



Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County had the pleasure of meeting up with Frank Plant, a Meals on Wheels participant.

Connection Matters Most for This Participant

Meet Frank. Frank has been a participant of Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County for nearly a decade. At age 99, Frank looks forward to one thing in particular every week: the smiling faces of Meals on Wheels volunteers — and a hug.

“The meals are second. It’s the human contact that matters most,” Frank said. “I get a hug or two — that’s what I miss most. I just want some connection.”

He was born in 1926 and grew up in Oregon as a self-described “country boy.” He experienced food scarcity growing up, at times feeling “lucky to get a piece of bread for a meal.” He learned self-reliance early and learned to cook by observation.

He was drafted at 18 to serve in World War II. His time in the military became his first experience with eating three meals a day. Before the army, he often went hungry. His service gave him gratitude for simple stability and routine.

After the war, he worked a variety of jobs before joining the Oakland City & County Employees Credit Union, where he



worked for seven years as assistant manager handling daily operations and audits.

Frank met his future wife Mary at a Friday Fling Dance at the University of California, Berkeley. Frank was helping his brother run the Coca-Cola concession stand there. Mary asked him to dance, but he said no. She insisted, and they danced the night away together. They dated for about eight months, and they were married for 72 years before Mary passed away five years ago.

A friend introduced Frank and Mary to Meals on Wheels. Frank remembers the early meals were bare bones, frozen, and not exactly very tasty. Over time, though, the program improved, which Frank credited to the volunteers listening to his feedback and making the meals better.

Frank appreciates the Meals on Wheels volunteers who deliver meals to him, and seeing them is what he looks forward to most every week. The food is nice and appreciated, but he'd rather get the connection over the food if he had to choose between the two.

Approaching his 100th birthday, Frank keeps a positive outlook rooted in gratitude, especially for companionship, food, and laughter, which he enthusiastically shares with Meals on Wheels volunteers each week.



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Message from our CEO: A critical moment for our community's health

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



As we navigate the final weeks of the year, I'm writing to you with a critical update regarding the federal budget and its potential impact on our Meals on Wheels program.

As I mentioned in a previous newsletter, the national funding reality for nutrition programs is shifting. While we remain hopeful that Congress will resolve this before December 30, we are preparing for any outcome. Our partners at the California Department of Aging and the Seniors Council of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties are working diligently with us, and we are all optimistic that we will not miss the delivery of a single meal.

Our commitment to the 1,600 older adults we serve is unwavering. Should federal funding be delayed, Community Bridges is prepared to use our reserves to cover program costs and ensure the continuity of this essential service.

However, relying on these emergency funds is a last resort, as it would divert resources from other vital community needs.

This is where you can make a powerful difference. Here's how you can help us ensure our community's older adults are cared for without interruption:

- **Advocate at the federal level:** Contact your local congressional leadership and urge them to support a budget that fully funds the Older Americans Act and protects older adult nutrition programs from devastating cuts. Your voice is a powerful tool for change.
- **Donate to our emergency fund:** Your gift today will help us build a community-funded safety net, ensuring we can weather this uncertainty without depleting the reserves that support all our programs. You can [make a donation today](#).

Here is contact information to help you share your voice:

Speaker Mike Johnson's Office: (202) 225-2777

Congressman Jimmy Panetta (CA-19)

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](#)

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Your partnership ensures that a potential crisis in Washington doesn't become a crisis in the homes of our most vulnerable neighbors. Thank you for your continued trust and support.

—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](#)



Apple cranberry salad recipe

Enjoy the best of fall flavors with this sweet and tart green salad. Light yet crisp, it's a perfect dish for the autumnal change of weather.

Ingredients:

- 1 medium head of lettuce (about 10 cups)
- 2 medium apples, sliced
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 1/2 cup green onions, sliced
- 3/4 cup vinaigrette dressing

Instructions:

- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- Toss lettuce, apples, walnuts, cranberries, and onions in a large bowl.
- Add dressing; toss to coat. Serve immediately.

Source: Creative Recipes for Less Familiar USDA Commodities Used by Household Programs. USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, Food Distribution Service

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