



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

## **A Life of Care and Community: Honoring Lois Sones**

For decades, Lois Sones has been a steady, compassionate presence in the lives of older adults across Santa Cruz County. As she steps into retirement from Elderday Adult Day Health Care, we pause to celebrate not just a career—but a legacy rooted in dignity, creativity, and deep human connection.

At Elderday, Lois helped shape a model of care that goes far beyond clinical support. Through music, art, and daily engagement, she created spaces where participants could remain connected to themselves and each other—supporting independence while honoring the fullness of each person’s life. Her work reflects what we believe at Community Bridges: that aging with dignity means staying rooted in community, with access to meaningful care and relationships.

Lois’ impact is perhaps best understood through the countless individuals and families she supported. For many caregivers, Elderday has been a lifeline—allowing loved ones to remain safely at home while receiving enriching daytime care. Lois’ leadership ensured that this care was not only reliable, but joyful.

Her story is also a reminder of what it takes to sustain this kind of impact. Programs like Elderday exist because of a shared commitment—from staff, families, and community members—to show up for one another. That commitment is more important than ever as our region faces growing needs among older adults.

As Lois retires, the music she helped bring into so many lives continues. Her work leaves a lasting imprint on our community and sets a powerful example of what compassionate care can look like.

Read more about Lois' remarkable journey and the spirit she brought to Elderday.



*Lois Sones dedicated the main activities room in the program's new headquarters to former Elderday Adult Day Health Care founder and director Majel Jordan, pictured right, whom she considered a key mentor.*

The music still plays at Elderday



*This year's Food From the Heart Luncheon raised a record \$116,000 for Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County.*

## A Community Showing Up for its Older Adults

The generosity of Santa Cruz County was on full display at this year's Food from the Heart Luncheon—our most successful yet, raising a record-breaking \$116,000 to support Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County.

This milestone comes at a pivotal moment. After facing our first-ever waitlist last year due to rising costs and reduced public funding, the need for reliable, community-driven support has never been clearer. Food from the Heart is how we respond—coming together to ensure

## IN THE NEWS

Key headlines from Community Bridges' family of programs.

- [More Than a Meal: How Community Bridges Is Helping Seniors Age With Dignity](#)
- [County Supervisors green-light SHIELD ordinance](#)
- [As Medi-Cal changes loom, Santa Cruz County's immigrant families face a new health crisis — and a call for collective action](#)

## 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

older adults continue receiving nutritious meals and meaningful connection.

This year's luncheon also marked two historic milestones: celebrating 50 years of Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County and delivering our 10 millionth meal. These achievements reflect decades of commitment, compassion, and community partnership.

We honored that spirit through our Sweetheart Awards, recognizing volunteers like Joyce Spencer and Bob Conroy, whose decades of service embody consistency and care. We also celebrated Bay Federal Credit Union as our 2026 Community Champions for more than 20 years of partnership.

From local leaders to national advocates like Leon Panetta, the message was clear: supporting older adults requires action, not just intention.

As we celebrate this moment, we also look ahead. You can help ensure Meals on Wheels continues reaching every neighbor in need.

Donate or get involved as a volunteer with Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County to help serve the more than 1,600 local seniors who depend on this lifesaving program.

[Learn More About Meals on Wheels](#)

- [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.*

# A Mural of Resilience and Belonging in Pajaro

In Pajaro, a new mural now stretches across the landscape—bold, vibrant, and deeply rooted in community identity. More than public art, it is a powerful expression of resilience, culture, and collective healing.

Created in collaboration with local artists and residents, the mural reflects the stories and spirit of Pajaro—honoring its agricultural heritage, its families, and the strength that has carried the community through challenges, including recent natural disasters.

Projects like this matter. They create space for visibility, pride, and connection—especially in communities that are too often overlooked. At Community Bridges, we know that true support goes beyond services. It means investing in places and projects that uplift voices, celebrate identity, and reinforce a sense of belonging.

The mural stands as a reminder that recovery is not just about rebuilding structures—it’s about restoring community, honoring culture, and creating something lasting together.

It also reflects what’s possible when partners, artists, and residents come together with shared purpose. That same spirit drives our work every day across Santa Cruz County.

See the full story and images of this inspiring project.

[READ MORE](#)

## CB In the Community



### Ray Cancino Appointed to State Advisory Committee

Community Bridges CEO Ray Cancino has been appointed to the state’s Disability and Aging Community Living Advisory Committee. With decades of advocacy experience, his leadership will help shape California’s Master Plan for Aging—ensuring it reflects equity, dignity, and real community needs.



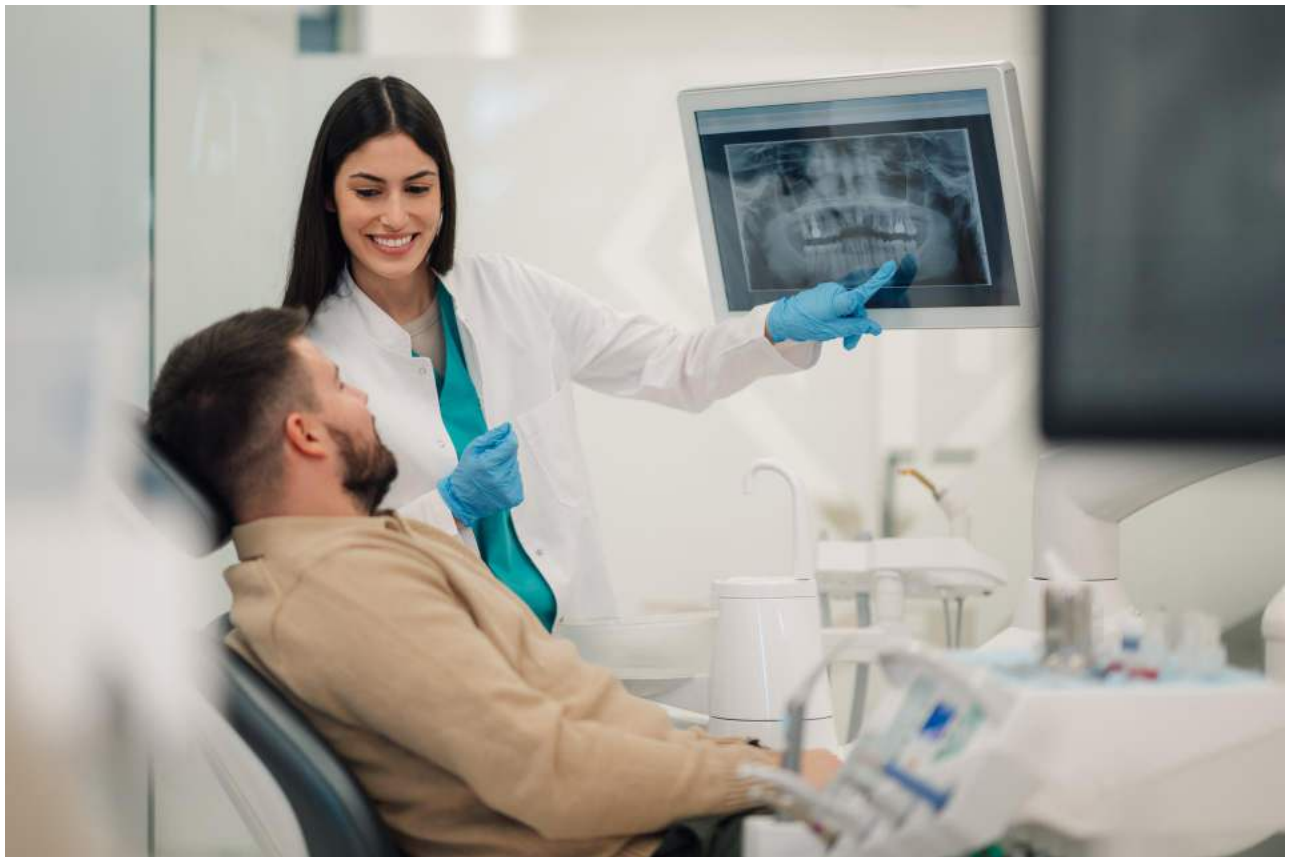
### Now Enrolling: Free & Affordable Preschool

Enrollment is open for Community Bridges’ Early Education Division. Families may qualify for free or affordable preschool across six Santa Cruz County centers, where children build confidence, creativity, and school readiness in safe, nurturing environments.



### Puentes Para Familias: Rapid Support in Crisis

Puentes Para Familias provides up to \$2,500 in emergency aid to families impacted by immigration detention. Initial funds supported six families and are now exhausted. Every donation goes directly to families—helping provide stability, dignity, and hope in urgent moments.



Changes are scheduled for July 1, 2026 for some Medi-Cal recipients who are 19 and older with unsatisfactory immigration documentation.

## **Advocating for Access: Protecting Health and Stability for Immigrant Families**

As a founding member of the Santa Cruz County Immigration Coalition, Community Bridges is working with partners to ensure families have clear, accurate information as important Medi-Cal changes take effect.

Beginning July 1, 2026, some adults age 19 and older with unsatisfactory immigration documentation will lose access to routine dental care, with coverage limited to emergency services.

At the same time, critical protections remain: all children and youth ages 0–18 continue to qualify for full Medi-Cal coverage, regardless of immigration status.

Through outreach, education, and advocacy, Community Bridges is helping families understand their options, plan ahead, and stay connected to care. This work reflects a commitment to ensuring everyone has access to essential health resources with dignity.

If you work with impacted communities, encourage participants to schedule dental appointments before the July 1 deadline.

[LEARN MORE AND ACCESS RESOURCES HERE](#)



## New Clinical Leadership Expands Mental Health Support for Families

Community Bridges has welcomed **Erin Carlson-Jones, LCSW**, as Clinical Director, bringing more than 20 years of experience in mental health, addiction treatment, and crisis intervention to lead and expand behavioral health services within the Family Resource Collective (FRC).

Serving more than 10,000 children and families each year across Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties, the FRC provides a trusted network of support—from food access and parenting education to counseling and care coordination. Under Carlson-Jones' leadership, Community Bridges is strengthening and scaling its mental health services to ensure that cost, language, insurance status, or cultural background are never barriers to care.

Her role focuses on expanding counseling services for children, youth, adults, and families; supporting and training clinical staff; and improving pathways to more intensive care when needed. Grounded in community voice, the FRC's model prioritizes culturally responsive, trauma-informed care delivered in familiar, welcoming spaces.

As demand for mental health services continues to rise, this expansion comes at a critical time. The FRC is actively welcoming new participants, ensuring families can access timely, compassionate support before challenges escalate.

[LEARN MORE](#)

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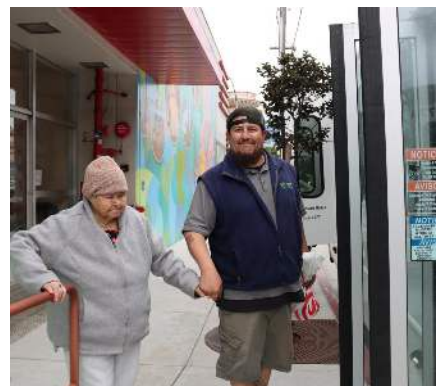
## Build a Career That Changes Lives

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

We're currently seeking:

**Program Director - Elderday Adult Day Healthcare:** Lead a multidisciplinary team providing compassionate, person-centered care for older adults and individuals with complex health needs. This role oversees daily operations, ensures regulatory compliance, and drives program quality while supporting participants and their families with dignity and respect.

**Teacher - Early Education Division:** Join a dedicated early childhood team where you'll help create a safe, nurturing, and engaging



classroom environment. Working alongside the Site Supervisor, you'll support age-appropriate learning, ensure children's well-being, and build strong, positive relationships with families and staff. Your role helps lay the foundation for children's growth, confidence, and lifelong learning.

**Preschool Substitute - Early Education Division:** Support early childhood classrooms by creating a safe, nurturing, and engaging learning environment. Substitutes play a vital role in maintaining continuity of care, fostering school readiness, and supporting young children's social and emotional development.

With roles spanning education, social services, health care, and advocacy, there's a place for you at Community Bridges. Together, we're strengthening our community—one life at a time.

APPLY TODAY!

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## Ray's Corner

### **The Music Continues: Honoring Lois and the Future of Care**

There are people whose work quietly, but profoundly, shapes the fabric of a community. Lois Sones is one of those people.

For 13 years at Elderday, Lois has led with compassion, creativity, and an unwavering belief in the dignity of older adults. She understood something essential: care is not just about services. It's about connection. Through music, art, and daily engagement, she helped create a space where participants could remain themselves—engaged, seen, and valued—while receiving the support they need to stay safely at home.

That model matters more than ever.

Elderday is a bridge to stability for families navigating the realities of aging, chronic illness, and caregiving. It allows a daughter to keep her father at home instead of placing him in institutional care. It gives a spouse the ability to continue working, knowing their loved one is safe, engaged, and supported during the day. It reduces isolation, supports cognitive health, and creates moments of joy that ripple far beyond its walls.

Families trusted Elderday because of Lois. Caregivers found relief because of Lois. And countless older adults experienced belonging, purpose, and dignity because of Lois.

As we celebrate her retirement, we also have to name the moment we are in. Programs like Elderday are facing real and immediate challenges. Changes to Medi-Cal, including shifts in eligibility and reimbursement tied to participants with unsatisfactory documentation status, are already impacting who can

access services and how programs are funded. At the same time, broader policy pressures—from federal decisions like HR1 to ongoing strain in our local health network—are compounding the challenge. We are seeing fewer medical participants, tighter margins, and growing uncertainty.

And yet, the need continues to rise.

We have more older adults aging in place than ever before. More families stretched between caregiving, work, and financial pressure. More individuals at risk of isolation, hospitalization, or premature institutionalization—outcomes that programs like Elderday are designed to prevent.

This is where we must be clear: Elderday's model works.

It is cost-effective, typically about one-quarter the cost of a nursing home, while helping people remain safely in their own homes. It keeps people healthier, longer. It reduces emergency room visits, which can cost \$1,500 to \$3,000 or more per visit, often for preventable issues tied to isolation or unmanaged conditions. It delays the need for institutional care, strengthens families, and preserves independence. But too often, families are not connected to these services early enough, or systems fail to coordinate care in ways that make access seamless.

That is not a capacity problem. It is a coordination problem.

If we are serious about supporting older adults, we must align our health care systems, community-based providers, and public partners more intentionally.

We must ensure referrals happen sooner, transitions are smoother, and funding structures reflect the true value of preventative, community-based care. Efficiency and coordination are the difference between programs like Elderday surviving this inflection point or being forced to scale back when they are needed most.

The best way we can honor Lois' legacy is not just with gratitude but with action.

Let's build a system where every older adult who could benefit from Elderday finds their way there. Let's ensure programs like this are not the exception, but the standard. And let's carry forward the spirit Lois embodied every day: that care, at its best, is personal, connected, and rooted in community.

With gratitude,

*Ray Cancino*  
*CEO, Community Bridges*

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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



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