



Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County's small army of volunteers helps serve more than 1,300 older adults throughout Santa Cruz County.

Recognizing the Generosity of Our Volunteers

As April draws to a close, we reflect on the incredible spirit of generosity and service that defines National Volunteer Month. It's a time to recognize the invaluable contributions of those who selflessly give their time and energy to support others, embodying the true essence of community.

Recently, we had the privilege of hosting a Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast on April 25th, a heartfelt gathering where we celebrated the dedication of our remarkable roster of 75 volunteers. These individuals are the heart and soul of Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County, shining examples of compassion and commitment.

Our volunteers go above and beyond, not only delivering nourishing meals to participants' homes and assisting at our dining sites but also serving as vital connections in our community. In a county where one in every five older adults lives alone, their presence is a beacon of companionship, providing essential wellness checks and combating the loneliness that can lead to health decline.

Their impact extends far beyond companionship; it's also financial. Through their efforts, our program saves approximately \$200,000 annually, funds that are redirected to ensure that no older adult in our county goes hungry or feels forgotten. Their dedication is truly priceless, and without them, our ability to meet the growing needs of our aging population would be significantly challenged.

To each and every volunteer, we extend our deepest gratitude. Your kindness, caring, and service are the cornerstones of our mission. The Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast was a small token of our appreciation, but our gratitude knows no bounds.

If you or someone you know is inspired to join our family of volunteers, we invite you to visit CommunityBridges.org/volunteer/ and learn more about how you can make a difference. Together, we can continue to ensure that every older adult receives the care, companionship, and support they deserve. Thank you for being the heart of our community.

HELP LOCAL SENIORS THRIVE

Leadership Changes for Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County



Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County is searching for a new program director.

We are beginning an exciting new chapter for Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County. We are embarking on a comprehensive nationwide search for a thoughtful, community-first, growth-minded director who can lead our program into the future. This search is crucial to ensuring that we find the right person who shares our values and vision for serving the older adults in our community and meeting their growing needs. If you know anyone who would be a good fit as our new director, please have them apply on our [careers page](#).

In the interim, I am pleased to announce that Dana Wagner is stepping into the role of interim director for Meals on Wheels for

News & Notes

The last few newsletters might have looked a little different than previous ones. Community Bridges and Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County recently changed our donor and email database provider, so there might be some slight differences from newsletters.

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.

Santa Cruz County. Dana is the Program Director for Community Bridges' Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. She brings with her a wealth of experience, integrity, and a deep commitment to addressing community needs in thoughtful ways. I have full confidence that Dana is the perfect fit to keep Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County running efficiently and steadily through this transition period.

I also want to extend my gratitude to our Central Coast partners from Meals on Wheels of the Monterey Peninsula for their support during this time. Mark Hansen, their operations director, will be providing additional support to our program, ensuring that we continue to serve our community without interruption.

As we navigate this transition period together, I ask for your continued support and dedication to our mission. Together, we will ensure that Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County can continue to serve older adults in our community. Thank you for your ongoing support and for being the heart of our program.

—Raymon Cancino, CEO, Community Bridges

- [A Proclamation on Older Americans Month, 2024](#)
- [Unlock the power of giving back this volunteer month with Community Bridges](#)
- [1 in 5 older adults don't have someone they can depend on in time of need. It's driving up ER visits and food insecurity](#)

COME WORK WITH MEALS ON WHEELS

Plant-Based Eating



Although the popularity of eating “plant-based” has grown, this term currently lacks a formal definition in the United States. In the past, plant-based was often used to describe a vegetarian or vegan diet. More recently, plant-based has been used to describe an eating style that includes more foods that come from plants, like fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts and seeds. It’s also a term that may be used in the marketing of a food, like dairy alternatives and meat substitutes.

Are there benefits to eating more plant-based foods? People may choose to consume more plant-based foods for a variety of reasons, including:

- Health benefits associated with eating more fruits and vegetables.
- Concerns for the environment.
- A potential for lower grocery bills and food costs.

Beneficial nutrients to look for in plant-based products include:

- Calcium
- Vitamin D
- Vitamin B12
- Dietary Fiber
- Protein

Meanwhile, aim for low amounts of:

- Saturated fat
- Sodium
- Added sugars

For a healthy eating style that includes more plant-based foods, focus on ways to add more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. For example:

- Designate a certain night or nights for meatless meals.
- Try substituting some or all of the meat in recipes with plant-based sources of protein, such as beans, tofu, tempeh or unsalted nuts and seeds.
- Include more vegetables and fruit without added sugars or salt in meals and snacks.

Information from Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: eatright.org

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

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