



Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County delivers more than 150,000 meals annually to over 1,700 seniors, offering a lifeline of independence, health, and dignity. But now, due to rising costs and recommended budget cuts, we face a critical funding shortfall that could turn away 1,035 seniors and cut 125,000 meals over the next three years.

Tell Our Supervisors to Help Us Protect Santa Cruz County's Seniors

Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County is more than a meal delivery program—it's a lifeline. We proudly serve over 1,700 local seniors each year, delivering more than 150,000 meals directly to their homes and offering nutritious meals at dining sites across the county. Our services provide independence, health, and dignity, empowering seniors—the fastest growing population in our community—to live safely in their own homes.

But now, for the first time in nearly 50 years, we face a crisis.

Due to recommended budget cuts from the County of Santa Cruz through its CORE funding program, rising costs, and increased demand, Meals on Wheels faces a six-figure funding shortfall. **This deficit will force us to cut back services and turn away 1,035 seniors from the program over the next three years, resulting in the loss of more than 125,000 meals over that time.**

We need your voice. By joining us in advocating to the County Board of Supervisors, you can help keep your local Meals on Wheels program serving every senior who depends on us.

How You Can Help

Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County has served nearly 10 million meals to more than 75,000 seniors since 1976. We're one of the few Meals on Wheels programs statewide without a waitlist and provide meals free of charge, ensuring our reach to those most in need. But without adequate funding from the County, we'll be forced to reduce services starting in July 2025.

Here's how you can support our seniors:

- **Add Your Name to Our Advocacy Letter:** Click [here to sign](#) and show the Board that our community stands behind our seniors.
- **Contact the County Board of Supervisors Directly:** Call (831) 454-2200 or email BoardOfSupervisors@santacruzcountycalifornia.gov to let them know why funding for Meals on Wheels matters to you.
- **Speak to the Board of Supervisors on November 19:** The Board will decide whether or not to keep Meals on Wheels funding intact at their Tuesday morning meeting on November 19. The meeting starts at 9am in the County Government building at 701 Ocean Street, Room 500, Santa Cruz.

Why Meals on Wheels Matters

Our program is vital to local seniors, many of whom live in poverty, face nutritional risks, or have disabilities. No other organization provides the door-to-door services Meals on Wheels does while also working with the population that we do. Many of our seniors live in poverty (78%), face nutritional risks (67%), have disabilities (66%), or live alone (54%). They rely on us for food, companionship, and safety.

And the impact of our program is undeniable:

- **92%** of participants say Meals on Wheels helps them live independently.
- **87%** feel safer at home.
- **79%** report eating healthier foods.

As the senior population in Santa Cruz County grows faster than anywhere else in California, demand for our services will only increase. At the same time, food costs have risen by over 20% in the past three years, stretching our resources to the limit.

Take Action Today—Our Seniors Are Counting on Us

Food is a fundamental human need, and we can't leave any senior behind. Join us in urging the Board of Supervisors to approve our funding request at the November 19 meeting. Your voice will make a powerful difference for our seniors.

[Click here to sign the advocacy letter](#)

Thank you for helping us protect the seniors of Santa Cruz County. Together, we can ensure every senior has the food, care, and companionship they need to thrive.



Save the Date: Support Meals on Wheels at Food from the Heart!

Celebrate Valentine's Day with purpose on **Friday, February 14, 2025**, at our **Food from the Heart Luncheon** benefiting Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County. Join us from **11:00 AM to 1:00 PM** at the scenic Chaminade Resort & Spa in Santa Cruz for an afternoon of delicious food, a live auction, and raffle prizes—all to support our mission of preventing hunger and isolation among local seniors.

Sponsorship Opportunities

By sponsoring Food from the Heart, your brand will gain meaningful exposure while making a difference for seniors in our community. Each sponsorship level includes unique benefits, from tickets and premium seating to recognition across event promotions and materials.

Champagne Sponsor – \$5,000

- **One premium table** for 8 with preferred placement.
- **Logo prominently featured** on all event marketing materials.
- **Full-page ad** in the event program (due by 1/31/25).
- **Verbal recognition on stage** and on-screen at the event.

Chocolate Sponsor – \$2,500

- **Four premium tickets** with preferred seating.
- **Logo featured** in all marketing materials.
- **Half-page ad** in the event program (due by 1/31/25).
- **Recognition** on stage and on-screen.

Red Rose Sponsor – \$1,000

- **Two tickets** with preferred seating.
- **Logo in the event program** (due by 1/31/25).
- **On-screen acknowledgment** at the event.

Auction/In-Kind/Media Sponsor

- Donate an auction item or in-kind advertising support.
- **One event ticket for every \$240** value of your donation.

IN THE NEWS

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

- [Preschool program expands at Highlands Park Center in Ben Lomond](#)
- [Phalanx of Santa Cruz County leaders vows to stand with immigrant community](#)
- [Tia Verches earns 2024 Green Heart Award for her dedication](#)
- [Community Bridges partnering with VSP Vision for free eye exams](#)
- [Giving Back In Scotts Valley: Local Causes To Support This Season](#)

COMMUNITY NOTES

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

- [Santa Cruz County Residents: sign up for emergency alerts](#)
- [Join a Board or Commission in the City of Watsonville](#)
- [Aging in Santa Cruz County: Preliminary results of County-wide survey available](#)
- [Pajaro Valley Health Care District seeks Bond Measure Oversight](#)

- Unique brand presence through auction items or media partnerships.

All sponsors receive:

- **Press and media mentions** (deadline: 1/31/25).
- **Inclusion in event email promotions** and **Meals on Wheels Facebook event page**.
- **On-stage and on-screen recognition**, associating your brand with a cherished cause.

Secure your sponsorship early to ensure your brand's presence at this impactful event! For sponsorship inquiries, please contact **Anna Vaage** at **831-688-8840 x205** or annav@cbridges.org.

For event details, visit CommunityBridges.org/Events. Mark your calendar and partner with us to make sure no senior in our community goes hungry.

Expanded Access to Universal Pre-Kindergarten at Highlands Park Center

Community Bridges is excited to announce that Highlands Park Center in Ben Lomond, part of our Early Education Division, is now offering free or low-cost preschool through the California State Preschool Program (CSPP). This expansion provides affordable, high-quality early education to more local families, especially in a region where the cost of living and childcare are among the highest in California.

In Santa Cruz County, many families struggle to afford childcare, often having to choose between basic needs like rent or quality early education for their children. Through subsidized care at Highlands Park, families with children ages 24 months to 5 years can access enriching programs with flexible scheduling at minimal or no cost.

In most cases, families earning less than \$130,000 per year can qualify for child care for free or at a reduced cost. This change ensures that more children can benefit from early learning in a safe, nurturing environment.

To learn more or determine eligibility, families can visit communitybridges.org/eed or contact Highlands Park Center directly at (831) 400-1170.



READ ABOUT THE CHANGE



Support Our Big Idea for Santa Cruz Gives: Wrap Them in Care – WIC Diaper Initiative

Community Bridges is proud to be part of Santa Cruz Gives this year, with a powerful initiative aimed at meeting a growing need in our community—*Wrap Them in Care: WIC Program Diaper Initiative*. Diapers are an essential item for families with young children, yet rising costs have created a heavy burden for many parents. Nationally, one in three mothers faces *diaper scarcity*, forcing difficult choices between essentials like food, rent, and basic hygiene.

Our local Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program has provided critical support to families in Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro Valley since 1977, serving thousands of mothers, infants, and young children. Last year, we recognized the urgent need for diaper assistance and launched the WIC Diaper Program, which has since provided over 850 diaper packs to families in need. But as prices continue to rise—up 22% since 2018—the demand for diaper assistance has far exceeded our available resources.

Our goal through Santa Cruz Gives is to raise funds to expand this program, enabling us to tell every family that they can come to their WIC appointments and receive diaper support, no questions asked. Unfortunately, federal funding for WIC does not cover the cost of diapers, making local support essential to continue this effort.

Visit **Santa Cruz Gives starting on Friday, November 14** to support *Wrap Them in Care* today, and let's continue to make a positive impact on families in our community.

LEARN MORE

Steady Progress in Pajaro Unmet Needs Program: Over \$800K in Aid Distributed

In our summer newsletter, we shared updates on [Monterey County's Pajaro Unmet Needs Disaster Assistance Program](#). As a nonprofit partner in this program, Community Bridges, along with Catholic Charities Diocese of Monterey, manages \$5.4 million in household and individual aid. Phase 1, completed on April 27, provided \$450,000 to cover food spoilage for 688 families. Now in Phase 2, we're addressing more complex recovery needs, including housing, home repairs, and vehicle replacements.

Between April 27 and November 11, 2024, Community Bridges and Catholic Charities have distributed approximately \$803,000 to 76 households impacted by the 2023 floods.

We continue to work with about 300 families, assisting them with eligibility requirements and moving additional households off the



waitlist. Our team is committed to ensuring every qualified household receives the support they need.

Community Bridges remains dedicated to the long-term recovery of Pajaro families. Thanks to the generosity of our donors and collaborative partnerships, we provided over \$1.7 million in direct support to more than 1,000 individuals and families in the first year after the flood. Now, through the leadership of Monterey County and the advocacy of our state partners and legislators, we are able to continue this crucial support for survivors.

We will keep you updated in the coming months and appreciate your ongoing support.



Join the Community Bridges team!

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:

- [Lead Care Manager – La Manzana Community Resources](#)
- [Program Coordinator – Nueva Vista \(Climate Resilience\)](#)
- [Mechanic – Lift Line](#)
- [Master's Level Therapist – Family Resource Collective](#)

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

Let's Make This Giving Tuesday Unforgettable!

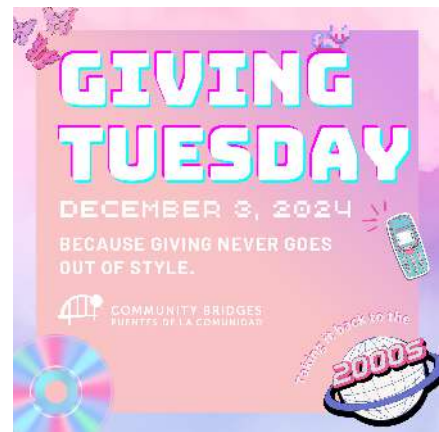
Giving Tuesday returns on December 3, and we need your help to reach our goal of raising \$25,000 to support vital programs across the Central Coast. From food security to senior care, your gift will make a lasting difference in the lives of 20,000 local families, children, and older adults.

Head over to our Giving Tuesday page to see how each funding level makes an impact—from meals for seniors to after-school activities for youth. No matter the size, every donation brings us closer to a healthier, stronger community.

Here's how your contribution will make an impact:

- **\$5,000** | “Fill the Bag” Initiative – Fund groceries for 200 families
- **\$10,000** | “Meal Delivery Heroes” – Provide 1,000 hot meals for seniors
- **\$15,000** | “Camp Like It’s 2006” – Expand afterschool programs and summer camps
- **\$20,000** | “Unlock Future Potential” – Support childcare and early education
- **\$25,000** | “Care with Compassion” – Provide adult day care for those in need

Your gift helps keep our mission alive and thriving—because giving never goes out of style. Donate today and help us hit our goal.



DONATE TODAY



Ray's Corner

Facing an Uncertain Future

As the dust settles from the recent elections, we want to assure you of our unwavering commitment to supporting and advocating for every member of our community, regardless of immigration status. ***At Community Bridges, we have always worked to build bridges of hope, light, and opportunity, providing essential resources and support to our most vulnerable populations. We stand firm in this commitment now and into the future.***

In collaboration with local law enforcement, nonprofits, health organizations, safety experts, and government leaders, Community Bridges has signed a letter of solidarity to support our immigrant community in this uncertain time. Together, we affirm:

“As leaders in local government, we unequivocally reaffirm our commitment to supporting all immigrants in our community. A relationship of trust between immigrants and local agencies, including law enforcement, first responders,

schools, and hospitals, is essential to assuring that all residents feel safe and healthy and have access to the resources necessary to help make our community a better place for all.”

Our shared commitment extends to upholding protective measures, such as the [California Values Act \(SB 54\)](#), the [TRUTH Act \(AB 2792\)](#), and local sanctuary resolutions, to ensure a safe and supportive environment for everyone.

While there has been much rhetoric and some indication of potential policies that could impact our community, we are uncertain of what is to come. As we await specifics from the incoming administration, please know that we are vigilant and prepared to inform you about any developments that may affect our community and the 20,000 individuals we serve each year. **Rest assured, we are committed to responding proactively to any community issues that arise and may impact us locally.**

We remember the climate of 2016, when many low-income and Latine families faced immense fear. This fear led to a concerning trend of community service disenrollment across all sectors, as families worried about potential immigration consequences simply for seeking help. The impact was profound, driving many into deeper poverty, with negative effects on their health and education, leading to certain generational impacts that we continue to address.

Today, we are preparing our community with important educational information, particularly on [public charge](#) and other immigration rules as well as [Childcare Safety Planning](#), so families are better prepared in case they are put in a situation in which they must make a difficult decision.

While many challenges are uncertain, our commitment to responding is not. We invite you to join us in strengthening our community:

- **Donate:** [Support our work as we face an increased need for services.](#)
- **Volunteer:** [Give your time to make a tangible impact in someone's life.](#)
- **Advocate:** Stay informed, ask questions, talk to your representatives, and stand by your neighbors.
- **Legal Aid:** If you are an immigration attorney able to provide support, please contact us to coordinate efforts.

We've faced difficult times before and pulled through by supporting each other. No matter what comes our way, we remain steadfast in our mission: to deliver essential services, ensure equitable access to resources, and advocate for health and dignity at every stage of life. With your help, we'll continue to serve, advocate, and empower those who need it most. Let's work together to make Santa Cruz County and the greater Central Coast a community where everyone feels valued, safe, and supported.

Together, we're building the world we want to live in—because together, anything is possible.

With gratitude,

*Ray Cancino,
Community Bridges CEO*



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



You have the power to make a difference! Join us in building a thriving community where every person has the opportunity to unleash their full potential. Donate to support our family of 10 programs across the county!

DONATE: SUPPORT
OUR WORK



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}}