



**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
**Meals on Wheels**  
FOR SANTA CRUZ COUNTY  
COMMUNITY BRIDGES  
PUNTES DE LA COMUNIDAD

**FEBRUARY 13**  
**11AM - 1PM**  
**CHAMINADE**  
**RESORT & SPA**  
1 Chaminade Lane  
Santa Cruz, CA

**For tickets and event details, visit: [CommunityBridges.org/FFTH](https://CommunityBridges.org/FFTH)**

## Celebrating 50 Years of Meals on Wheels

Our 2026 Food from the Heart Luncheon will be an extra special one: Next year, we will honor five decades of delivering nutritious meals, safety checks, and meaningful connections to older adults in our community through Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County.

Reaching 50 years has us reflecting on the thousands of volunteers, donors, and staff who helped shape this remarkable legacy. Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County has supported countless lives and established a tradition of compassion that continues to grow.

We invite you to help us celebrate 50 years of Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County at our Valentine's Day-themed **Food from the Heart Luncheon** on **February 13, 2026, at Chaminade Resort & Spa**.

Food from the Heart is an annual celebration of community and purpose. Enjoy exquisite local cuisine, inspiring stories, a silent auction, and special moments that highlight the power of giving back. All proceeds support vulnerable older adults across our region.

Your support helps us ensure no older adult goes hungry or feels isolated. **Every dollar directly fuels essential services** — from daily meals to wellness checks and social connection.



*Local Meals on Wheels Santa Cruz County participants enjoying our essential services*

**You can contribute at any of these levels:**

**\$5,000 — Feed All Santa Cruz County Seniors for One Day:** A gift of \$5,000 sponsors every meal served countywide for an **entire day**, ensuring **every senior** receives nourishment, connection, and care.

**\$2,500 — Sponsor All Home-Delivery Routes for One Day:** Your \$2,500 gift fuels **every home-delivery route for one day**, helping us reach seniors across Santa Cruz County, from Boulder Creek to the Pajaro River.

**\$1,000 — Deliver Meals to 100 Homebound Seniors:** A \$1,000 gift provides **100 home-delivered meals to local seniors**, helping them remain independent and safe in their homes.

**\$500 — Provide One Month of Dining-Site Meals:** Sponsor **one month of meals** at a dining site in Ben Lomond, Live Oak, Santa Cruz, or Watsonville, and help cultivate a life-saving community for local seniors.

**Every gift matters.** Stand with us to nourish more older adults than ever before.

Don't forget to [buy your tickets](#) now for Food from the Heart!

Purchase your tickets early to ensure you don't miss this unforgettable event. **Tickets are limited** and expected to sell quickly. We encourage you to invite your friends, colleagues, and loved ones to celebrate this milestone with us.

SUPPORT LOCAL SENIORS TODAY

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## Director's Note: Giving Thanks to Our Community

## News and 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.



It is a time of year for reflection. As program director of Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County, I'm filled with gratitude as I look back on this year.

Meals on Wheels makes a difference in the lives of people we serve by bringing them nutritious meals and friendly connections — supporting their health, dignity, and independence. This is all possible thanks to our dedicated staff, caring volunteers, and generous donors.

We have served some 10 million meals to more than 75,000 older adults since we launched our program in 1976. Our commitment to the 1,600 older adults we serve today remains unwavering.

Our team delivers nearly 600 nutritious meals every week to people in their homes. Each meal is accompanied by a wellness check — often the only human contact an older adult might have that day. We serve another 200 meals each day at in-person dining sites in Watsonville, Santa Cruz, Live Oak, and Ben Lomond, where people can enjoy companionship.



It truly takes a community, from preparing meals, coordinating delivery routes, and running dining sites to connecting people with

[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.

[\*\*Built for this moment: Community Bridges will be the light during these dark times\*\*](#)

[\*\*Pair of local nonprofits unite to provide food assistance to Santa Cruz County seniors\*\*](#)

[\*\*Get the Facts on SNAP and Senior Hunger\*\*](#)

[\*\*As Medi-Cal changes loom, Santa Cruz County's immigrant families face a new health crisis — and a call for collective action\*\*](#)

additional services that help them live independently with dignity in their homes.

***We provide so much more than meals when we connect with people: 92% of our participants say the program helps them live independently, and 87% feel safer at home.***

This year hasn't been without challenges. Rising food and gas prices, rising labor costs, and unpredictable federal policy changes and actions — including HR1 cuts and government shutdowns — are creating instability for food assistance, Medicaid and Medicare, and older adult services, putting added pressure on local programs and the older adults who rely on them for essential services.

Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County was deeply impacted by a \$70,000 cut in county funding earlier this year, combined with stagnant state and federal funding. We implemented an acuity-based waitlist on April 1— meaning we now must prioritize older adults for our services based on their immediate health and nutritional risk. This is our first-ever waitlist, and it is a direct result of needs outweighing resources.

Even in these trying times, I'm filled with hope as I look ahead. Our community has a deep commitment to lifting each other up. Whatever opportunities and challenges lie ahead, I'm confident we will continue to answer the call and ensure every one of our neighbors has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for being part of our community, and thank you for your role in making this a vibrant, caring place to call home.

*—Dana Wagner, Director, Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County*

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## Tips for the Holidays

### **Drink up — water, that is!**

Did you know that there are 22 packets of sugar in a 20-ounce soda? You wouldn't eat that many packs of sugar, so why would you drink them? Try water, unsweetened tea, or low-fat milk for a satisfying thirst quencher.

### **Don't skip meals to save calories for later.**

Skipping meals can cause you to overeat and consume more calories than if you had small meals throughout the day. A key to long-term weight loss is starting your day with a healthy breakfast.

**Avoid foodborne illness.**

Wash fresh fruit and vegetables thoroughly, separating raw meat and poultry from other food, and using separate cutting boards, knives, and platters to prepare meats. Keep hot foods hot, and cold foods cold. When in doubt, throw it out.

**Wash your hands!**

Germs can survive on door handles, railings and other surfaces you touch with your hands. After being in crowded places and always before eating, wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds

**Manage stress.**

The holidays don't need to take a toll on your health. Be mindful about overcommitting and overspending to reduce your stress level. Balance work, home and holiday parties. and above all, try to get enough sleep each night to stay well-rested, refreshed, and ready to go

**Enjoy those once-a-year holiday treats — just eat less of them.** It's possible to indulge without packing on the holiday pounds. Choose the items you can't live without and enjoy them in moderation.

—Caren Dix, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist

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

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VOLUNTEER

LEARN MORE

**Our Contact Information**

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