



Every meal begins with a volunteer's kindness. At Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County, our volunteers make it possible to serve over 1,700 local seniors each year with nourishment, dignity, and care.

Celebrating our dedicated volunteers

Our second annual Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast was a morning of heartfelt gratitude, collaboration, and community connection. We were thrilled to take a moment to celebrate the dedicated volunteers who make our services possible as we wrap up National Volunteer Month.

Community Bridges' Chief Executive Officer Raymon Cancino and Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County Senior Program Director Dana Wagner fielded questions from 40 attendees in a Q&A session, providing updates on the status of the federal budget and strategies for advocating for services like Meals on Wheels, as well as updates on our local operations and ways volunteers and participants can support the program.

We proudly distributed 70 certificates of recognition — with two-thirds awarded to new honorees — celebrating the compassionate individuals who support our mission by delivering meals weekly to participants' homes and daily at our four dining sites.

Our deepest gratitude goes to Whole Foods Market for donating a beautiful food spread, complete with Peet's Coffee and Evolution Fresh juices. Six volunteers from the Santa Cruz Whole Foods Market store worked diligently to help set up and serve the delicious meals they lovingly prepared for us.



Special thanks to Gayle's Bakery and New Leaf Market for donating raffle prizes to bring extra excitement to the morning. Attendees received tote bags, reusable utensils, informative flyers, and notebooks for recording feedback they receive from participants along their routes.

Mark your calendar to join us in April 2026 for another celebration of the incredible individuals who help us serve more than 200,000 meals each year to 1,737 local older adults. You can also support these dedicated community members by [making a donation](#) in their honor.



Join our team of dedicated volunteers!

Make your voice heard on prioritizing older adults



Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County's congregate dining sites throughout the county provide local seniors an opportunity for connection and community.

During Older Americans Month in May, Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County is asking you to use your voice and spark action.

As California Gov. Gavin Newsom prepares to release the latest revision of the state budget, there is a possibility that health and human services funding could be impacted as leaders work to close the state's budget deficit. We are urging all of our supporters to contact their representatives and make it clear that if any cuts are necessary, Meals on Wheels must be protected.

News & Notes

We're excited to announce the launch of our **new online volunteer application**—making it easier and faster than ever to join our mission! This streamlined process will help us bring on volunteers more quickly, allowing us to expand our support for seniors in need across Santa Cruz County.

If you've been thinking about making a difference in your community, now is the perfect time to get involved. Visit communitybridges.org/volunteer to apply today and start changing lives!

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.

- [Federal actions cast shadow over health outcomes in Santa Cruz County.](#)

At a time when California is celebrated as the fourth-largest economy in the world, more than 1 in 5 older adults across the state — including here in Santa Cruz County — still experience hunger.

Despite our region's economic strength, Meals on Wheels programs like ours are being pushed to the breaking point.

- Federal cuts to food assistance, Medicaid, and older adult services are already underway, putting enormous pressure on local programs and the older adults who rely on them.
- Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County has already been deeply impacted. A \$70,000 cut in county funding earlier this year, combined with stagnant state and federal funding, forced us to make a painful decision: **Beginning April 1, we implemented an acuity-based waitlist** — meaning that we now must prioritize older adults for our services based on their immediate health and nutritional risk.
- Santa Cruz County has the fastest-growing population of older adults in California.
- In the next decade, our older adult population is expected to grow by nearly 30%.
- Today, more than 1 in 3 households in Santa Cruz County includes a person age 60 or older — a figure that continues rising.

Despite a rapidly growing older adult population and historic economic strength, Meals on Wheels programs across California are serving less than 1% of eligible older adults due to chronic underfunding — a number that reflects a system stretched dangerously thin.

If further cuts are allowed to happen, the consequences will be devastating:

- Thousands of meals could be eliminated in communities like ours.
- Medi-Cal and health care costs would continue to rise as more older adults face avoidable hospitalizations.
- Isolation would increase among older adults who depend on Meals on Wheels for connection and safety.

"Budgets are statements of our values," said Raymon Cancino, Chief Executive Officer of Community Bridges. "Balancing the state budget by cutting services for vulnerable older adults sends the wrong message about who and what we stand for as Californians. We have a responsibility to stand up for our older adults — now more than ever."

This Older Americans Month, we ask you to stand with us and the older adults who helped build our communities:

- [Contact your state legislators](#) — tell them Meals on Wheels must be protected if any budget cuts are made.
- [Email the Governor's Office](#) — urge him to prioritize the needs of vulnerable older adults.

Santa Cruz County leads with compassion. Let's make sure our voices are heard loud and clear: Meals on Wheels must not be on the chopping block. Our older adults deserve better. Our

- [Budget cuts endanger Meals on Wheels: 'Life and death implications'](#)
- [Even if you don't depend on Medicaid, you'll likely be hurt if Republicans cut it](#)
- [Meals on Wheels America Sounds the Alarm on Safety Net Programs for Seniors](#)

communities deserve better. Together, we can make sure no older adults are left behind.

—Dana Wagner, Senior Program Director, Meals on Wheels

Make Energy Costs More Predictable with PG&E's Budget Billing Program

Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County is proud to partner with Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) to bring helpful energy-saving programs directly to the seniors we serve. Together, we're making it easier for older adults to stay independent, comfortable, and financially secure.



One way to better manage your monthly expenses is through PG&E's *Budget Billing Program*. Budget Billing evens out your energy costs by spreading your payments more evenly throughout the year, based on your average usage. This means fewer surprises and easier monthly budgeting—no matter the season.

How to apply: Visit pge.com/billhelp to learn more and enroll. It's free, easy to sign up, and can bring greater peace of mind to your household.

Learn more

Pasta primavera recipe



Here is a flavorful spring recipe that you and your family will savor. Use your favorite spring vegetables from your garden or local farmers market: kohlrabi, sugar snap peas, carrots, and asparagus are all delicious options.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup noodles, uncooked
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 cups mixed vegetables (chopped)
- 1 cup tomatoes (chopped)
- 1 tablespoon margarine
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 3 tablespoons Parmesan cheese

Instructions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Cook noodles according to package directions.
3. While noodles are cooking, heat oil in a skillet.
4. Add vegetables and sauté until tender; stir constantly.
5. Add tomato and sauté 2 more minutes.
6. Toss vegetables with noodles and margarine.
7. Add seasonings; sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Source: Utah State University Cooperative Extension

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

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VOLUNTEER

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Our Contact Information

Community Bridges
519 Main Street
Watsonville, CA 95076
831-688-8840 ext. 205
<http://communitybridges.org/>

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