



*Community Bridges' mission is to deliver essential services, provide equitable access to resources, and advocate for health and dignity across every stage of life. This National Nutrition Month, we're rallying support for four of our nutrition-focused programs to ensure every individual has access to healthy meals and essential resources.*

## Fight Hunger and Protect Vital Programs with Community Bridges This National Nutrition Month

Rising grocery prices and economic uncertainty are making it harder than ever for families, seniors, and children on the Central Coast to access nutritious food. At the same time, potential federal funding cuts threaten the very programs that provide a critical safety net for thousands in our community.

This **National Nutrition Month**, Community Bridges is taking action to strengthen local food assistance programs and ensure that, no matter what happens at the federal level, no one in our community goes hungry. But we can't do it alone—we need your support.

### **The Growing Challenge of Food Insecurity**

Since the pandemic, **grocery prices have soared by more than 25%**, forcing families to make impossible choices between food, rent, and medical care. Seniors on fixed incomes are skipping meals to afford basic necessities, while childcare providers struggle to serve healthy meals due to rising costs.

Meanwhile, federal funding for essential food programs—programs that keep food on the table for thousands of local residents—is facing uncertainty. Without sustained investment, the future of these

programs is at risk, leaving some of the most vulnerable members of our community without reliable access to food.

That's why Community Bridges has set a goal to **raise \$20,000 this month** to strengthen and expand four key nutrition programs, ensuring our community remains resilient regardless of federal funding changes.



*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.*

### Where Your Support Makes an Impact

Every dollar donated helps sustain critical food assistance programs that serve children, families, and seniors across our region:

- **Healthy Meals for Children** ([CACFP](#)) – Helps 427 childcare providers serve **4,700+ children** nutritious meals that meet USDA health standards. Over the past four years, the number of childcare providers we support has grown by **16.3%**, yet funding uncertainty threatens their ability to continue feeding young children.
- **Groceries for Families** ([Family Resource Collective](#)) – Provides weekly distributions of fresh food, including eggs, tuna, tortillas, and peanut butter, to families struggling to afford groceries. Last year alone, we distributed **10,000+ bags of food** to **3,768 household members, including 683 children**—relieving pressure on working families facing food insecurity.
- **Meals for Seniors** ([Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County](#)) – Delivers over **700 meals daily** to homebound older adults while serving another **100 fresh-cooked meals** at senior dining sites. For **1,700 local seniors**, this program is a lifeline, offering not just food but also social connection. Without stable funding, hundreds of seniors could lose access to daily meals.
- **Nutrition Education for Families** ([Women, Infants & Children - WIC](#)) – Empowers **6,500 low-income families** with interactive nutrition education, wellness assessments, and monthly food vouchers to buy healthy groceries. As federal funding for WIC remains in limbo, we must step up to ensure families can continue to access essential nutrition support.

## How You Can Help

Even if you can't donate financially, there are still many ways to get involved and help protect food security in Santa Cruz County:

**Volunteer Your Time** – Help distribute groceries, deliver meals to homebound seniors, or assist in community kitchens. Sign up at [communitybridges.org/volunteer](https://communitybridges.org/volunteer).

**Share Our Mission** – Spread the word by following us on social media and sharing our posts to educate others about the importance of food security.

- **Facebook:** [facebook.com/CommunityBridgesSC](https://facebook.com/CommunityBridgesSC)
- **Instagram:** [instagram.com/puentes\\_sc](https://instagram.com/puentes_sc)

**Advocate for Change** – Join us in urging policymakers to protect funding for essential food programs. Sign up for advocacy alerts at [communitybridges.org/newsletters](https://communitybridges.org/newsletters) and contact your representatives to voice your support.

## Together, We Can Fight Hunger

Food insecurity is a solvable problem—but only if we take action. With your help, we can protect vital food programs from potential funding cuts and ensure that children, families, and seniors in community continue to receive the nourishment they need to thrive.

Donate or get involved today!

Help Fight Hunger Locally



## Celebrating a Decade of Impact: Join Us for the 10th Annual Farm to Fork Gala!

For the past 10 years, our **Farm to Fork Gala** has brought together community champions like you to support **Community Bridges'** mission of delivering essential services across **Santa Cruz County and the Monterey Bay Area**. Your generosity fuels programs that serve

## IN THE NEWS

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

- [Help Community Bridges fight hunger and build resiliency this National Nutrition Month](#)
- [Santa Cruz County declares itself sanctuary community for immigrants](#)
- [Measuring progress on the County's post-flood recovery plan in Pajaro.](#)
- [Santa Cruz Wharf reopens to community fanfare](#)
- [Community Bridges, PG&E team for bill assistance workshops](#)

## COMMUNITY NOTES



**more than 20,000 local children, families, and seniors**—and this year, we're celebrating just how far we've come together.

Join us on **Saturday, June 28, 2025, at Seascope Golf Club in Aptos** for an **elegant evening** featuring:

- ★ Sunset sea breezes and stunning views
- ★ A locally sourced **seasonal gourmet menu**
- ★ Fine regional wines
- ★ Live music
- ★ A **vibrant live and silent auction** featuring exclusive excursions

### **A Decade of Growth, A Future of Possibility**

So much has changed in the past 10 years. With your support, we've:

- ✓ Secured a permanent home in downtown Watsonville
- ✓ Established a Lift Line bus yard
- ✓ Built a state-of-the-art facility for Elderday
- ✓ Expanded services like mental health counseling, eviction defense, and emergency response

Together, we've delivered nearly **2 million meals to seniors, provided hundreds of thousands of accessible rides, supported tens of thousands of families, and distributed nearly 1 million bags of food** to those facing hunger.

Be part of this special milestone and help us continue this vital work.

### **Reserve your spot today!**

10th Annual Farm to Fork Gala

Seascope Golf Club, Aptos

For more info, contact [donations@cbridges.org](mailto:donations@cbridges.org) or call 831-688-8840 ext. 205

We can't wait to celebrate with you!

Get Your Tickets Today!

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

- [Pitch In All-Santa Cruz County Cleanup Day May 10, 2025](#)
- [Measure Q Citizens Oversight Advisory Board seeking applicants](#)
- [Watsonville Strawberry Festival Art Contest opens](#)
- [Watsonville wants feedback on its public art](#)
- [City of Santa Cruz asks for feedback from youth](#)
- [RTC Seeking Input on Transit Needs in Santa Cruz County](#)



## Standing Strong: Continued Support for Families Rebuilding After Disaster

As Pajaro flood recovery continues, we're proud to share how our **Family Resource Collective (FRC)** has distributed an additional **\$1.2 million in direct aid** to impacted families—all while stepping up to meet urgent needs elsewhere in the region.

In Pajaro, our **La Manzana Community Resources team** remains a key player in **long-term recovery**, helping distribute **\$908,000 in Phase 1 assistance** through the **County of Monterey's Unmet Needs Disaster Assistance Program**. As of March 11, we have also provided **\$296,000 in Phase 2 aid** to 89 families, helping them rebuild their homes and regain stability. These efforts, made possible by **state and county leadership**, add to the **\$1.7 million we previously distributed** thanks to local philanthropy and county support.

At the same time, when destructive ocean swells hit the **Santa Cruz Wharf and harbor** just before Christmas, leaving hundreds of workers suddenly without income, our **Nueva Vista Community Resources team** partnered with **Community Foundation Santa Cruz County** to launch an economic relief program. In just one week, we delivered **\$133,000 in aid**, ensuring **266 workers** had the support they needed for rent, groceries, and other essentials.

These responses show the **FRC's ability to take on multiple large-scale efforts at once**, ensuring relief reaches those who need it most—**swiftly, equitably, and with dignity**. Through every crisis, the **FRC remains a trusted community resource**, serving over **12,000 residents annually** across Santa Cruz County.

This work would not be possible without our **dedicated staff, generous donors, and tireless community advocates**. Thank you for helping us deliver critical support when and where it's needed most.

## CB In the Community



### Santa Cruz Warriors Score Big for Lift Line!

Huge thanks to the **Santa Cruz Warriors** for their jersey auction benefiting **Lift Line**! The **\$3,365 raised** helps provide **60,000 rides** yearly for seniors and people with disabilities, ensuring access to medical care. We're thankful for the Warriors' support and partnership in making a lasting impact on the Central Coast.



### Stanford Avenue Neighbors Make a Big Impact!

A heartfelt thank you to the Stanford Avenue neighbors for coming together to support Community Bridges through their **neighborhood yard sale**! Their collective efforts raised an impressive \$1,528. We're grateful for their dedication to making a difference and for showing how small actions can create big change.



### Free Wildfire Preparedness Training in Pajaro

Be ready before wildfire strikes!  
Join us for a **FREE Spanish training** on wildfire safety for Pajaro and North Monterey County residents on **Saturday, March 29 from 11 AM - 3 PM at Pajaro Middle School**. Learn from experts, join hands-on workshops, and access key resources.



### Essential Community Resources for Families Across the Central Coast

In times of uncertainty—whether due to economic hardship, natural disasters, or policy changes—Community Bridges stands as a trusted resource for communities in need. As such, our team has stepped up to coordinate local efforts to support our immigrant community during this challenging time, filled with uncertainty and fear.

By partnering with community-based organizations, local governments, school districts, and elected representatives, we have helped inform thousands across the Central Coast of their rights, assisted hundreds of families in creating emergency plans, and connected individuals with key resources such as immigration lawyers, mental health clinicians, and general assistance programs.

Through our work, we have received many questions about the most critical and helpful steps families can take to prepare for unexpected situations. We recommend the following:

1. **Fill Out a Childcare Safety Plan:** A Childcare Safety Plan is a temporary custody plan that ensures your children will be cared for by a trusted caregiver of your choosing in case of an emergency. This document provides peace of mind and legal clarity for caregivers and family members. You can access it at [susederechos.info](https://susederechos.info) and receive assistance in completing it at many community-based organizations across the Central Coast, including our five resource centers in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties.
2. **Complete a Family Financial Plan:** Financial preparedness can reduce stress and provide stability during emergencies, including deportation situations, which do not take away your financial rights. We encourage all families to create a financial

plan using a toolkit developed by our partner organization [Ventures](#), designed to help families take proactive steps toward financial security.

3. **Seek Legal Aid or Hire a Lawyer:** Having access to legal counsel can make all the difference when navigating immigration matters. Many local nonprofits offer free or low-cost legal consultations, and there are numerous private immigration attorneys available to assist. Visit [susederechos.info](http://susederechos.info) for a directory of local legal resources.
4. **Know Your Rights:** Thousands of "Red Cards" have been distributed to local residents to help individuals understand and exercise their rights in encounters with immigration enforcement. However, it is crucial to know how and when to use them. Learn more by visiting the [Immigrant Legal Resource Center](#).

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## Join the Community Bridges team!

Are you looking for a rewarding career that transforms lives? Community Bridges is hiring passionate individuals to support families, older adults, and youth across our region.

We're currently seeking:

- [Enhanced Care Manager Supervisor](#) – Lead care coordination for those in need.
- [Teacher - Highlands Park](#) – Shape young minds in an enriching learning environment.
- [Lead Care Manager - Mountain Community Resources](#) – Provide critical support to local families.

With positions in education, social work, advocacy, and more, there's a place for you at Community Bridges. We serve over 20,000 residents annually—join us in making a lasting impact!

**Apply today!** Visit us at **519 Main St., Watsonville**, email [recruitments@cbridges.org](mailto:recruitments@cbridges.org), or call **831-688-8840 ext. 200**.



Start Your Career

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## Ray's Corner

### Challenges to Nonprofits Impact the Heart of Our Communities

Nonprofits exist to serve the public good, stepping in where government funding and capacity fall short. Our tax-exempt status reflects our vital role in strengthening the social safety net—ensuring that seniors, children, low-income families, and marginalized communities have access to essential services. But today, the very existence of community-based organizations (CBOs) like Community Bridges is under threat. Policies at the federal level are eroding the foundation of our sector, putting thousands of lives at risk in Santa Cruz County and beyond.

Over the first two months of President Trump's current administration, we are witnessing an unprecedented assault on nonprofits that refuse to align with its ideological agenda. The rollback of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, environmental justice programs, and support for immigrant communities signals a broader effort to silence organizations that advocate for equity and social welfare. But the most immediate and devastating impact is the freeze—and potential elimination—of federal funding for programs that sustain our most vulnerable neighbors.

#### **Federal Funding Cuts Put Seniors, Children, and Families at Risk**

The federal funding freeze was a dire warning for the nonprofit sector. Many of our programs rely on federal pass-through funding to provide essential services. Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County (MOW), a program of Community Bridges, depends on federal dollars from the Older Americans Act (OAA) to deliver hot, nutritious meals to 1,700 homebound seniors each year. More than half of our funding—55%—comes from these sources. Had the freeze persisted, hundreds of local seniors would have gone without food. A staggering 89% of our clients report that their meal delivery is their only meal of the day. Without this support, they will go hungry.

And it's not just seniors. The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program helps 6,500 families in Santa Cruz County access healthy groceries, breastfeeding support, and nutrition education. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) ensures that nearly 5,000 children in daycare settings receive balanced meals each year. These programs are lifelines, yet they are being placed on the chopping block.

Even before these funding threats, the demand for food assistance has skyrocketed. Nonprofits like Community Bridges have worked tirelessly to fill the gap, distributing thousands of bags of food each year through our Family Resource Collective. But we cannot sustain these services alone—especially as inflation drives costs higher and government support dwindles.

#### **A Dangerous Precedent: Unchecked Power to Withhold Funding**

Perhaps the most alarming development is the administration's new claim that it can unilaterally pause or deny funding to any initiative it deems "not in the national interest." This vague and unprecedented power lacks clear guidelines, an appeals process, or accountability measures. Programs that have long been bipartisan priorities—like Meals on Wheels, WIC, CACFP, Lift Line, Elderday, and early education centers—are now at risk of being defunded based on political whims.

This is not just an attack on organizations like Community Bridges. It is an attack on the people we serve—seniors who rely on daily meals, children who



need access to nutrition, families struggling to afford groceries, and individuals with disabilities who need transportation to medical appointments. The administration's message is clear: nonprofits that advocate for marginalized groups or provide services to vulnerable communities are being deliberately targeted.

### **We Must Act Now**

We cannot afford to be silent. The erosion of nonprofit funding and legal protections will devastate those in need and weaken the very fabric of our communities. We must act now to protect these essential services.

- **Contact Your Representatives** – Demand that they fight to protect nonprofit funding and safeguard critical food programs. Call, email, and visit their offices.
- **Stay Informed and Advocate** – Follow organizations like Community Bridges to stay updated on policy threats and advocacy efforts.
- **Support Local Nonprofits** – Donate, volunteer, and spread the word. The more we invest in local organizations, the stronger our community will be.

This is not the time for passive hope. It is a time for fierce advocacy. We need unwavering commitment from our legislators—even if it means working against the tide. The survival of our community-based programs depends on it.

With gratitude,

*Ray Cancino*  
CEO, Community Bridges



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!



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!



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.

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