



Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County joined AARP at the London Nelson Community Center on August 20 to celebrate the 90th anniversary of Social Security and connect with local seniors about community needs.

Celebrating 90 years of stability and dignity for older adults

We celebrated the 90th anniversary of Social Security with AARP at the London Nelson Community Center in Santa Cruz on August 20.

Since it was signed into law in 1935, Social Security has provided a promise of support, stability, and dignity to older Americans across the country. More than 72 million people in the United States will receive \$1.6 trillion in Social Security payments this year, according to the Social Security Administration. Like Social Security, Meals on Wheels is a lifeline for older adults in Santa Cruz County by delivering reliable meals and connections.

To mark the 90th anniversary of Social Security, our celebration included trivia questions about the year 1935, with prizes for the winners provided by AARP. During their visit, AARP also sponsored the meals served at London Nelson and treated everyone to a delicious cake in honor of the occasion.



This was a great collaboration among AARP, London Nelson, and Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County. Thank you to everyone involved for bringing joy and a strong spirit of community as we marked this milestone, and [make a contribution today](#).

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Director's note: Insights on sustaining support for nutrition



Community Bridges CEO, Ray Cancino, at the Meals on Wheels America National Conference in San Antonio.

Last month, I had the honor of representing Community Bridges at the Meals on Wheels America National Conference in San Antonio. What struck me most was how urgently the national conversation reflects what we see every day here in Santa Cruz County: the need for bold leadership, innovative funding strategies, and strong community partnerships.

I spent valuable time in strategy sessions with the Meals on Wheels America policy director and ensured we communicated strategy for upcoming opportunities, such as the Older Americans Act reauthorization and Farm Bill, which all support older adults. We also discussed sequestration and a likely government shutdown based on the current political climate.

Here are other key takeaways:

The funding reality is shifting — fast.

News & Notes

We're looking for volunteer drivers in Watsonville and the San Lorenzo Valley to help deliver meals and support local seniors.

If you've been thinking about making a difference in your community, now is the perfect time to get involved.

[CLICK HERE](#) to apply today and start changing lives!

In the Press

Click the headlines below to read local and national news affecting county residents.

- [Guest Commentary | Why Community Bridges joined the fight against federal funding threats](#)
- [Federal Funding Cuts to SNAP \(CalFresh\) Will Have Sweeping Impacts on Californians](#)
- [The Impact of H.R. 1 on Two Medicaid Eligibility Rules](#)

Government support for nutrition is shrinking, and providers nationwide are already seeing waitlists stretch longer than ever. This makes it clear: We must reimagine how we support Meals on Wheels programs to ensure no older adult is left behind.

Innovation is driving solutions.

Across the country, providers are tapping into new funding streams, such as specialty license plate fees, driver's license renewal opt-ins, parking meter revenue, and even state lottery proceeds in Pennsylvania. These bold strategies prove sustainable support is possible when communities think differently about what it means to invest in aging with dignity.

Reframing the story.

Too many people assume Meals on Wheels provides three meals a day, seven days a week, fully covered by the government. In reality, most Meals on Wheels programs deliver one meal a day, five days a week, and government funding usually covers less than half the cost. Changing this perception is vital if we are going to open new doors for advocacy and policy change.

Partnerships as a model for the future.

At the conference, I was proud to highlight Community Bridges' success: Every jurisdiction in our county contributes to Meals on Wheels in some way. Only 5% of the programs nationwide that attended my session can say the same. This model of government partnership is exactly the type of innovation that can be scaled across the country if we have willing leaders and community members who want to take a serious bite out of food insecurity.

As Vice Chair of Meals on Wheels California and its Advocacy Chair, I am committed to advancing this work on a statewide and national level. Community Bridges is proud to stand as a thought leader in shaping the conversation around how we fund and sustain nutrition and connection for older adults — not just today, but for generations to come.

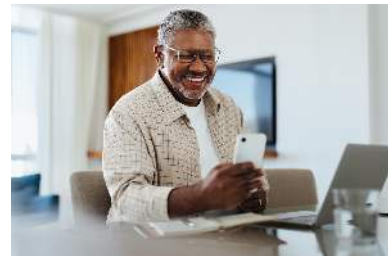
—Raymon Cancino, CEO, Community Bridges

PG&E Launches Match My Payment Program to Help Reduce Overdue Balances

Our partners at PG&E have introduced a new *Match My Payment* program to help qualifying customers pay down past-due energy bills. Through this initiative, PG&E will match eligible customers' one-time payments—up to \$1,000—made toward their overdue balance.

To qualify, customers must:

- Be enrolled in either the [CARE](#) or [FERA](#) discount program
- Have an active residential account with a past-due balance
- Not be enrolled in [PG&E's Arrearage Management Plan \(AMP\)](#).



This program is especially helpful for seniors and low-income households facing financial hardship. Eligible customers can receive one matched payment between now and March 31, 2026.

To learn more and apply, visit PG&E's [Match My Payment](#) page. If you or someone you know is behind on their energy bills, this could be the help they need to get back on track.

[Learn More](#)

Slow-Cooker Minestrone Soup Recipe



As the days grow shorter, a hearty soup is so comforting and nourishing! Try this hearty slow-cooker soup and enjoy a homemade meal after a long day. Bursting with vegetables, beans, and whole-grain pasta, this is a vegetarian meal the whole family will enjoy.

—Caren Dix, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist

Serving size: 1½ cups

Serves 10

Ingredients

6 cups vegetable broth
28-ounce can diced tomatoes
15-ounce can cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
15-ounce can kidney beans, drained and rinsed
2 cups frozen green beans
4 medium carrots, chopped
1 medium zucchini, chopped
1 stalk celery, chopped
1 medium onion, chopped
2 tablespoons dried Italian seasoning
1 bay leaf
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon salt
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon pepper
1 cup cooked (or 2 ounces of dry) whole-grain elbow pasta
2 cups fresh baby spinach
1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups freshly grated Parmesan cheese for garnish (optional)

Instructions

1. Combine ingredients, except pasta and baby spinach, in a 6- or 7-quart slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours.
2. Increase the heat to high. Stir in pasta and spinach. Cover and cook for 15 minutes or until pasta is done.
3. Remove bay leaf before serving. Sprinkle each serving with 2 tablespoons of grated Parmesan cheese, if desired.

Developed by Caren Dix, RD, Nutrition Education 2025. Recipe adapted from eatright.org

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