



Program Coordinator Patricia Zamora J. (left) and Advocate Ana Albor have helped hundreds of Pajaro families access economic assistance and other aid in the aftermath of the March 2023 flood.

Leading the Charge in Long-Term Pajaro Flood Recovery and Resilience

As we continue to support families impacted by the devastating floods in Pajaro in March 2023, Community Bridges remains a key local agency in both immediate relief and long-term recovery. Our **Pajaro Valley Storm Recovery Plan**, initiated just days after the March 11th flood, has provided crucial support to the Pajaro community, and our efforts remain strong more than a year later.

Through the incredible generosity of donors and the collaborative efforts of our nonprofit and foundation partners like you, we distributed **over \$1.7 million in economic assistance** between March and November 2023. More than 1,000 individuals and families received direct support through our three-phase assistance program.

In a continued commitment to recovery, Community Bridges was honored to be selected as a nonprofit partner in the **County of Monterey's Pajaro Unmet Needs Disaster Assistance Program**. Backed by \$20 million in recovery funds secured by our state legislators, this program is a vital resource for individuals, households, and small businesses still grappling with the effects of the levee breach.

OUR ROLE

As the primary overseer of \$5.4 million in individual and household recovery assistance, alongside our partners at Catholic Charities Diocese of Monterey, Community Bridges is leading efforts to ensure families receive the help they need. **Phase 1** of the program, which provided up to \$600 in economic assistance for food spoilage due to evacuation, was completed in April 2024. We successfully distributed over **\$450,000 in financial aid** to 688 qualifying applicants, helping over 25% of Pajaro households based on the most recent census.

Now in **Phase 2**, we are addressing more complex recovery needs, such as home repairs, vehicle replacements, housing assistance, and personal property damage. With no maximum award for vehicle or home repair categories, we aim to provide flexible, tailored support to meet the diverse needs of the community.

Since late April, our disaster case managers have helped 20 families receive over \$60,000 in aid, and we are actively working with 115 more families. As we continue this work, 35 households are pending eligibility documentation, and 80 more are on our waiting list, eager to receive assistance. **Our dedicated case workers are diligently ensuring that all qualifying families receive the assistance they deserve, working tirelessly to address each family's unique needs and expedite their support.**



Community Bridges' Family Resource Collective Advocates, like Ana Albor, are not only helping Pajaro families navigate the long road to recovery but are also actively engaging in community outreach and emergency preparedness events.

BEYOND UNMET NEEDS

At Community Bridges, our mission extends far beyond economic recovery. We are deeply committed to helping every family in Pajaro regain stability and rebuild their lives. Financial assistance is just one part of our larger effort to improve outcomes and strengthen the Pajaro community.

In 2023, we took a significant step towards long-term support by opening the [Pajaro Long-Term Recovery Center](#) in the heart of the community. This dedicated space provides ongoing assistance and resources, and through our partnerships, we have also offered tenants crucial eviction protection services via our [Eviction Defense Collaborative](#).

Our work doesn't stop at disaster relief. We are actively pursuing initiatives to ensure lasting support for Pajaro families. These efforts include connecting residents with essential services such as housing, healthcare, food security, and child and family resources. We're also focused on building long-term resiliency, including the development of a **Pajaro Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)** to better equip the community for future disasters. For us, rebuilding isn't just about recovery—it's about fostering resilience, promoting growth, and ensuring the Pajaro community thrives once again.

In the past two years, we've remained engaged with local families, sharing progress at community meetings to maintain transparency and build trust. Our commitment also includes hosting **emergency preparedness events and training sessions** to provide residents with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate future challenges. We will hold our **fall and winter emergency preparedness events at Our Lady of the Assumption Church** (100 Salinas Road, Pajaro) in October and November. Our dates and time are still to be determined.

Together, with the support of our community and the generosity of our donors, we will continue to stand by Pajaro, making a lasting impact on those most affected by disaster.



IN THE NEWS

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

- [Rising demand, shrinking resources: The challenges facing Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County](#)
- [WIC celebrates 50 years of supporting healthy families](#)
- [Growing Santa Cruz County homeless senior](#)

Meals on Wheels: Two-Year Lease Secured, Long-Term Stability Uncertain

Community Bridges is pleased to announce that we have reached a short-term lease agreement with the Live Oak School District (LOSD), allowing Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County to continue operating out of the Live Oak Senior Center for the next 24 months. While this extension ensures that we can continue serving over 1,700 seniors who rely on us daily, it is not the long-term solution needed to provide stability for our vital program.

Under the new agreement, Community Bridges will pay \$4,480 per month in rent and will be responsible for thousands of dollars in essential repairs to the facility, including replacing the HVAC system, repairing the roof, and repaving the parking lot—all long-standing responsibilities of the school district. These repairs must be completed by November 1, with a final deadline of March 31, 2025. Failure to meet this deadline could result in the district terminating the lease with 90 days' notice.

We have worked diligently with LOSD to secure a long-term solution, offering to purchase the property above market value or commit to a long-term lease with substantial upfront payments. Unfortunately, despite our efforts, an agreement has not been reached. We remain hopeful that the school district will reconsider our proposals for the future of this important facility and to support the value that our work does to their multigenerational families.

As we move forward with this temporary lease, our commitment to ensuring the long-term well-being of local seniors remains unwavering. Meals on Wheels will continue to provide nourishment, dignity, and hope to those who depend on us, even as we work towards a permanent solution that guarantees stability for years to come.

Rest assured; we will continue to keep you informed on how you can help Meals on Wheels find a permanent home. In the meantime, you can make a meaningful impact today by volunteering to help deliver meals or donating to the program.

HELP MEALS ON WHEELS TODAY

Join Us for a Night Under the Redwoods

We're thrilled to announce that tickets are now available for the **39th Annual Mountain Affair!** Join us on **Friday, October 25, from 5-9pm at the Highlands Park Senior & Community Center in Ben Lomond** for an unforgettable evening benefiting **Mountain Community Resources**. This cherished event brings together community leaders, local businesses, and neighbors to support the vital services that make our valley strong.

[population struggles for resources](#)

- [Santa Cruz City Council bolsters rental increase protections](#)

COMMUNITY NOTES

Here's a heads up about opportunities to get involved in local initiatives throughout Santa Cruz County and North Monterey County.

- [The County of Santa Cruz is starting a Youth Advisory Task Force](#)
- [Age Well Santa Cruz County initiative preliminary findings available](#)
- [Santa Cruz County residents: Sign up for Emergency Alerts Today](#)
- [Monterey County residents: Sign up for Emergency Alerts Today](#)



Every dollar raised goes directly toward providing essential services to more than 1,000 valley residents, helping them meet basic needs, prepare for emergencies, recover from disasters, and build a brighter future.

Get Involved!

- **Sponsorship Opportunities:** Showcase your brand and make a meaningful impact. [Check out our sponsorship packet for details.](#)
- **Donate an Auction Item:** Contribute your products or services to our silent auction and support the community you love.
- **Volunteer:** Lend a hand and be part of the team that makes this event a success. Contact us about volunteer opportunities and help make a difference!

Don't miss this chance to celebrate and strengthen our valley community. Purchase your tickets today and be part of something special!

For more information, sponsorship inquiries, or auction donations, please contact us at donations@cbridges.org or call 831-688-8840 ext. 205.



PURCHASE TICKETS TODAY



Community Bridges Awarded \$3 Million Grant from CALFIRE

We're thrilled to announce that Community Bridges has been awarded a \$3 million grant from CALFIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Grants program! This funding will allow us to transform the outdoor spaces at our Early Education Division childcare centers into beautiful, nature-based learning environments.

Through the "Blacktop to Bloom" project, we'll replace over 3,500 square feet of concrete with trees, gardens, and eco-friendly play areas across our centers in Watsonville, Freedom, Santa Cruz, and the San Lorenzo Valley. These enhancements will create engaging outdoor classrooms that encourage children to explore and learn in a natural setting, while also providing much-needed shade and combating the effects of climate change.

We're excited about the positive impact this project will have on the children, families, and communities we serve, and we extend our gratitude to CALFIRE and our many local partners for their support in making this vision a reality.

LEARN MORE

Cheers to 50 Years of WIC: Highlights from Our 17th Annual Breastfeeding Fair

Thank you to everyone who attended our 17th Annual Breastfeeding Health Fair and Walk to help us celebrate WIC’s 50th birthday!

Your presence made the day truly special, and we are incredibly grateful for the support of our community. A special thanks to Santa Cruz County Supervisor Felipe Hernandez and all of our amazing partners who helped make the event unforgettable.

As part of National Breastfeeding Awareness Month, this celebration brought families together at the Watsonville City Plaza to enjoy a day filled with fun activities, healthy snacks, raffles, community resources, and more. WIC, a program run by Community Bridges, provides vital support to women, infants, and children, ensuring access to breastfeeding resources and healthy nutrition for families in need.

We’re proud to continue raising awareness about the benefits of breastfeeding and addressing barriers that many face. Thank you for standing with us to support the health and well-being of our community!



READ MORE ABOUT WIC'S IMPACT



Join Our Team at Community Bridges!

Are you ready to make a meaningful impact? 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. Here are a few of our current opportunities:

- [Registered Nurse – Elderday Adult Day Health Care](#)

- [Program Manager – La Manzana Community Resources/Aztecas Program](#)
- [Lead Care Manager – La Manzana Community Resources](#)
- [Program Coordinator – Nueva Vista Community Resources](#)
- [Senior Program Manager – Nueva Vista Community Resources](#)
- [Project Manager – Early Education Division](#)

If you're ready to make a difference, we encourage you to apply today! You can submit your application online [HERE](#) or by contacting our Human Resources department via email at 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. Your career awaits!

START YOUR CAREER

Won't You Be Our Neighbor? Commercial Space Available in Downtown Watsonville

Are you an innovative entrepreneur or a community-focused business ready to grow? Community Bridges has an incredible opportunity for you! We're offering approximately **1,000 sq. ft. of prime commercial space** at **501 Main Street**, right in the heart of downtown Watsonville.

Ideal for a coffee shop, eatery, co-working space, or any creative venture that adds value to our vibrant community. This location is next to our headquarters, home to essential services like La Manzana Community Resources, Elderday, WIC, and more.

Why Watsonville? The city is on the rise, with **4,000+ new housing units** planned and a revitalized Main Street designed for walkability. Be part of this exciting transformation!

This space offers **affordable rent** and the chance to make a lasting impact in Watsonville. We're seeking businesses that align with our mission to strengthen the community.

- Interested? **Contact us today!** Call: 831.688.8840 x206
- Email: info@cbridges.org



CONTACT US TODAY



Ray's Corner

The Hidden Costs of Inflation

This Hunger Action Month, I want to draw attention to the profound impact rising inflation is having on all of us. Since the pandemic, grocery prices have surged by 25%, placing even greater pressure on families already struggling to get by. Today, more than one in four of our neighbors are forced to skip meals or sacrifice essentials like rent, utilities, clothing, and childcare just to afford food.

These choices ripple through entire households—especially multigenerational ones. Children may start school hungry, grandparents may miss critical care, and the stress of just getting by can strain relationships.

At Community Bridges, we understand the weight of these challenges. That's why our work is more important than ever. Over the past year, our 10 programs have provided lifelines to over 20,000 local children, families, and seniors by offering:

- **24,000 days** of free or low-cost eldercare and childcare
- **90,000 free bags** of healthy food
- **2,300 hours** of no-cost youth activities
- **7,000 hours** of free crisis assistance and counseling
- Access to more than **\$500,000 in state and federal tax credits**
- **200,000 meals** delivered to local seniors

We also recognize that these economic pressures extend beyond the most vulnerable. Middle-income families, local businesses, and community service providers are all feeling the strain. Just as many are having to rethink how and where to spend their hard-earned dollars, we too are faced with tough decisions about how to best invest in our community and sustain our vital services while recognizing the weight that every decision has real consequences to families we serve.

The program facing perhaps the toughest challenge right now is **Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County**. Rising operational costs, uncertainty about our headquarters, and stagnant and diminishing government funding has combined to create a six-figure deficit that threatens our ability to serve seniors without taking drastic measures. For the first time in nearly 50 years, we may need to implement a waitlist, joining two-thirds of Meals on Wheels programs across the state that already have one.

While food inflation has slowed, it hasn't reversed the steep price hikes we have seen over the past four years. Similarly, gas prices remain 35.9% higher than in early 2020, making it more expensive to deliver meals to the growing number of seniors who depend on us. At the same time, the demand for our services is growing faster than our current funding can sustain. We served 1,737 clients in the most recent fiscal year, 429 more than the previous year.

To address these challenges, we are taking the following steps:

- **Changes in Enrollment:** We are working with hospital discharge planners to refer individuals to other programs before they are eligible for Meals on Wheels.

- **Assessing Acuity:** We are now conducting thorough assessments to ensure we serve those most in need—those unable to drive, cook, or access other support.
- **Increasing Suggested Donations:** We’ve raised the suggested donation to \$3.50 per meal, though we continue to provide meals regardless of ability to pay. The new suggested donation rate still falls short of covering the full cost of the meal.

While these changes help, they are not enough to meet growing demand. We are working toward a long-term solution for our headquarters and exploring additional ways to keep serving our senior community.

We know that times are tough for many, and financial donations may not be possible for everyone right now. However, a donation of time can make an enormous impact—and during Hunger Action Month, we’re asking for your help.

- **Deliver Meals to Seniors:** Whether you have a few hours or a full day, we have a route that suits your schedule. Your friendly visits to vulnerable and disabled seniors across Santa Cruz County provide much-needed interaction and nutritious meals, supporting their independence and dignity.
- **Assist With Meals:** Volunteer at one of our senior dining sites in Ben Lomond, Santa Cruz, or Watsonville—whether in the kitchen or serving meals.
- **Help Operations Run Smoothly:** Support our logistics team at headquarters, ensuring that meal deliveries go smoothly for local seniors. By assisting with various logistical tasks, you’ll play a key role in providing nutritious meals and companionship to those who need them.

If you can’t give financially, giving your time is a very real and powerful way to make a difference. Sign up to volunteer and help us continue serving our senior community.

With gratitude,

*Ray Cancino,
Community Bridges CEO*

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 toward Community Bridges and the FRC!

BUY COMMUNITY
BRIDGES MERCH

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

CONTACT YOUR
SUPERVISOR

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 plethora of volunteer opportunities.

HELP YOUR
COMMUNITY



Our Contact Information

{{Organization Name}}

{{Organization Address}}

{{Organization Phone}}

{{Organization Website}}

{{Unsubscribe}}