



The Watsonville Senior Center is one of four congregate dining sites Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County offers to Santa Cruz County's older adults.

Creating a Community Hub for Older Adults

Dining site in the Watsonville Senior Center fosters connections and provides healthy meals to local older adults

At the Watsonville Senior Center, having a Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County dining site is a key part of making it a true resource hub for older adults in the community.

The Meals on Wheels team of staff and volunteers serves daily hot, fresh lunches to adults ages 60 and up, providing them with vital nutrition and battling loneliness by creating friendly connections.

“We think of this as a collaboration between the Community Bridges Meals on Wheels program and the City of Watsonville,” said Katie Nuñez, older adult services supervisor for the City of Watsonville.

City staff oversee the Senior Center and make sure all day-to-day operations run smoothly. In addition to receiving lunch from Meals on Wheels, older adults can enjoy coffee and tea while socializing with each other, and they can participate in activities such as arts and crafts, chair yoga, and dance classes. The Senior Center also provides English classes, tech workshops, peer counseling, and much more. People visiting the Senior Center can pick up bags of fresh produce and pantry items donated by local organizations, too.

Having this multifunctional site benefits older adults because they are able to not only get the nutritional value from the meals, produce, and pantry items available, but they can also socialize, stay active, and make friends.

“I like to think of the Senior Center as a hub of resources for older adults. It gives people a much better opportunity to seek help when they need it, because they can quickly and easily make the right connections,” Nuñez said.

Many participants have told Nuñez what a blessing it is to have the Senior Center and what an improvement it has made for their mental and physical health by being a warm, welcoming place.

“I love hearing that feedback,” Nuñez said. “Having Meals on Wheels here is key to that warmth.”

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A Love Letter: Giving Thanks for Food from the Heart



Friends of Meals on Wheels committee members Michele Bassi (right) and Anissa Novak (left) attend the Volunteer Center's 2023 Be the Difference Awards, where Anna Vaage (center) acknowledged Michele for her leadership supporting the 2023 Food from the Heart luncheon.

Register now for the annual luncheon event supporting our program

Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County depends on the generosity of our community to deliver 3,500 meals every week to the homes of local older adults and serve 200 meals per day at dining sites across the county.

Government funding of the program has not kept pace with current costs and demand; funding in 2023 is nearly identical to what it was in 2010. This leaves roughly one-quarter of our services in need of funds! That's where our community comes in, through the advocacy and contributions of people like you. A special group of supporters known as the "Friends of Meals on Wheels" embodies this spirit.

Founded in 2011, the Friends of Meals on Wheels committee has come together for the past 12 years to organize support for the nutritious meals and friendly human connection that Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County delivers. This year, Friends of Meals on Wheels committee members Michele Bassi and Anissa Novak organized more than a dozen of their friends to help plan the [11th Annual Food from the Heart luncheon](#). This celebration brings together generous supporters and local leaders to enjoy a Valentine-themed auction and luncheon event.

This popular gathering features romantic items for silent and live auctions, exciting raffle prizes, lunch catered by Chaminade Resort & Spa, the annual Sweetheart Award ceremony, the Community Champions Award ceremony, and updates about the Meals on Wheels program.

We are grateful for the generosity and leadership of the Friends of Meals on Wheels. Please join us in sharing their love and support for this vital community service. All proceeds from the luncheon benefit the older adults who Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County supports, to ensure no older adult in our community goes hungry.

[Reserve your tickets now](#) for this memorable occasion at Chaminade Resort & Spa on Friday, February 2, 2024, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. [Sponsorship opportunities](#) are available! We also welcome your love-inspired [auction item](#) donations. Contact Anna Vaage, Senior Development Analyst, at

News & Notes

This month's newsletter might look a little different. Community Bridges and Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County recently changed its donor and email database provider, so there might be some slight differences from last month's newsletter to this month's.

Rest assured, Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County's monthly newsletter will continue at its normal tempo and Community Bridges' will continue to receive donations without interruption during the transition.

Think you were left off the Meals on Wheels newsletter during the transition? Contact Anna Vaage at annav@cbridges.org.

In the Press

Click the headlines below to read local and national news about Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County and older adult services.

- [Community Bridges named Best Community Organization and Best Senior Services in the Pajaro Valley](#)
- [Why the Senior Poverty Rate Keeps Rising: Both senior and child poverty are high in America. We must defend both generations and their common fate](#)
- [Empowering 22,000 vulnerable residents: Help deliver essential services to older adults, children & families](#)

donations@cbridges.org or 831-688-8840 ext. 205, for more details.

BUY TICKETS TODAY



Here's your last call to Share the Love

There's still time to Share the Love!

Purchase a Subaru between now and January 2 and Subaru of America, Inc. and its retailers will donate a minimum of \$300 to charity, like Meals on Wheels America, for every new vehicle leased or sold.

Since 2008, [Subaru of America, Inc.](http://www.subaruofamerica.com) and its retailers have helped donate and deliver more than 4.3 million meals and friendly visits to seniors in need.

Thank you, Subaru, for demonstrating a commitment to supporting healthy meals and caring for neighbors!

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Nutrition Corner



Holiday food safety tips

Whether it is holiday cookies, perogies, roast goose, latke, or tamales, food is an important ingredient of holiday celebrations. Here are some tips to keep holiday cooking and feasting fun and healthy:

- Cook and wash thoroughly. Bacteria are often present in raw foods. Fully cook meats and poultry, and thoroughly wash raw vegetables and fruits.
- Wash your hands frequently, with warm water and soap for 20 seconds
- Sample safely. If you have a taste, be sure to wash the spoon before putting it back into the food. Also, make sure that taste doesn't include raw eggs or other ingredients that should be cooked before being eaten.
- Separate raw foods. Always keep raw foods and cooked foods separate, and use separate utensils when preparing them.
- Thaw in the fridge. Always thaw meat in the refrigerator, never on the countertop.
- Put away or toss? Foods that require refrigeration should never be left at room temperature for more than two hours. When in doubt, throw it out!

ESPAÑOL

Ya sea que se trate de galletas, perogies, ganso asado, latkes o tamales, los alimentos son un ingrediente importante de las celebraciones de fin de año.

- Cocine por completo y lave bien. Con frecuencia las bacterias están presentes en los alimentos crudos. Cocine bien todas las carnes y pollos, y lave bien las verduras y frutas crudas.
- Lávese las manos con frecuencia con agua tibia y jabón durante 20 segundos.
- Pruebe los alimentos de forma segura. Si le da a probar cerciórese de lavar la cuchara antes de colocarla de nuevo en los alimentos. Cerciórese también de no probar huevos crudos o cualquier otro ingrediente que debe ser cocido antes de consumirlo.

- Separe los alimentos crudos. Guarde siempre los alimentos crudos separados de los cocidos, y utilice utensilios diferentes para prepararlos.
- Descongele en la nevera. Descongele las carnes siempre en el refrigerador, nunca en la encimera (mesa de cocina).
- ¿Guardar y desechar? Los alimentos que requieren refrigeración nunca deben dejarse a temperatura ambiente por más de dos horas.

Thank you for your ongoing support. Your kindness is transforming our community.

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