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La Manzana Community Resources Program Coordinator Siloia Sanchez oversees the Family Resource Collective's Eviction Defense Collaborative, which has helped dozens of families resolve complex disputes between them and their landlords in Santa Cruz County.

Santa Cruz County's Lifeline for Housing Stability

In the picturesque coastal paradise of Santa Cruz County, where the sun-kissed beaches and rolling waves often mask an undercurrent of crisis, an unprecedented initiative is fighting to preserve the right to safe and stable housing.

The Family Resource Collective's Eviction Defense Collaborative is the beacon of hope that countless local families desperately need. In a county ranked as the most unaffordable rental market in the United States, this alliance of Community Bridges, Tenant Sanctuary, Senior Legal Services, and the Conflict Resolution Center of Santa Cruz County has come together to create a lifeline for tenants and landlords in distress.

These organizations work tirelessly to create a unified front against eviction crises in Santa Cruz County and, in the wake of the March floods, the community of Pajaro.

The Eviction Defense Collaborative, operating from the Family Resource Collective sites throughout Santa Cruz County, offers a range of critical services to prevent legal evictions, ease the burden on vulnerable residents, and support landlords in what sometimes may feel like an adversarial process. The program had previously received a one-time COVID relief grant from the County of Santa Cruz, but this support ended in June. The demand for legal aid services for undocumented clients, landlords, and those not served by other local resources is growing faster than currently available resources. In the face of such stark affordability challenges, the Collaborative's mission is to keep tenants housed and minimize the negative consequences of legal eviction.

Comprehensive Support

Here's a snapshot of the essential services provided by the Collaborative's partner organizations:

- **Tenant Sanctuary:** Offers free tenants' rights counseling and assists tenants in demanding that landlords adhere to the rules. They hold walk-in office hours at Live Oak Community Resources every Wednesday and one-on-one phone counseling sessions with referrals.

- **Conflict Resolution Center of Santa Cruz County (CRC):** Provides free mediation services for various tenant-landlord disputes, including home repairs, rent increases, evictions, and unsanitary conditions. CRC holds walk-in office hours at La Manzana Community Resources every Thursday.
- **Senior Legal Services (SLS):** Offers free legal case evaluation, document preparation, and potential legal representation to tenants served with evictions (unlawful detainers). SLS plays a crucial role in negotiating move-out agreements that mitigate the long-term impacts of court-ordered evictions. Given the time-sensitive nature of these cases, SLS responds to referrals promptly through our case referral process. They hold office hours at La Manzana every Monday.

Resolving Conflicts

Here are a few remarkable success stories that exemplify the transformative impact of the Collaborative's services (Participant names have been removed to protect their identity):

Mr. F's Journey to Housing Stability

Mr. F, a long-term tenant of over 20 years, was served an unlawful detainer notice, facing the possibility of eviction. Confused and uncertain about the reasons behind his eviction, Mr. F sought mediation and requested the Collaborative to communicate with his landlord. Through open dialogue, the landlord and Mr. F were able to reach an agreement, allowing Mr. F and his family to continue residing in their home until they could purchase or rent a new one. This heartwarming success story highlights the power of communication and mediation in securing housing stability.

Mr. S's Path to Extended Residency

Facing a notice to vacate from his landlord, Mr. S contacted the Collaborative to request mediation. The benefits of an open dialogue became evident through the mediation process to the landlord, who ultimately agreed to participate. Research shows that mediated agreements are 15% more likely to be complied with than court-ordered mandated agreements. In the spirit of cooperation, Mr. S asked for an extension of time to move out of the property, a request that his landlord granted, extending his stay by an additional 45 days. This success story showcases how mediation can lead to mutually beneficial solutions, minimizing harm and crises.

Ms. D's Journey Towards Healing

Ms. D faced a daunting 3-Day Notice to "Pay or Quit" due to being behind on rent by over \$11,000. Her financial struggles were compounded by the loss of her mother in 2021 and her brother in 2022, as she was their primary caregiver. Grieving and overwhelmed, Ms. D needed help to navigate her difficult circumstances. The Collaborative successfully negotiated a Stipulation agreement that provided her with a softer landing. Ms. D gained additional time to pack her belongings and move closer to her family. A payment plan was established to gradually reduce her debt without negative credit implications that would haunt her from future rental opportunities. Notably, she left the property with no eviction on her record and a plan to move forward. This story reflects the Collaborative's commitment to preserving dignity and supporting those facing challenging life circumstances beyond the immediate crisis and need.

A Proven Solution

The stark reality is that Santa Cruz County's conditions for an eviction crisis are intensifying. It is not only a housing issue but a human rights issue, as countless residents teeter on the precipice of homelessness. Additional funding and support for the Eviction Defense Collaborative are not merely desirable; they are an absolute necessity.

Community Bridges' ultimate policy objective would be to ensure a right-to-counsel program is established and available for all community members to ensure that justice is served equitably regardless of income.

A [recent landmark study of homelessness](#) found that the issue is closely tied to unaffordable housing options and significant rent burdens. In this study, roughly four in five participants entered homelessness immediately after having a previously stable housing situation that was upended by rising rental rates. And 82% of the participants in the survey believed receiving a one-time payment of \$5,000- \$10,000 would have prevented their homelessness. Another study in 2020 found that a median rent increase of \$100 resulted in a 9% increase in homelessness nationwide.

Mediation, navigation services, and case management support to access back rent programs, housing, and benefits align with the mission of the Collaborative to significantly prevent homelessness. Eviction prevention is key to addressing any housing crises, as we know that it is [much harder](#) to secure housing once experiencing homelessness, and the cost of serving people experiencing homelessness is far greater.

In the face of this housing emergency, the Family Resource Collective's Eviction Defense Collaborative stands as a symbol of resilience, compassion, and unity. But without the community's support, its ability to protect vulnerable tenants and landlords hangs in the balance. Let us come together to ensure every Santa Cruz County resident has a safe and secure place to call home.

Support the Collaborative

Advocate for the Collaborative

Valley Residents Dine in Support of Emergency Services



Assemblymember Gail Pellerin (left) honored Shelley Young (Second from right) with the Green Heart Award on October 20 at the Mountain Affair. Community Bridges CEO Ray Cancino (second from left) and Community Foundation Santa Cruz County CEO Susan True (right) also spoke at the annual event benefiting Mountain Community Resources.

Community Celebrates Mountain Community Resources' Impact

Our heartfelt thanks go to everyone who joined us at the 38th Annual Mountain Affair on October 20. This lively group of longtime and recent supporters helped raise \$20,000 to support the essential programming at Mountain Community Resources, and they had a blast while doing it.

Special thanks to our presenters, Gail Pellerin, 28th District California Assemblymember, and Susan True, CEO of Community Foundation Santa Cruz County. Congratulations to our Green Heart Award winner, Shelley Young, with thanks for seven years of volunteer service at MCR's weekly food pantry.

Our gratitude goes to Raffaele Cristallo, owner of Ristorante Casa Nostra, for a beautiful evening under the redwoods, enjoying fine Italian cuisine as well as our generous wine sponsor, Roberts Ranch Vineyards, and the many local wineries and businesses that donated silent auction items.

If you weren't able to join us this year, you can still help Mountain Community Resources deliver crisis support services, disaster recovery and emergency preparedness resources for neighbors in San Lorenzo Valley, a community that knows the importance of staying prepared and being connected.

Your donation to Mountain Community Resources supports more than 1,400 San Lorenzo Valley residents to access the dignity of a daily shower and laundry facilities, weekly food and clothing distribution, low-cost counseling and legal assistance, and much more to support a strong valley community.

Donate to Mountain Community Resources

In the news

Key headlines from Community Bridges Family Resource Collective and challenges local children, parents, and families are facing:

- [Medi-Cal rules prompt enrollment drop in Santa Cruz County](#)
- [Pajaro Flood Victims Still Rebuilding](#)
- [Child poverty more than doubles — a year after hitting record low, Census data shows](#)

Learn More About our Family Resource Collective sites

- [La Manzana Community Resources](#)
- [Live Oak Community Resources](#)
- [Nueva Vista Community Resources](#)
- [Mountain Community Resources](#)

FRC's 'Outstanding' Work Recognized!

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 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.

This accolade acknowledges the outstanding contributions of our team in the face of adversity. The Pajaro floods were a difficult time for our community, and it was through the commitment and resilience of our team that we were able to make a significant difference in the lives of those who needed it most.

We want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Nonprofit Alliance of Monterey County for recognizing our efforts and for hosting an inspiring 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](#)

PAJARO RESIDENTS!
Are You Ready for Disaster?

Community Emergency Preparedness Sessions
Learn from emergency response experts how to prepare yourself and your community to respond to emergencies and disasters.

Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church
100 Salinas Road, Pajaro

Sunday, October 29
2pm to 5pm

Sunday, November 12
2pm to 5pm

Logos for Community Bridges, Pajaro Valley Chamber of Commerce, Monterey County Office of Emergency Services, Catholic Charities, American Red Cross, and Pajaro Valley Fire Department are shown at the bottom.

Creating Strong Community Response

With winter fast approaching and possible heavy rain and storms on the horizon, Community Bridges' Family Resource Collective is hosting a series of emergency preparedness events in Pajaro to help residents prepare for natural disasters.

The first was on Sunday, October 1 at Our Lady of Assumption Church at 100 Salinas Road in Pajaro. We will be back at Assumption Church on the following Sundays:

- October 29, 2pm to 5pm
- November 12, 2pm to 5pm

Learn from emergency response experts how to prepare yourself and your community to respond to emergencies and disasters. We will also distribute emergency preparedness kits, known as 'go-bags,' to participants who sign up for emergency alerts through A!ert Monterey County during the event.

[MORE INFORMATION](#)

Join the FRC Team!

Community Bridges envisions a thriving community where every person has the opportunity to unleash their full potential.

Our Family Resource Collective Advocates and Program Managers work collaboratively with community partners, residents, businesses, foundations, donors, supporters, volunteers, and the Community Bridges family of programs to provide our participants with access to resources that offer stability and hope for the future.

Current open positions:

- [Program Manager - Mountain Community Resources](#)
- [HEAP Coordinator - Mountain Community Resources](#)
- [Advocate - Mountain Community Resources](#)
- [Advocate - La Manzanita Community Resources](#)
- [Advocate - Live Oak Community Resources](#)

These are full-time, 40-hour per week positions with competitive starting wages and a robust benefits package.

APPLY NOW



Show your support of Community Bridges and the Family Resource Collective by shopping at our TeePublic storefront! A portion of the proceeds of every sale go toward Community Bridges and the FRC!

SHOP COMMUNITY BRIDGES MERCH



Local advocacy makes a difference. The Family Resource Collective can not sustain its services without strong backing from local elected officials. Contact your representatives, ask questions, and advocate for our programs.

CONTACT YOUR SUPERVISOR



The Family Resource Collective's work would not be possible without our dedicated volunteers. From helping with food distributions to conducting community outreach, our FRC centers have a plethora of volunteer opportunities.

LEND A HAND TODAY

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