manzanita Community Resources, WIC, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.



Elderday Adult Day Health Care Program Director Lois Sones (from left), California Department of Aging Deputy Director Denise Likar and Community Bridges CEO Raymon Cancino.

Key speakers at the event emphasized the increasing need for programs like Elderday. The number of older adults in California is rising, making such services essential. Santa Cruz County has seen an 80.9% growth in the 65-84 age group since 2010. Studies reveal that 1 in 5 older adults in Santa Cruz County live in isolation, posing added risks to their health and well-being.

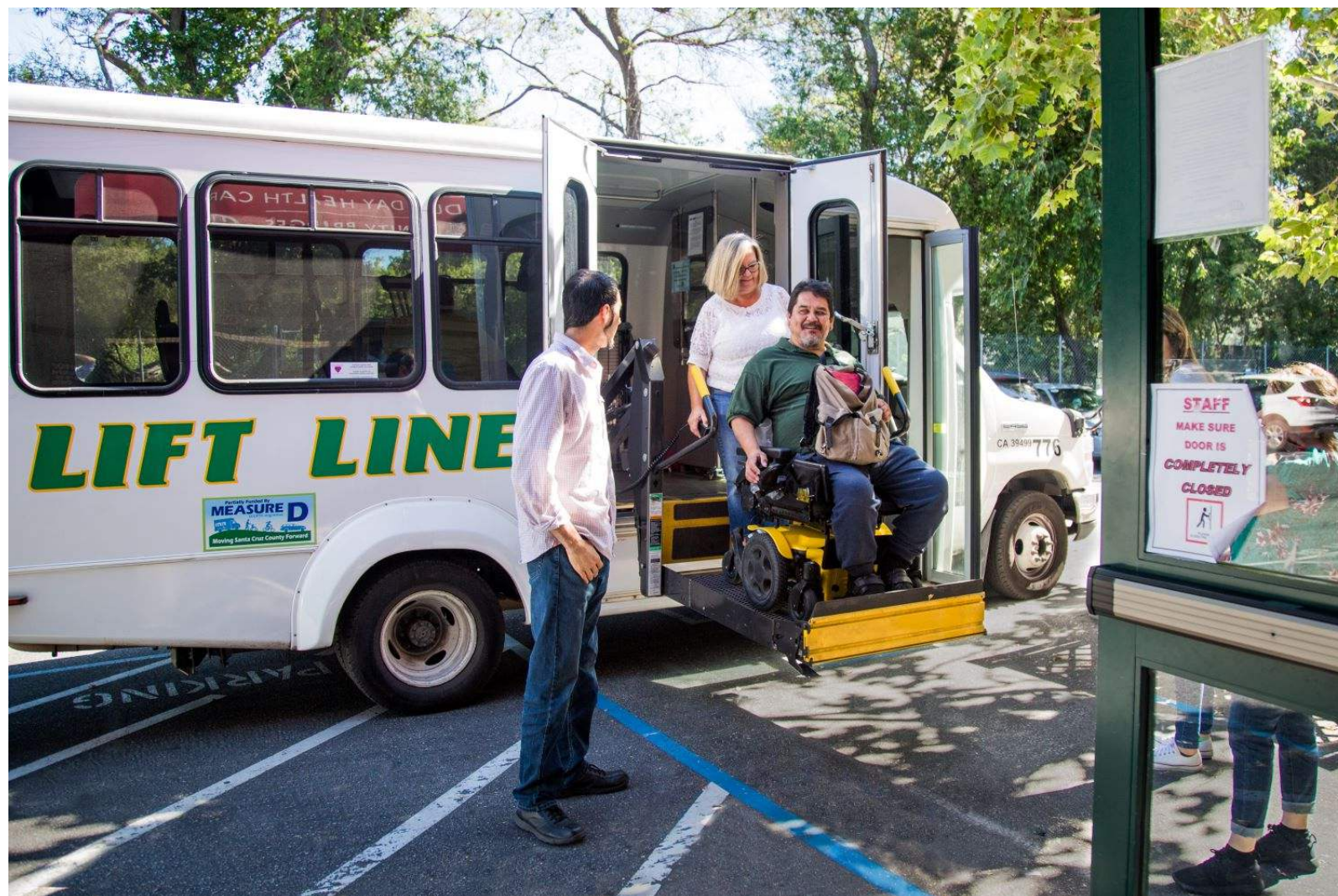
Elderday is a vital Community-Based Adult Services (CBAS) program and the only program of its kind combating senior isolation in Santa Cruz County and the Central Coast. Their compassionate programs provide companionship, enrichment, and nourishment, allowing older adults to continue living at home within their families and communities.

As the need for these services continues to grow, Elderday's expansion will extend its reach to San Benito and Monterey Counties, ensuring more older adults can access care and companionship that would otherwise be out of reach. Elderday services are provided for just a fraction of the cost of assisted living (42%) and nursing home care (24%) and are covered by Medi-Cal and Veterans Administration.

As we celebrate the remarkable journey that has led us to the grand opening of Elderday's new state-of-the-art headquarters, we are reminded of the critical importance of the services we provide to older adults in Santa Cruz County and the Central Coast. The development of this project was 100% self-financed by Community Bridges, without a large capital campaign or community fundraising drive.

We invite you to be a part of this transformative endeavor by making a stretch donation to Community Bridges to help support this program and the community it serves. Your support will enable us to continue offering essential care, companionship, and enrichment to older adults, reducing isolation, and helping them live fulfilling lives at home. Please consider donating today to help us make a difference in the lives of older adults and their families. Thank you for your generosity and for being a part of our mission.

SUPPORT ELDERDAY TODAY



Breaking Barriers: Lift Line Access for All Program Expands Inclusive Transportation in Santa Cruz County

Community Bridges is thrilled to announce the expansion of its Lift Line transportation program to better serve all Santa Cruz County residents with disabilities. Thanks to the generosity of a state grant from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Transportation Network Company's (TNC) Access for All program through our local Regional Transportation Commission (RTC), we're launching a groundbreaking initiative to further make transportation accessible for everyone, regardless of income.

The Lift Line Access for All Program Features:

- Unique Door-to-door transportation for all county residents with disabilities.
- An affordable flat fee of just \$5 per ride (income-eligible older adults and individuals with disabilities ride for free).
- Extensive countywide coverage, ensuring everyone has access to ADA-accessible transportation.

Why It Matters:

A typical 18-mile taxi ride from Watsonville to Santa Cruz can cost nearly \$100, making it unaffordable for many residents who require wheelchair-accessible vehicles. Additional low-cost and barrier options, such as ParaCruz, may cost up to \$14 per ride and have limited pickups due to reduced coverage area, leaving rural low-income participants without other options. Our \$5 fee is one of the lowest rates in the county for countywide trips, ensuring affordability and accessibility.

Convenient Scheduling:

We're introducing a self-service mobile app similar to popular ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft. This app allows you to schedule rides up to seven days in advance, with same-day pickups based on availability. To schedule your rides, simply call 831-688-9663 to register for the program and receive a log-in for our app. Then, you can choose to schedule your rides through the app or over the phone.

Impact on the Community:



Update on Meals on Wheels HQ

The Live Oak School District has asked to move Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County to a month to month lease as discussions about a two-year lease extension at our current headquarters at 1777 Capitola Road have stalled.

You can read more about the situation by [CLICKING HERE](#).

We are committed to preserving older adult services for our 1,500 participants. We will keep you updated as we learn more. Rest assured that home-delivered meals will continue to be served and congregate dining sites will continue to operate.

Community Bridges' Lift Line program already provides 60,000 free door-to-door rides annually to low-income older adults and individuals with disabilities. This crucial service ensures that individuals can access essential services like medical appointments, banks, grocery stores, and pharmacies. Now, with the expansion of our services, we're extending this support to the broader community, enhancing the independence and accessibility of those with disabilities.

This expansion of the Lift Line program is a significant step towards making transportation in Santa Cruz County more inclusive and affordable for everyone. It's an investment in the well-being and independence of all residents, and we're excited to bring this transformative service to our community.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT LIFT LINE](#)

Act Now to Protect Children and Mothers: Your Voice Matters!

WIC has been a beacon of hope for vulnerable mothers, babies, and young children for nearly half a century. It has paved the way for healthier, more prosperous futures and has had a tremendous impact on low-income families lives during the pandemic with temporary increases to its benefits, and it's time for us to ensure this crucial program thrives.



Current Congressional proposals for Fiscal Year 2024 would significantly reduce benefits for 1.5 million mothers and 3.5 million children. Here's why this matters: WIC has seen a 12% increase in child participation since 2020, and in fiscal year 2024, it's projected to serve over 6.5 million pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and young children.

Furthermore, we've witnessed tangible benefits from WIC's fruit and vegetable pandemic boost. Access to a wider variety of produce has led to a measurable increase in fruit and vegetable consumption among WIC-enrolled toddlers. Together, access to WIC food packages supports the optimal development of young children and can help prevent nutrition-related diseases.

Your Action Matters: Click the Link Below

By taking action at the link provided, you can join us in our advocacy efforts to secure adequate funding for WIC, maintain science-based food packages, and extend the fruit and vegetable benefit. Your voice can make a significant impact in safeguarding the well-being of countless families.

[ACT NOW](#)



Join Us at Pajaro Rising: A Literary Event for a Great Cause!

We are thrilled to announce that our organization has been selected as the beneficiary of the upcoming Pajaro Rising event, scheduled for November 30th. This remarkable event is made possible through the collaborative efforts of Bookshop Santa Cruz, UC Santa Cruz, and the Center for Agroecology at UC Santa Cruz, with additional support from the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County.

Event Details:

- Date: November 30

- Location: Cowell Ranch Hay Barn, 94 Ranch View Road, Santa Cruz

Pajaro Rising promises to be an unforgettable evening, bringing together a fantastic lineup of authors, readers, and supporters for an incredible cause. This event is dedicated to raising funds for the ongoing recovery of individuals affected by the Pajaro floods.

What to Expect:

- Engaging readings and insightful discussions with celebrated authors.
- Book signings, providing you with the opportunity to connect with the authors and have your books personally signed.
- Special live screen printing, offering a unique artistic experience.
- An exclusive live auction, featuring private readings at a supporter's home.

Meet the All-Star Cast:

We are excited to introduce our never-before-assembled all-star cast of authors:

- **Jaime Cortez:** A celebrated writer from the Pajaro area, known for his work "Gordo."
- **Alexis Madrigal:** The voice of the Bay Area, a prominent figure at KQED.
- **Claudia Ramirez Flores:** A rising poet from the Pajaro region.
- **Ingrid Rojas Contreras:** A talented novelist and memoirist.
- **Rebecca Solnit:** An accomplished essayist and passionate climate activist.

Don't Miss Out:

Every ticket purchase includes signed books, giving you a lasting memory of this exceptional event.

Mark your calendar for November 30th and be part of Pajaro Rising. Your presence and support will make a significant difference in the ongoing recovery of those affected by the Pajaro floods. Join us for an evening of literary excellence, community, and philanthropy. We can't wait to see you there!

[BUY TICKETS](#)



'Outstanding': Recognizing the FRC's Invaluable Work!

We are thrilled that Community Bridges was awarded the prestigious Outstanding Nonprofit Agency Award/Collaborator by the Nonprofit Alliance of Monterey County at their 10th Annual Nonprofit Awards. This recognition is a testament to the unwavering commitment and tireless dedication of our amazing team at La Manzana and the from across the Family Resource Collective (FRC).

Our dedicated FRC team was honored for its exceptional efforts in responding to the Pajaro floods and aiding families affected. Their hard work and compassion profoundly impacted the lives of Pajaro families during their most challenging moments, from children to parents and older adults in need.

We want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Nonprofit Alliance of Monterey County for recognizing our efforts and for hosting a fantastic awards breakfast to celebrate all the honorees and supporters.

None of this would have been possible without your generosity and belief in our cause. Your support is the driving force behind our ability to create positive change in our community.

SUPPORT THE FRC

Service With Heart: Watsonville Senior Center Honors Older Adult Programs

In a heartwarming and humbling moment, Community Bridges’ Senior and Transportation Division was recently awarded the prestigious “Service with Heart Award” at the Watsonville Senior Prom. This incredible honor recognizes the unwavering dedication of our hardworking staff and their commitment to serving older adults in Santa Cruz County. Across our Senior focused programs of Elderday Adult Day Health Care, Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County, and Lift Line, our dedicated team tirelessly strives to provide essential services to the seniors who frequent the Watsonville Senior Center.

The award to our Lift Line program serves as a lifeline for countless older adults, ensuring them full access to their community, improved medical outcomes, appointment compliance, and well-being as they access transportation to services that provide the care, support, and companionship they deserve. We are truly grateful to the City of Watsonville Senior Center for this exceptional recognition.

Lisa Berkowitz, our recently retired Meals on Wheels program director, was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award honoring her indispensable contributions to our older adult communities over the span of 44 years. Lisa's dedication to her work is truly inspiring. She played an essential role in ensuring that older adult services were accessible to all, regardless of their economic standing or background.

These awards are a testament to the collective effort of our entire team, and it signifies the trust and support of our community. We are truly grateful for the opportunity to serve, and we look forward to continuing our work, ensuring that every older adult in Santa Cruz County receives the care, respect, and support they deserve.



NEWS & NOTES



Volunteers are critical to our success at Community Bridges. And with 10 programs at 20 sites throughout Santa Cruz County, there are so many ways you can help us continue our mission.

READ MORE



As the leading human services provider in Santa Cruz County, Community Bridges offers dozens of fulfilling careers in education, social work, culinary arts, community outreach and advocacy, transportation, and more!

JOIN OUR TEAM



Show your support of Community Bridges by shopping for swag at our TeePublic storefront! A portion of the proceeds of every sale go toward Community Bridges and our family of ten programs.

SHOP CB SWAG



Ray's Corner

Combating Hunger, Building Hope: A Year-End Reflection and Call to Action

It's hard to believe that the end of 2023 is quickly approaching. We find ourselves in a pivotal moment for our community and our nation. The challenges brought by the past 12 months have been immense, and one of the most pressing issues we face is the alarming increase in hunger and food insecurity. We must reflect on this crisis and take bold action to address it.

In 2021, thanks to pandemic relief efforts, we saw a brief improvement in hunger and food insecurity for our community, however, the latest findings from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (ERS) report have brought to light a concerning trend for 2022. Here are some key takeaways from the report:

1. The number of people living in households struggling with hunger in 2022 increased by 10.3 million compared to the previous year.
2. Shockingly, one in 8 households in the United States now face food insecurity.
3. The number of children living in households experiencing food insecurity rose significantly, affecting 13.4 million children – a 44.6% increase from the previous year.
4. Single-parent households headed by women experienced a particularly high level of food insecurity, with a rate of 33.1%.
5. The report highlights the disproportionate impact of food insecurity on Black and Latine households, with both groups experiencing double the rate of White non-Latine households.
6. Rural areas faced a higher prevalence of food insecurity (14.7%) compared to urban areas (12.5%).
7. Even households with incomes below 185% of the poverty threshold experienced a significant level of food insecurity, with a rate of 32%.

To address this growing crisis, the ERS report suggests several policy measures, including additional funding for programs like the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), expanding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), reinstating the Expanded Child Tax Credit (CTC), and making free healthy school meals available to all children nationwide.

The report serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need for Congress to make substantial investments in anti-hunger and anti-poverty programs and that local governments must take a proactive role in helping address these community issues. It shouldn't be controversial for us to state that no one in our country should go hungry, especially when viable solutions exist. It's a pressing issue that demands attention and action to ensure the well-being of all community members.

You can message your elected officials by clicking [HERE](#).

In these challenging times, the support and advocacy of our community are more important than ever to ensure that addressing the most basic need of hunger is prioritized and addressed.

Community Bridges has been at the forefront of delivering essential services and critical resources. We have responded swiftly during

times of crisis, thanks to the generosity and support of individuals like you.

Over the past year, our community has faced natural disasters, including storms that led to flooding and displacement. In response, Community Bridges provided over \$1.7 million in direct assistance to those affected, and we continue to support families in their rebuilding efforts. Meanwhile, our various programs, from Meals on Wheels to Early Education Division preschool services, have been unwavering in their commitment to fulfilling our mission.

Yet, the need for assistance has never been greater. Many households are struggling to cover basic expenses, and childhood poverty has doubled in just one year. Most government aid has ended, leaving many facing loss of expanded services, escalating inflation, increased housing costs, and the threat of falling into poverty.

This holiday season, we invite you to join our mission and help us address our community's growing needs. Your donation, regardless of its size, will enable us to continue providing vital services, strengthen our organization, and offer hope for a brighter future to those facing unprecedented challenges.

Together, we can build stronger, more resilient communities, ensuring no one is left behind. This holiday season, let's spread the gift of hope, love, and support, making our community a better place for all. Visit our website at communitybridges.org/donate, review our financials to see how we invest your dollars, and join us in making a difference in the lives of those who need it most.

DONATE TODAY

Support our Programs

Sign-up to Volunteer

Community Bridges is an exempt organization as described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; EIN #94-2460211. Donations are tax deductible in excess of the value of any goods or services provided in exchange for your contribution.

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