



Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County was facing the possible implementation of a waitlist if the Governor's Office went through with the proposed state budget cuts.

State Budget Victory for Older Adults

When California Gov. Gavin Newsom and legislative leaders recently reached a deal on the state budget, we were thrilled to see it protects funding to provide nutritious meals to older adults.

This is a victory for older adults in need and communities across the state. In a budget proposal in May, Newsom had planned a \$111.6 million cut to the modernization of the Older Californians Act. The proposal would have led thousands of older adults toward hunger and had a lasting impact across the state, as it represented a 60% reduction in meals and nutrition services, according to the California Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

The proposed cut would have led to increased waitlists for Meals on Wheels services, hunger, emergency visits, adult protective service calls, unnecessary early institutionalization, preventable malnutrition deaths, and a rise in homelessness among older adults — the fastest-growing homeless population. Meals on Wheels is a proven solution to these issues, with a history of keeping older adults healthy, independent, connected, and out of costly institutional care — saving public funds.

We are thankful for all of the Meals on Wheels advocates who contacted their state representatives about how crucial funding for meals is, and we are grateful for our representatives in the state legislature and Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas, who pushed back against the proposed cut. The restored funding in the budget deal will help us keep up with current demand for meals and not have to implement a waitlist.

The need to expand, not disrupt and underfund, older adult nutrition programs is expected to continue growing rapidly, as Americans aged 65 and older are one of the fastest-growing populations across the nation. Californians aged 85 and older, the group most prone to malnutrition, are projected to grow by about 420,000, or 54%, from 2020 to 2030, according to state Department of Finance projections.

Census data shows the age 65-84 population has grown faster in Santa Cruz County than anywhere else in California since 2010. More funding is needed to ensure we can continue to provide services that meet the growing needs of this population. Please consider [supporting Meals on Wheels today](#) to ensure we continue to provide this vital service without a waitlist.

SUPPORT MEALS ON WHEELS

Volunteer Drivers Needed in San Lorenzo Valley



Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County delivers meals to all seniors in the county, no matter how remote they might be.

Our dedicated volunteers are crucial to the success of Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County, and we are currently looking for more volunteer drivers to help deliver meals in the San Lorenzo Valley.

In addition to delivering nutritious meals to the homes of older adults in the community, our volunteer drivers serve an important role in ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of our program participants. Volunteers provide wellness checks and bring friendly connections to our community's older adults. One of every five older adults in Santa Cruz County lives alone — that's more than 14,500 of our neighbors — and the loneliness they face puts them at an increased risk of health decline.

When Meals on Wheels volunteers arrive at the door of a meal program participant's home, they may be the only friendly face

News & Notes

We're excited to share a special opportunity for you to show your love for Meals on Wheels and support our cause at the same time!

We now have a fantastic selection of merchandise featuring our logo and designs that celebrate our mission of providing nutrition and connection to local seniors.

From cozy hoodies and stylish T-shirts to stickers, hats, coffee mugs, and more, there's something for everyone at the [Community Bridges TeePublic store](#).

What's even better? A portion of each sale directly supports Community Bridges, helping us continue our vital work in Santa Cruz County.

Your purchase not only spreads awareness but also contributes to ensuring seniors in our community receive the meals and support they need.

Thank you for your ongoing support!

the participant sees for the week. We train volunteers to conduct wellness checks as they deliver meals, ensuring older adults living in isolation receive the care they need. Volunteers can also help make referrals for any other services they identify as being needed or useful.

If you are interested in contributing to the health and happiness of our community's older adults, we encourage you to [sign up today to become a volunteer](#) with Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County. We offer flexible driving schedules that meet your needs and empower you to provide support when you can.

Volunteers are the reason we are able to continue serving older adults in need of meals, without a waitlist. By generously donating their time, our volunteers embody community spirit and save the program approximately \$200,000 annually that is able to go toward the meals we provide.

Your time and support can help older adults stay independent with dignity in their homes, providing the care and compassion we would all wish for our loved ones and ourselves as we age. Please consider [signing up today](#).

—Raymon Cancino, CEO, Community Bridges

[SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER](#)

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.

- [Live Oak School District to add housing measure to November ballot](#)
- [New mural, art exhibit sprout in Watsonville](#)
- [Low-income seniors get housing help, but 'there is a need for even greater funds'](#)

All about sweet potatoes



Sweet potatoes are rich in Vitamin A, in the form of beta-carotene, vitamin B6, vitamin C, potassium, and fiber. Did you know?

- Sweet potatoes may help maintain a healthy blood pressure and protect against cancer.
- The high fiber content of sweet potatoes helps prevent constipation.
- One medium, baked sweet potato with skin contains just 103 calories.
- The fastest way to prepare a sweet potato is in the microwave.

—Caren Dix, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist

Recipe: Oven Baked Sweet Potato Fries

(yields 4 side servings)

Ingredients:

- 2 pounds sweet potatoes (about 2 medium-large or 3 medium)
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Optional spices: freshly ground black pepper, cayenne pepper and/or garlic powder

Instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 425.
- Peel the sweet potatoes and cut them into fry-shaped pieces about 1/4-inch wide and 1/4-inch thick. Try to cut them into similarly sized pieces so the fries will bake evenly.
- Sprinkle the sweet potato fries with the cornstarch and salt. Drizzle the olive oil over the fries.
- Arrange your fries in a single layer and don't overcrowd; otherwise they will never crisp up. Bake for 20 minutes, then flip the fries so they can cook on all sides.
- Bake for 10 to 18 more minutes, or until the fries are crispy. You'll know they're almost done when the surface of the fries change from shiny orange to a more matte, puffed up texture.
- If desired, toss the baked fries with seasonings, to taste. Serve warm!

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

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