



Community Bridges Counseling Program: Bridging Gaps, Transforming Lives

The Community Bridges Family Resource Collective (FRC) stands as a source of hope and assistance for more than 10,000 individuals each year in Santa Cruz County and North Monterey County. Among its many vital programs, the Counseling Program, led by Clinical Supervisor Bryan Giese-Gardner, plays a pivotal role in providing mental health services to children, parents, and families who often find themselves unable to access or afford professional assistance.

The counseling program extends its compassionate arms across the FRC's four locations in Watsonville, Santa Cruz, Live Oak, and Felton. The program started in 2018, following a client survey in which community members indicated both the availability of clinicians and having services in their language, as well as with a clinician that understands their culture, were important assets to the community. The counseling program's mission is clear: to ensure that the ability to pay should never be a barrier to receiving the care needed to improve one's quality of life with a clinician who can relate to one's experiences.

“Our mission is to make sure that people have access, who typically wouldn’t have access, and that the ability to pay or not is not a determining factor of someone receiving the kind of care that they would need in order to improve their quality of life,” says Bryan.

A Growing Need

As the COVID-19 Pandemic continues to cast its long shadow, the need for mental health services has surged. The overflow of clients in traditional mental health services has left many, particularly children and adults, without the support they require.

“The need for mental health services has been increasing and the acuity with which people come in is higher than it’s been,” Bryan says. “A lot of traditional programs that are far more intense and high frequency services have been inundated with people who have lots and lots of issues.”

The counseling program not only offers individual child, teen, adult, and family counseling for general mental health issues but also serves as a crucial link for those facing more acute needs. Bryan acknowledges the challenging reality of delays and disruptions in accessing mental health care, but he emphasizes the program’s commitment to decreasing lag time and increasing access for people, even if they cannot provide immediate counseling services.

A Communal Space

In a community space like Community Bridges’ FRC sites, the counseling program serves as a connector, a place where individuals who live in some of the Central Coast’s most overlooked communities can voice their struggles and be guided to the right resources.

“The FRC serves as one of the ultimate connectors in different pockets of the community... that ability to feel like you can come in and say, ‘I’m not really sure what I want, I’m not really sure. But here’s what I can share about what’s happening for me,’ and people can point you in a good direction that isn’t a dead end.”

The impact of the program is not just measured in the number of clients served but in the stories of transformation that unfold within its walls. While Bryan cannot disclose specific cases, he highlights the profound change that often begins with someone simply feeling heard and validated.

“Simply by someone listening and validating that they have gone through difficulty and that they have been hurt or wounded and have some pain and suffering, gives them strength and gives them the feeling like they have choices, they have options,” he shares.

Families First

Beyond individual impact, the program plays a crucial role in supporting families dealing with school difficulties and developmental issues. Bryan stresses the importance of affirming differences and helping parents advocate for their children in a system that often fails to listen to the needs of the most vulnerable.

“Being able to meet families, affirm someone’s differences, and not see them through this lens where they’re coming up short, where they’re falling behind, is a really important aspect of us taking care of populations that don’t have a lot of power socially.”

Building Blocks

As the demand for mental health services continues to rise, the Community Bridges Counseling Program is at the forefront of bridging the gaps in access and care. However, it cannot achieve its mission without the support of the community.

The community is invited to join hands in supporting this vital program by making donations to the Family Resource Collective. Your contribution will enable the program to continue its mission of

providing essential mental health services to those who need it the most. To make a difference today, visit communitybridges.org/donate.

In the face of growing mental health challenges, Community Bridges stands tall as a lifeline, reminding us that compassion and support can transform lives and build a stronger, more resilient community.

SUPPORT THE FRC

JOIN OUR COUNSELING TEAM



Don't Miss Our Positive Parenting Month Family Resource Fairs!

We are excited to announce the upcoming Positive Parenting Month Family Resource Fairs hosted by Community Bridges Family Resource Collective (FRC). These one-day events, held at our FRC locations across Santa Cruz County, are a collaborative effort involving Triple P, First 5, and various agencies dedicated to promoting family-oriented services.

Upcoming Events:

January 13, 2024

Beach Flats Park
160 Raymond St., Santa Cruz
11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

January 27, 2024

La Manzana Community Resources
521 Main St., Watsonville
11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Join us for a day filled with engaging activities, delicious food, exciting games, and the chance to win fantastic raffle prizes. It's an opportunity to come together as a community, celebrate positive parenting, and access valuable resources.

At our FRC sites throughout Santa Cruz County, we are committed to providing support and education to individuals and families. Our services include both individual and group classes covering a range of essential topics, such as coping with stress, balancing work and family

IN THE NEWS

Key headlines from Community Bridges' Family Resource Collective and challenges impacting local children, parents, and families.

- [Writers raise funds, encourage advocacy for Pajaro flood victims](#)
- [Empowering 22,000 vulnerable residents: Help deliver essential services to older adults, children & families](#)
- [Monterey County flood response bolstered](#)

Learn more about our Family Resource Collective Sites

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

life, creating a safe home environment, and promoting language and communication skills.

The best part? *All our services are offered free of charge to the community. We believe in creating a supportive environment where every family can thrive.*

Don't miss out on this fantastic opportunity to connect with your community, access valuable resources, and celebrate the essence of positive parenting. Mark your calendars, and we look forward to seeing you at the Positive Parenting Month Family Resource Fairs!



Only Two Weeks Left to Make a Difference!

Time is running out to bring joy and support to Pajaro through the Family Resource Collective's Monterey County Gives campaign. Community Bridges is thrilled to be a part of this initiative for the first time, and we need your help to make our "Big Idea" a reality.

Thanks to a generous \$1,000 challenge gift from Santa Cruz County Bank, we're on a mission to establish a new family resource center in Pajaro. This center will be a lifeline for hardworking residents, providing essential services and resources to help them thrive.

Since the March 11 flood, Community Bridges has already made a significant impact, distributing \$1.7 million in direct economic assistance, offering 600 hours of case management, and delivering vital items to families in need. Now, we're aiming even higher with our vision for the Monterey County Gives campaign—a one-stop hub for translation and nutrition services, parenting classes, job applications and training, housing navigation, counseling, and more.

Here's how you can be a part of this transformative journey:

- Visit montereycountygives.com/bridges to make your Christmas donation.
- Share this campaign with your friends, family, and community groups to spread the word!

Let's come together and build a stronger, more resilient Pajaro Valley. Every contribution counts, and with your support, we can create a brighter future for our community. Act now, and let's make these last two weeks truly impactful!

[LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR 'BIG IDEA'](#)

Over \$81K Raised to Support Evicted Pajaro Farmworker Families

We are thrilled to share the incredible news of our community's compassion and generosity! Thanks to your unwavering support, we have successfully raised over \$81,000 to assist more than two dozen farmworker families in Pajaro who were facing imminent eviction during the holiday season.



A special note of gratitude goes to the Community Foundation for Monterey County and the United Way of Santa Cruz County, who demonstrated remarkable leadership by contributing grants of \$50,000 and \$10,000, respectively, to our fundraising campaign. Their commitment to our community has been instrumental in making a significant impact.

With the combined power of these grants and the support of over 130 individual donors, ranging from \$5 to \$5,000, we were able to provide much-needed relief. Many of the families abruptly evicted from 29 San Juan Road have found alternative housing, ensuring they have a secure place to call home during the holidays.

We closed the GoFundMe account on Friday, December 15, so that we could get the last round of economic assistance into the hands of the evicted families as quickly as possible. Our dedication to the well-being of these families and the broader community of Pajaro does not end with this successful fundraising campaign.

We will continue our collaborative efforts by offering support in various forms, including housing navigation, public benefit enrollment, legal aid, mental health services, and other resources available through our family programs and community-based partners.

Thank you for being an essential part of this impactful journey. You can continue to help these families by supporting our services.

SUPPORT LOCAL FAMILIES



Preparing for Emergencies

It can be a matter of life or death. Be proactive in protecting yourself and others; take the time to create a 5-minute plan to evacuate from fires. With a clear escape route, you can leave at a moment's notice, keeping your loved ones safe from harm.

Remember, waiting for official evacuation orders might be too late – act quickly when it feels unsafe.

To ensure a smooth evacuation process:

- Establish a meeting place for your family.
- Prepare an emergency kit containing essentials like medication, important documents, clothes, food, and water.
- Stay updated with weather reports and Red Flag Warnings.
- If it's time to leave, have your emergency bags packed and gather your family, including pets.

- Don't delay; evacuate promptly.

For more information on creating a 5-minute plan and staying prepared for disasters, visit firefightersonyourside.org

LEARN MORE

Celebrating the Outstanding Contributions of FRC Advocate Sandra Rodelo

We are thrilled to share the recent recognition of Family Resource Collective Program Coordinator Sandra Rodelo by the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office for her exceptional efforts in coordinating Triple P parenting classes across our community. Sandra has been instrumental in bringing these classes to inmates at the Rountree facility near Watsonville.

Triple P extends its reach beyond correctional facilities. Sandra is actively involved in coordinating both individual and group parenting classes at various FRC sites across Santa Cruz County. Her dedication doesn't stop there—she also plays a key role in organizing classes at Janus Santa Cruz, local libraries, preschool centers, and more.

Let's take a moment to congratulate Sandra for her outstanding work and tireless dedication to supporting families across Santa Cruz County. Her efforts truly have a positive impact on the lives of many.



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:

- [Senior Program Manager - Live Oak Community Resources](#)
- [HEAP Coordinator - Mountain Community Resources](#)
- [Master's Level Therapist - La Manzana Community Resources](#)

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

JOIN OUR TEAM



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!

BUY 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.

HELP YOUR
COMMUNITY



Our Contact Information

{{Organization Name}}
 {{Organization Address}}
 {{Organization Phone}}
 {{Organization Website}}

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