



Dana Wagner was named the new director of Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County.

Dana Wagner on the full-circle moment of becoming Meals on Wheels Director

Becoming the director of Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County is a full-circle moment for Dana Wagner.

She started her career as a registered dietitian in a skilled nursing facility in Maryland, where she used her clinical insights and food service knowledge to help older adults live healthy lives.

After moving to California with her husband, Dana became a supervising dietitian in 2001 for Community Bridges' Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, working her way up to assistant director of the program for 10 years and then director for three years. She has also served as the interim director of Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County since March. She was officially selected as the new director in September, and she will now bring her deep nutrition experience and community connections to serving as director of both the WIC and Meals on Wheels programs.

"It is really great that as my career has evolved I am coming full circle working with older adults," she said. "There is a poetic beauty to that."

She brings with her a wealth of experience, integrity, and a deep commitment to addressing community needs in thoughtful ways.

“The reason I have continued to work with Community Bridges all this time is because it aligns with my values of service and helping others, and I strongly believe in the mission of serving our community,” Dana said.

Her goal as director of Meals on Wheels is to help older adults remain in their homes while receiving nutritious meals and friendly interactions from staff and volunteers who care about their well-being.

With Santa Cruz County’s older population booming, there are several new applications each week for the services Meals on Wheels provides. The population of people age 65-84 in Santa Cruz County has grown 81% since 2010 — faster than anywhere else in California.

“This is an expensive place to live, and with inflation over the last few years it has been a challenging time for many older adults on fixed incomes,” Dana said. “Meals on Wheels is so important for meeting their needs and helping them be able to stay in their homes.”

Dana plans to continue enhancing the services Meals on Wheels provides to ensure those who are most vulnerable are connected to the right resources for their medications, appointments, and support.

“It is an honor to be part of a program that provides dignity to the older adults in our community,” Dana said.

Help us avoid drastic service cuts



Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County has not been recommended for funding by the County of Santa Cruz, putting about 17% of the program's budget in jeopardy.

Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County, a vital program that has served older adults in our community for nearly 50 years, is at risk of implementing a waitlist for the first time in our history and disenrolling people due to a lack of funding from the county.

Our program narrowly missed a recommendation for Collective of Results and Evidence-based (CORE) Investments funding from Santa Cruz County by just one point, despite receiving a very

News & Notes

This holiday season, you can make a difference with Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County through Subaru’s annual **Share the Love Event!**

From November 21, 2024, to January 2, 2025, Subaru of America and its retailers will donate a minimum of \$300 to charities like ours for every new vehicle leased or sold. Since 2008, Subaru has helped provide more than 4.6 million meals and friendly visits to seniors served by local Meals on Wheels programs nationwide.

For more details, visit [Meals on Wheels America - Share the Love](#).

Thank you for helping us nourish lives and bring joy to seniors in our community!

strong score of 95 out of 105 possible points. We appealed this decision, but our appeal was denied.

We are now advocating for \$450,000 in funding from the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors to prevent drastic service cuts. The board will make a decision at its meeting on November 19.

Without this funding, which represents 17% of our total annual budget and is more than 10% less than the program received from the County in 2001, we will have to remove 20% of our nearly 1,800 participants who rely on our services for nutrition, social connection, and wellness checks.

We need your help rallying support and spreading the word about the importance of Meals on Wheels leading up to the funding decision on November 19. [You can click here to add your name to our letter to the supervisors about the need to prevent service cuts.](#)

It is essential that the supervisors understand the impact of their decisions. You can call your supervisor at (831) 454-2200 or email them at BoardOfSupervisors@santacruzcountyca.gov. There will be an opportunity to speak to the supervisors during their [November 19 meeting](#) at the County Building, located at 701 Ocean Street in Santa Cruz (next to the courthouse). The meeting will begin at 9 a.m., and you can join by phone or online via Zoom.

We thank you for your ongoing support. With the growing local population of older adults and increasing demand, Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County is more important now than ever.

—Raymon Cancino, CEO, Community Bridges

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.

- [Would Measure N demolish a Live Oak senior center for teacher housing?](#)
- [Rising demand, shrinking resources: The challenges facing Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County](#)
- [In survey, Santa Cruz County seniors cite financial hardship, housing worries](#)

The pros of pure pumpkin



Pumpkin is an excellent nutrient-dense addition to your fall menu. Pumpkins are a great source of vitamins A and C, potassium, and fiber, and they are low in calories.

Pumpkin is also rich in carotenoids. Carotenoids are the naturally occurring pigment found in fruits and vegetables, such as pumpkins, carrots, dark green leafy greens, and cantaloupe, giving them their bright orange, green, and yellow colors. Carotenoids work as antioxidants in the body to help protect our cells from damage.

Pumpkins are a member of the Cucurbitaceae family, which includes squash, cantaloupe, cucumbers, watermelon, and gourds.

Fun fact: Although pumpkins have a nutritional profile like that of a vegetable, they are botanically a fruit since they contain seeds. All parts of the pumpkin are considered edible.

When shopping for canned pumpkin, purchase 100% pumpkin. Some canned pumpkin is pie filling, which includes addition of sugar.

—Caren Dix, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist

Pumpkin chicken curry

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons oil, divided
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast halves, cubed
- ¾ cup chopped onion
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons curry powder
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon coriander
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup 100% pure pumpkin

- ½ cup unsweetened lite coconut milk

Instructions:

1. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a skillet over medium heat.
2. Brown chicken on all sides, but don't cook all the way through.
3. Transfer chicken to a plate. Heat remaining oil in same skillet.
4. Sauté onion, ginger and garlic for 2-3 minutes.
5. Stir in spices and salt. Cook for an additional minute.
6. Stir in pumpkin and coconut milk.
7. Add browned chicken and simmer for 8-10 minutes or until chicken reaches 165°F as measured with a food thermometer.
8. Serve over rice

Recipe adapted from Libby's Pumpkin.

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

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