

# Celebrating a Decade of Impact: Ray Cancino's 10-Year Anniversary as CEO of Community Bridges

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## Ray Cancino: A Decade of Visionary Leadership Transforming Community Bridges and Beyond

This year we mark a significant milestone in our organization's journey as we celebrate a decade under Ray Cancino's remarkable tenure as our CEO. Since Ray's arrival in 2014, his visionary leadership has propelled Community Bridges to new heights, allowing us to better serve and support the Santa Cruz County community while expanding services into Monterey County and San Benito County.

When Ray first stepped into the role, Community Bridges was already a cornerstone of support, with ten vital programs spanning across 20 sites, touching the lives of more than 20,000 individuals annually. Yet, despite our profound impact, we recognized a crucial need to enhance our organizational strategy, visibility and cohesion as an agency.

Ray wasted no time in implementing transformative changes. With a strategic focus on rebranding and unifying our identity, Ray spearheaded the launch of new logos, a revamped website, and a cohesive mission, vision, and values framework. This pivotal step positioned Community Bridges as a unified force, amplifying our reach and impact across the community.

Drawing from his expertise in supportive housing development and case management, Ray catalyzed the expansion of our services to meet the evolving needs of our community. Over the past decade, under Ray's stewardship, Community Bridges has strategically worked to invest in creating longstanding sustainability for the work that we do through asset acquisition in lieu of renting. In a strategic effort to meet that need, we acquired three new building sites for our programs. These include our headquarters, which houses three programs in downtown Watsonville, a building for Elderday, and a facilities site for Lift Line. This acquisition stands as a testament to our commitment to sustainable growth and service excellence, facilitated by the reduction in operating costs.

Moreover, Ray's financial acumen has been instrumental in securing vital resources to fuel our mission. Through strategic investments and prudent fiscal management, our agency's assets have soared by an astounding 600%. Grant funding and donations have surged (grant funding has increased by 695%, and donations have increased by more than 300%), enabling us to bolster our programs and services, despite challenges such as dwindling local government grants [City and County grants decreased by 50% during that time, going from 11% of our funding to 4.5% now] and growing community needs.

In tandem with our organizational and communal financial gains, Ray has prioritized the well-being of our dedicated staff. By initiating several wage increases, uplifting a maximum CEO wage based on our lowest paid worker and fostering a culture of support and appreciation, Ray has empowered our team to deliver their best work, day in and day out. Ray's work has always prioritized equity before it was commonplace in today's conversations by focusing on lowest paid workers, approaching negotiations with unions to focus higher percentage increases on the entry level positions and working collaboratively to hold this value and the reality of limited financial constraints.

Under Ray's leadership, our community engagement efforts have flourished. Our social media presence has skyrocketed, and local media and local government recognition has surged, amplifying our message of hope and resilience. With Ray at the helm, Community Bridges has become synonymous with positive change and compassionate service.



Ray met with Sen. Alex Padilla after the 2023 Pajaro Flood.



Ray outside of Community Bridges previous offices in Aptos. Community Bridges moved to downtown Watsonville in 2018 after purchasing and renovating the historic La Manzana building, creating a community haven for social services and updating a deteriorating iconic building.

Most importantly, Ray's tenure has been marked by a steadfast commitment and willingness to innovate and invest in service expansion. From the creation of our bilingual mental health counseling program to our eviction prevention legal assistance initiative, Ray has led the charge in launching new programs, ensuring that our community receives the support it needs, when it needs it most.

As we celebrate Ray Cancino's remarkable achievements over the past decade, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to him for his unwavering dedication and leadership. Together, we are not just serving individuals; we are transforming lives, building a stronger, more resilient community for generations to come.

Please join us in honoring Ray's extraordinary legacy and the profound impact he has had on Community Bridges history but also on the remarkable impacts his changes have had on the 20,000 local children, families, and seniors we serve each year. Here's to a decade of compassion, resilience, and positive change.



Ray's hands on leadership during the COVID-19 Pandemic and CZU Fires were critical in the community's time of need.

CELEBRATE RAY'S ANNIVERSARY: DONATE TODAY!



## Continuing Our Crucial Work in Pajaro

We're excited to announce that we have been selected as a nonprofit partner in the **County of Monterey's Pajaro Unmet Needs Disaster Assistance Program** – a unique and unprecedented opportunity made possible through the hard work of local government, invaluable community partners, and the State of California.

This program, backed by \$20 million in recovery funds secured by our state legislators, will provide essential assistance to individuals, households, and small businesses affected by the March 2023 levee breach.

As a trusted nonprofit partner, our Family Resource Collective will oversee the distribution of \$5.4 million in individual and household recovery assistance alongside our partners Catholic Charities Diocese of Monterey. We were selected as a nonprofit partner in charge of this distribution because of our experience as disaster case managers and proven record of assisting survivors from multiple local natural disasters, including the CZU wildfires, floods, and atmospheric rivers, as well as the California COVID-19 rental assistance program.

On March 27, an Application Center will open at Pajaro Park, offering individuals the opportunity to complete applications in person. It will be open the following days and times through April 27:

- Tuesdays & Wednesdays - 10am to 7pm
- Thursdays & Fridays - 2pm to 7pm
- Saturdays - 10am to 2pm
- Closed Mondays and Sundays

## IN THE NEWS

Key headlines from Community Bridges' family of programs and challenges impacting local children, parents, and families.

- [How Community Bridges' Family Resource Collective is partnering to break the cycle of evictions](#)
- [Celebrating CACFP Week and Leveraging CACFP for Farm to Early Care, Education](#)
- [Overhaul of faulty Monterey County levee is finally underway — but flood risks remain](#)
- [Top lawmakers agreed to add an extra \\$1 billion to WIC for fiscal year 2024](#)
- [Measure N: Watsonville Community Hospital's \\$116 million bond remains ahead](#)
- [Monterey County begins Pajaro disaster relief program](#)

For more information about the program, please visit [readymontereycounty.org/recover](https://readymontereycounty.org/recover) or [communitybridges.org/emergency](https://communitybridges.org/emergency).

Being selected for the program is an exciting and challenging opportunity to continue our ongoing work of improving the lives of Pajaro residents. Thank you once again for your unwavering support. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of Pajaro residents as they rebuild and thrive.

#### MORE INFORMATION

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### New Opportunity for Meals on Wheels

We are excited to share that we recently submitted a letter of intent to the Live Oak School District to purchase the Elena Baskin Live Oak Senior Center. The \$2.4 million purchase would ensure continued operations of essential older adult services at the 1777 Capitola Road location and other essential Community Bridges programs.

This purchase would be a win-win, resolving a long-standing issue over the future use of the Senior Center and allowing the continuation of senior services provided by Senior Network Services and Community Bridges as part of the Area Agency on Aging's local network of services.

The Senior Center has been home to Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County since the 1970s, providing a centralized location for vital services for older adults and allowing Meals on Wheels to provide daily meals for over 800 older adults. The majority of those we serve are homebound and live below the poverty line.

In addition to the proposed purchase agreement, we are offering the Live Oak School District an option to purchase a nearby property primed for affordable housing construction, supporting the school district's long-held goal of developing a teacher housing project.

As we wait for a response from the Live Oak School District, we continue operating on a month-to-month lease at the 1777 Capitola Road site. 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.



SIGN UP FOR MEALS ON WHEELS UPDATES

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## Celebrating Community Bridges Employees!

On March 1st, in celebration of Employee Appreciation Day, Community Bridges employees were honored with new raincoats, shirts, hats, and delicious sandwiches from TOGO's. This gesture was a token of gratitude for the hard work and dedication of our 200 employees who tirelessly serve 20,000 residents across 20 sites.

But the celebration doesn't stop there! You can join us in supporting the incredible work of our staff by mentioning Community Bridges at TOGO's stores in Capitola, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville until March 31st. When you use **promo code 627** at [togos.com](https://togos.com), you'll not only receive **10% off all orders** but also ensure a **10% donation to Community Bridges** at participating TOGO's stores.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all Community Bridges staff members for their unwavering commitment to delivering essential services, providing equitable access to resources, and advocating for health and dignity across every stage of life. Your dedication makes a difference every day. Let's continue to show our appreciation and support for the amazing team at Community Bridges!

LET'S DO LUNCH

## Bringing Big Smiles to Little Faces!

Our WIC program has been a place of pure joy over the past month, as adorable toddlers have been cuddling up with their new stuffed animal friends! These heartwarming moments are made possible by the incredible generosity of Kaiser Permanente, which donated dozens of stuffed animals to our WIC offices during Martin Luther King Week of Service.

Thanks to Kaiser's thoughtful donation, young children visiting our program have been greeted with wide smiles and left with not just nutritional support but also a cuddly new friend in hand. It's truly heartening to witness the impact of these simple gestures on the lives of our little ones.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Kaiser Permanente for their unwavering support and commitment to our community. Together, we are making a tangible difference and spreading happiness one stuffed animal at a time!





## Join us in Celebrating National CACFP Week!

This week, we're thrilled to shine a spotlight on the National Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and its incredible impact on providing nutritious meals to children and adults in daycare settings.

CACFP isn't just about serving meals; it's about nourishing futures and supporting the professionalism of childcare providers. By ensuring that our little ones receive the essential nutrients they need, CACFP plays a pivotal role in their growth and development.

During National CACFP Week, let's come together to celebrate and raise awareness about the benefits of this vital program. By spreading the word to parents, caregivers, and our community, we can highlight how CACFP contributes to quality childcare across the nation.

Want to learn more about CACFP and its initiatives? Visit our website at [communitybridges.org/cacfp](https://communitybridges.org/cacfp).

Let's make a difference in the lives of children and adults alike by championing nutritious meals and quality care. Join us in celebrating National CACFP Week and let's continue to nourish brighter futures together!

LEARN MORE

## Join Our Team at Community Bridges!

Are you ready to make a meaningful impact? At Community Bridges, we are dedicated to serving our community by offering a wide range of rewarding career opportunities. As the leading human services provider in the area, we're on a mission to empower individuals and families to reach their full potential.

With roles available in education, social work, culinary arts, community outreach and advocacy, transportation, and more, there's something for everyone at Community Bridges. Whether you're passionate about helping older adults enjoy their golden years, providing stability to families in need, or mentoring local youth, we have a position that aligns with your interests and values.

Each year, we engage with over 20,000 residents, providing vital services to ensure the well-being of our community. Now, we're looking for dedicated individuals to join our team and continue this important work.

If you're ready to make a difference, we encourage you to apply today! You can submit your application online or by contacting our Human Resources department via email at [recruitments@cbridges.org](mailto:recruitments@cbridges.org). We're also available in person at 519



Main Street, Watsonville CA 95076, or over the phone at 831-688-8840 ext. 200.

Join us at Community Bridges and be a part of something truly meaningful. Your career awaits!

FIND YOUR CAREER



Are you 40 years or older? Age Well Santa Cruz County wants to hear from you



### Aging with Grace in Santa Cruz County

The Santa Cruz Human Services Department, in partnership with the Seniors Council and local cities, is developing a Master Plan for Aging, which will be a blueprint for implementing strategies and partnerships that promote healthy aging for all. This effort is called Age Well Santa Cruz County.

Age Well Santa Cruz County is developing a Master Plan for Aging, a 10-year blueprint to ensure people of all ages and abilities in Santa Cruz County are afforded equitable opportunities to thrive as they age, how and where they choose. To learn more about Age Well Santa Cruz County visit: [AgeWellSantaCruzCounty.org](https://AgeWellSantaCruzCounty.org).

The Age Well Santa Cruz County survey is collecting community feedback focused on aging locally. If you are a resident of Santa Cruz County and 40 years or older we encourage you to take the survey now: [tinyurl.com/AgeWellSantaCruz](https://tinyurl.com/AgeWellSantaCruz)

TAKE THE SURVEY

### Energy Assistance Programs to Help You Save Money!

We have important news to share about Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) resources that can help you save energy and money. PG&E offers financial assistance programs and solutions to help you manage your utility expenses. You may qualify for several programs at once and you can begin applying or enrolling now.

Learn more or apply for any of these programs by visiting [pge.com](https://pge.com).

**Programs that can help with past due bills:**  
**Relief for Energy Assistance through Community Help (REACH):**  
Get an energy credit up to help with past due bills.

**Programs that can help reduce future energy bills:**





**Family Electric Rate Assistance (FERA) Program:** Households of 3 or more, can save 18% on their monthly electric bill.

**Energy Saving Assistance (ESA) Program:** You may qualify for no-cost energy efficient home upgrades. Improving the energy-efficiency of your home can help reduce energy bills.

**Budget Billing:** Limit stress and keep your energy bills manageable: Enroll in Budget Billing to keep your monthly payments predictable throughout the year.

**Medical Baseline Program:** Customer with qualifying medical conditions, can get an ongoing monthly energy discount or extra notifications in advance of a Public Safety Power Shutoff

[LEARN MORE](#)

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## Ray's Corner

### Reflecting on a Decade of Gratitude and Collaboration at Community Bridges

As I reflect on the incredible journey of the past decade, I am overwhelmed with a profound sense of gratitude and appreciation. I am deeply honored to have had the privilege of serving alongside such an extraordinary community of donors, supporters, partners, staff, and board members.

When I embarked on this journey with Community Bridges in 2014, I was embraced by the spirit of collaboration and compassion that defines our organization. From the outset, it was clear that Community Bridges was more than just a service provider—it was a quintessential lifeline for children, parents, and families across the Central Coast.

I am deeply grateful to our dedicated donors, whose generosity and unwavering support have been the cornerstone of our organization. Your contributions have enabled us to expand our reach and enhance our services, making a profound difference in the lives of thousands.

***Your belief in our mission fuels our determination and inspires us to strive for excellence every day.***

To our passionate supporters, partners, and stakeholders, your collaborative spirit and shared vision have been instrumental in driving our success. Together, we have worked tirelessly to ensure that Community Bridges remains a force for good in our communities. Your commitment to building a stronger, more inclusive Central Coast is truly inspiring.

I want to take a heartfelt moment to acknowledge that this work is not possible without our dedicated staff, board members, volunteers, and former employees, who are the heart and soul of Community Bridges. Your

unwavering dedication and tireless efforts have been the driving force behind our achievements. Whether on the front lines of service delivery or behind the scenes, your hard work and commitment to our mission have been nothing short of extraordinary.

As we celebrate this milestone, it is important to acknowledge the rich history of Community Bridges and the incredible legacy that has been built over the past four decades. The foundation laid by those who came before me has provided the springboard for our continued growth and success, and I am humbled to build upon their remarkable contributions.

Looking ahead, I am excited that Community Bridges is reaffirming its commitment to our roots as a regional social service powerhouse. We are expanding our reach to serve all three counties—Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito—with renewed vigor and determination. Through initiatives like Enhanced Care Management, we are poised to deliver even better outcomes for our participants and make an even greater impact in the years to come.

As we embark on the next chapter of our journey, let us take a moment to reflect on the incredible strides we have made together and the countless lives we have touched along the way. Our collective efforts have built a legacy of compassion, resilience, and community that will endure for generations to come.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for your unwavering support, boundless generosity, and steadfast commitment to our shared mission. It is an honor and a privilege to have the opportunity to continue to serve as CEO of Community Bridges, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to work alongside each and every one of you.

HELP CONTINUE OUR MISSION



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



Local advocacy makes a difference. Community Bridge can't sustain its services without strong backing from local elected officials. Contact your representatives, ask



Community Bridges' work would not be possible without our dedicated volunteers. From helping with food distributions to donating your time in our offices, we have a

toward Community Bridges  
and the FRC!

questions, and advocate for  
our programs.

plethora of volunteer  
opportunities.

BUY COMMUNITY  
BRIDGES MERCH

CONTACT YOUR  
SUPERVISOR

HELP YOUR  
COMMUNITY



**Our Contact Information**

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