



The Community Bridges WIC Program serves 5,500 local women, infants and children each month.

Community Bridges WIC Program Remains Open as Shutdown Threatens Family Nutrition

Despite the ongoing federal government shutdown, the **Community Bridges WIC Program** remains open and continues to serve local families across Santa Cruz County. Appointments are still happening, benefits are active on WIC cards, and families can keep shopping as usual.

However, while **California's Department of Public Health (CDPH)** has committed to keeping WIC programs open and funded **as long as current state and federal reserves last**, that funding is limited. Without swift congressional action to restore federal support, even California's contingency measures could run out in the coming weeks—putting access to vital nutrition, breastfeeding support, and health referrals for pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and young children at risk across the state and nation.

Said Georgia Machell, President and CEO of the National WIC Association (NWA): “Congress must act with urgency to pass legislation that fully funds WIC, keeps the federal government open, and ensures that federal appropriations law cannot be undermined by administrative actions ... WIC provides critical nutritious foods, breastfeeding support, infant formula, and access to health screenings and referrals. These services are not a luxury; they are a necessary lifeline. Even temporary disruptions to the program could have long-term negative consequences for the health and development of our nation's families.”

In Santa Cruz County, the Community Bridges WIC program has diligently served generations of women, infants and children, regardless of their background or status, since being established in 1977.

Currently, the program serves approximately 550 pregnant women in Santa Cruz and North Monterey counties each month, primarily Spanish-speaking agricultural workers. It also serves roughly 800 breastfeeding women, 1,100 infants, and 3,800 children under 5, and is constantly looking for ways of how it can better serve and enroll more local mothers and children.

Community Bridges joins NWA in urging our community to contact their federal representatives today and demand an end to the shutdown to ensure WIC and other essential programs remain fully funded.

Take action to protect WIC and programs that support families.

Tell Congress to Fund the Government



The Mountain Affair returns for its 40th iteration on Friday, October 24 at the Highlands Park Senior & Community Center in Ben Lomond.

Celebrate 40 Years of Community at the Mountain Affair — Get Your Tickets Today!

Join us for a night of local flavor, live music, and community pride at the 40th Annual Mountain Affair on **Friday, October 24, from 6:30–9:30 p.m.** at **Highlands Park Senior & Community Center in Ben Lomond**—benefiting Mountain Community Resources (MCR).

This cherished annual fundraiser supports **more than 1,200 San Lorenzo Valley residents each year**, helping neighbors access food, housing, mental health counseling, and crisis support when they need it most. Every ticket, sponsorship, and auction bid directly sustains these vital programs and ensures our valley remains strong.

IN THE NEWS

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

- [Mountain Affair celebrates 40 years of support and resilience in San Lorenzo Valley community](#)
- [Hijos del Sol mural taking shape in Pajaro](#)
- [Pajaro residents to receive final phase of disaster relief](#)
- [Watsonville nonprofit Community Bridges supports blockage of Trump orders](#)
- [How Enhanced Care Management transforms lives—and could change yours](#)

OUR PROGRAMS

Each year, our family of 10 programs, across 20 different sites, meets the needs of over 20,000 local children, families and older adults.

Children & Nutrition

A Feast Worth Celebrating

Enjoy a multi-course, **Italian-inspired dinner by Chef Marina Camarlinghi of Barbara & Company Catering**, paired with wines from Alfaro Family Vineyards. Each dish celebrates the bounty of our local farms and the spirit of community that brings us to the table.

Music Among the Redwoods

Dance under the stars with a performance by local favorite **Gary Blackburn**, whose soulful blend of country, rock, and folk will fill Highlands Park with “Americana with an Edge.”



Funds raised at the event help keep Mountain Community Resources services such as the weekly food distribution running smoothly.

Honoring Our Green Heart

This year, we proudly honor **Tonje Switzer**, the 2025 **Green Heart Award** recipient. Even as she faced the loss of her own home during the CZU Fire, she continued to serve others—embodying the compassion, resilience, and dedication that define our mountain community.

Why Your Support Matters

Proceeds from this event power the essential work of Mountain Community Resources—connecting families to food, mental health services, disaster recovery, and other Community Bridges programs like **WIC, Meals on Wheels, Lift Line, and Early Education**. Your generosity helps ensure that children, families, and seniors in our valley can thrive.

Join us for an unforgettable evening and make a difference for your neighbors—reserve your seat today!

BUY YOUR TICKETS TODAY!

- [Child & Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#)
- [Early Education Division \(EED\)](#)
- [Women, Infants & Children \(WIC\)](#)

Family Resource Collective (FRC)

- [La Manzana Community Resources \(Watsonville–Pajaro\)](#)
- [Live Oak Community Resources \(Live Oak\)](#)
- [Mountain Community Resources \(Felton\)](#)
- [Nueva Vista Community Resources \(Santa Cruz\)](#)

Seniors & Transportation

- [Elderday Adult Day Health Care](#)
- [Lift Line](#)
- [Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County](#)



Hundreds of local families have completed Childcare Safety Plans across the Central Coast.

Community Bridges Steps Up to Support Childcare Safety Plan Coalition

Across the country, immigrant families are living with renewed fear and uncertainty. Parents are weighing impossible questions.

What happens if I don't come home tonight?

Who will care for my children?

How can I protect them if I'm not there?

That's why **Community Bridges is proud to announce that we are now serving as the fiscal sponsor for the Childcare Safety Plan (CSP) Coalition**, a grassroots network formed to ensure no child is left without care during times of crisis.

A Plan Born from Compassion

The **CSP** was created out of community urgency and care. In 2017, when family separation policies left children vulnerable to trauma and uncertainty, **local attorneys, nonprofit leaders — including Community Bridges and the Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County — and government partners** came together to find a solution.

Their answer was the **CSP**, a free, bilingual document that helps parents prepare for emergencies by naming trusted caregivers who can temporarily care for their children if they become unavailable due to illness, deportation, incarceration, or other crises. Completing a CSP **does not transfer custody or parental rights**—it simply provides peace of mind that children will be cared for by someone families trust.

Now being shared across California as a model, the CSP has become a trusted model for family preparedness—empowering parents to take control of uncertain situations and ensuring that children remain safe, supported, and connected to their loved ones no matter what challenges arise.

Our Commitment to Families

Today, as the CSP Coalition's fiscal sponsor, **Community Bridges is helping carry this work forward** — producing bilingual materials, conducting community outreach, creating and hosting their landing page for awareness and advocacy, and connecting families to support through our **Family Resource Collective** in Santa Cruz, Live Oak, Felton, and Watsonville.

Together with our partners, we've made **remarkable progress** in ensuring that families across the Central Coast know about this vital tool and are taking advantage of it. That success was on full display during the

recent **1,000 Childcare Safety Plan Challenge** led by our partners at the **CAB**, which rallied community members to complete hundreds of plans in just a few months. The campaign showed the deep commitment our community shares to protect children, keep families together, and ensure that no one faces uncertainty alone.

How You Can Help

- **Spread the word:** Share information about the Childcare Safety Plan with friends, neighbors, and families who may benefit. Visit CommunityBridges.org/CSP to learn more, download the plan, or find free local support.
- **Donate:** Help fund bilingual materials, outreach, and volunteer support. Visit CommunityBridges.org/donate and select *Childcare Safety Plan (CSP)*.
- **Volunteer:** Become a trained community helper who walks parents through the process with compassion and care.

In times of uncertainty, a plan can be the difference between fear and peace of mind.

Together, we can ensure that **every child in our community has someone to care for them — no matter what tomorrow brings.**

CB In the Community



Helping Families Stay Covered: Medi-Cal Outreach

Community Bridges has partnered with the County of Santa Cruz, the Central California Alliance for Health, and other local healthcare providers to help vulnerable Medi-Cal patients stay informed ahead of the 2026 coverage changes. Together, we created bilingual flyers to guide current Medi-Cal members on renewing their coverage, updating contact information, and understanding what's changing for immigrant adults. These materials are being distributed countywide and are available online. Help us spread the word and keep every family covered and connected to care. [CLICK HERE](#) to view, download, and print the flyers.



Now Enrolling: Free & Affordable Preschool

Community Bridges' Early Education Division is enrolling for the 2025–2026 school year! Families of four earning up to \$12,203 per month, or \$146,436 per year, may qualify for free childcare through the California State Preschool Program, with affordable options available for others. Our six centers across Santa Cruz County—in Watsonville, Freedom, Santa Cruz, Felton, and Ben Lomond—offer safe, nurturing spaces that inspire learning, creativity, and growth. Visit communitybridges.org/eed to apply today and find a preschool near you.



Bill Assistance Day Helps Nearly 100 Families

Community Bridges, in partnership with PG&E, helped nearly 100 Watsonville families receive bill assistance and connect with essential programs during our recent Bill Assistance Day. Residents received help signing up for PG&E discount programs, resolving past-due balances, and enrolling in CalFresh, Medi-Cal, WIC, and other community services. These events ensure families can stay stable and supported through changing times. A huge thank-you to our partners for making this event possible! To learn more about PG&E's assistance programs, visit pge.com/billhelp.



A 160-foot-by-25-foot mural on Salinas Road is quickly forming thanks to Community Bridges.

Progress in Pajaro: Rebuilding, Healing, and Honoring Community Strength

As Pajaro continues to rebuild from the devastating floods, the community's resilience and renewal continue to shine. Thanks to strong local partnerships, state advocacy, and continued collaboration, the community is turning the page toward recovery — with both direct support for families and new investments that honor Pajaro's enduring spirit.

Final Phase of Disaster Assistance Underway

Community Bridges is proud to announce the completion of the **Pajaro Unmet Needs Disaster Assistance Program**, which helped distribute a portion of state funds secured through **California Assembly Bill 102 (AB 102)**.

Working with the **County of Monterey** and **Catholic Charities Diocese of Monterey**, we have already helped deliver more than **\$4.6 million** in direct recovery support to Pajaro families through Phases 1 and 2 of this program. This final phase ensures every remaining dollar reaches residents who were impacted by the 2023 flood.

Families who previously received assistance do **not** need to reapply. La Manzanita Community Resources staff will contact them directly. Residents who have changed addresses or phone numbers since receiving prior aid are encouraged to call **831-724-2997** to update their contact information.



The artist rendition of the final mural.

A Landmark Mural Celebrates Pajaro's Resilience

Beyond recovery funding, Pajaro is also healing through art. In partnership with **Hijos del Sol**, Community Bridges is bringing to life a **160-foot-by-25-foot mural on Salinas Road** — a lasting symbol of strength, unity, and pride created with community input from flood survivors and local leaders.

The mural, supported by AB 102 community grants, features a woman rising from the Pajaro River — embodying Mother Earth, renewal, and hope. Surrounding her are the people, birds, and farmlands that define Pajaro's identity.

Once complete, the mural will join other Community Bridges-supported public art—including “[Wisdom of Our Elders](#)” and “[Societies Light: Acknowledging and Empowering Women](#),” two murals at our Watsonville headquarters — as a community landmark and reminder of Pajaro's enduring strength.

Artist **José G. Ortiz** and his team at **Hijos del Sol** — known for their colorful, community-driven murals across the Central Coast — have led workshops with residents, businesses, and cultural partners such as **Casa de la Cultura** to ensure the final design reflects Pajaro's heart.

Learn more about the mural by [clicking here](#).

Learn more about the unmet needs program by [clicking here](#).

2025-2026
Event Sponsorship
OPPORTUNITIES

COMMUNITY BRIDGES
PUERTOS DE LA COMUNIDAD

Visit: communitybridges.org/events Email: donations@cbridges.org

Make Your Impact: Become a 2026 Event Sponsor

Your organization can make a lasting difference for local children, families, and older adults through Community Bridges' **2026 Sponsorship Opportunities**. Each partnership level offers meaningful ways to **highlight your brand, connect with the community, and directly fund essential services** that reach more than **20,000 neighbors** across the Central Coast every year.

Whether you choose to **host a branded reception, sponsor a table, contribute an auction item, or step forward as a Community Leader partner**, your support helps deliver meals to seniors, provide early education, expand healthcare access, and strengthen families through every stage of life.

Together, we can create lasting change — one event, one meal, and one family at a time.

Contact us today at donations@cbridges.org or call **831-227-6900** to explore sponsorship opportunities.

Learn more: communitybridges.org/events/

Build a Career That Changes Lives

Community Bridges is looking for passionate, community-driven individuals to join our team and help deliver essential services to more than **20,000 children, families, and older adults** across the Central Coast.

We're currently seeking:

HR Specialist – Talent Acquisition and Management: Help strengthen our team from within. This role supports recruitment, onboarding, training, and employee development to ensure Community Bridges continues to attract and retain exceptional talent.

Preschool Teacher – Highlands Park Center: Inspire young learners in a nurturing environment. Work alongside our early education team to build a foundation for lifelong success through play, curiosity, and care.

Program Coordinator – Nueva Vista Community

Resources: Support families in Santa Cruz by coordinating services, managing client cases, and connecting individuals to resources that promote stability and resilience.

With roles spanning **education, social services, health care, and advocacy**, there's a place for you at Community Bridges. Together, we're building stronger, more connected communities.

APPLY TODAY!



Ray's Corner

Why We Refuse to Stay Silent

Community Bridges has never shied away from hard choices when our mission or our neighbors are under threat. Today, we face one of those moments. By joining an amicus brief against the Trump administration's attempt to strip sanctuary cities and nonprofits of federal funding, we risk losing critical dollars that sustain health, nutrition and safety-net programs for thousands of local families. But to remain silent while federal intimidation dictates whom we serve would betray both our community and our values.

Since 1977, Community Bridges has taken to heart the charge of Bayard Rustin, the civil rights activist who called on every community to nurture “angelic troublemakers.” From our earliest days, our roots have been tied to people-first movements for justice. Our founding traces back to the local Black Panther Party’s Breakfast for Kids Program, which showed that feeding children and protecting dignity are acts of liberation. For nearly five decades, we have answered that call — rebels for good, standing as unwavering advocates for fairness and dignity across Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties.

That mission is now under attack. Earlier this year, President Trump issued executive orders directing federal agencies to withhold funding from sanctuary

jurisdictions. These orders are not policy in the service of the public good: they are political weapons. They aim to punish communities for protecting families and refusing to participate in mass deportation agendas. If allowed to stand, these orders would strip resources from thousands of local children, families and seniors.

Community Bridges cannot stand by in silence. With the support of our Board of Directors, we joined six other nonprofits and associations across California in an amicus brief urging the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals to uphold a preliminary injunction blocking these executive orders. The brief, led by the Asian Law Caucus and Cooley LLP, represents hundreds of organizations that feed the hungry, care for elders, provide behavioral health services and create safe spaces for vulnerable families. Together, we are united in saying: these dollars do not belong to any administration. They belong to the people, and they must be invested in the wellbeing of our communities, not hijacked as tools of division.

The stakes are not abstract. Nonprofits across California already face budget shortfalls as government cuts shift more of the burden of care onto community organizations. The threat of funding withdrawal forces agencies to consider reducing clinics, meals, disability support and education programs at exactly the time they are needed most. Worse, the fear these policies create ripples through immigrant communities. Families delay medical treatment, avoid reporting crimes and hesitate to seek support, even when their health, safety or survival depends on it.

Research confirms what we see daily: in jurisdictions with sanctuary protections, more people access preventive care, more families cooperate with local law enforcement, and communities are healthier and safer overall. When fear drives people underground, conditions worsen until emergencies strike. That means local costs rise, lives are endangered, and public safety is compromised for everyone. These executive orders don't just target immigrants; they endanger entire communities.

We recognize the risks. By standing up, Community Bridges could become a target. If our nonprofit status, federal grants, or public platforms come under attack, we will understand it as retaliation for refusing to be silent. But fear cannot dictate our mission.

We call on our peers, partners, neighbors and supporters to join us in this fight — by raising your voices, sharing our message, and investing in the safety-net services that hold our community together.

Your donation directly supports programs that feed children, deliver meals to homebound seniors, provide legal aid and health care to families, and protect those who too often go unheard. Together, we can ensure compassion and justice remain stronger than fear.

History will not remember those who stayed silent in moments of crisis. It will remember those who stood up, who chose “good trouble” over quiet compliance, and who insisted that dignity and fairness must never be withheld as punishment.

At Community Bridges, we know which side of history we intend to stand on.

With gratitude,

Ray Cancino
CEO, Community Bridges

Join us. Give today.



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}}