



Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County volunteers are the lifeblood of the program.

A heartfelt thank you this National Volunteer Month

This April, in honor of National Volunteer Month, we proudly hosted our third annual Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast — bringing together the dedicated individuals who make our mission possible every day.

Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County staff were honored to serve and celebrate the 86 volunteers who deliver meals, provide wellness checks, and build meaningful connections with local older adults. The morning offered a chance to relax, share a meal, and connect outside their daily routes and service sites.

During the event, volunteers participated in an open Town Hall, engaging in thoughtful conversation about the program's impact and challenges ahead. With a rapidly growing population of older adults, rising demand, and ongoing funding constraints, the importance of volunteer support has never been greater.



In 2025 alone, Meals on Wheels delivered more than 150,000 meals to over 900 homebound older adults and served an additional 32,000 meals to 700 people at congregate dining sites. Volunteers help deliver 500 meals each day — bringing not just nutrition, but safety, companionship, and dignity.

Volunteers were recognized for their incredible commitment, from those just beginning their service to those reaching milestones of up to 25 years. Their consistency and compassion are the backbone of this program.

One story shared during the event captured that impact powerfully: After noticing concerning signs during a routine delivery, volunteers alerted staff, leading to a wellness check that ultimately saved a person's life. It's a reminder that volunteers don't just deliver meals — they deliver care when it matters most.

At the same time, the need continues to grow. Older adults are now the fastest-growing age group in Santa Cruz County, resulting in 10–15 new applications for service each week. For the first time in 50 years, the program had to create a waitlist, with 58 people currently waiting for support. Meanwhile, funding has remained flat or declined as costs for food, labor, and transportation have risen nearly 26% since 2020.

Despite these challenges, Meals on Wheels remains committed to serving the most vulnerable



— and that commitment is only possible because of our volunteers.

To all who serve: Thank you. Your time, compassion, and dedication are the foundation of everything we do. Together, we are delivering meals, connection, safety, and care.

We are honored to celebrate you this month and every month.

Interested in joining us? [Find out more.](#)



Creating good days together



Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County ensures local, homebound seniors can thrive.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and this year's theme is "More Good Days, Together." The theme is rooted in the power of standing with your community, which is something we experience every day at Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County.

Whether we are delivering meals directly to people's homes or gathering at our dining sites, we see firsthand how connection can foster empathy, understanding, and profound change. Our congregate dining sites in particular are a moving example of this.

News and Notes

We're looking for volunteer drivers 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.

[Santa Cruz County budget to dip into reserves to weather financial challenges caused by federal funding changes](#)

[A Closer Look at California's Plans to Implement Work Requirements While Facing Major Budget Shortfalls Amid Cuts in Federal Medicaid Funding](#)

[What Is the Income Limit for SNAP?](#)

We serve 250 meals each weekday at in-person dining sites in Watsonville, Santa Cruz, Live Oak, and Ben Lomond, where people enjoy companionship with their neighbors and make new connections. It's an opportunity for people who might otherwise feel alone to be seen, heard, and know they are cared for. More than 90% of congregate participants say visiting the dining sites helps them feel less isolated.

Mental Health Awareness Month is an important reminder that no one should struggle alone. Sharing lived experiences and strengthening community bonds can lead to healing and hope.

Whether you want to volunteer to support these keystones of the community or know someone who might benefit from the opportunity for connection, we invite you to [learn more](#) about our congregate dining sites.

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



Healthy snacks for people with diabetes

Diabetes friendly snacks are essential to keep blood glucose levels as close to normal as possible and to help prevent low blood sugar.

When it comes to snacking, women usually need snacks with 15 to 30 grams of carbohydrate and men usually need 30 to 45 grams of carbohydrate. Combining foods that contain protein, fiber, and healthy fats with carbohydrates will help balance blood glucose levels.

Here are some healthy ideas for snacks that are low in carbs and will give you the energy you need to get through your day:

Mozzarella string cheese: This protein-rich snack is great on its own or paired with fresh vegetables or whole wheat crackers. Carbs: less than 1 gram

Popcorn: An alternative to chips or crackers, this whole grain snack is full of fiber and can be eaten with butter, sprinkled with grated parmesan cheese, or sweetened with a light drizzle of sugar-free chocolate syrup. Carbs: 16 grams per 4 cups

Cottage cheese or Greek yogurt and berries: Cottage cheese and Greek yogurt plain is high in protein. When paired with berries, you get the bonus of beneficial antioxidants. Carbs: 15 grams in 1/2 cup cottage cheese and 1/2 cup berries

Whole wheat crackers and natural peanut butter: This powerful snack provides protein, fiber and unsaturated fats – a perfect combination. Carbs: 15 grams in 3 Triscuits with 2 tablespoons natural peanut butter

Hard-boiled eggs: Eggs are a complete protein, which is highly absorbable and has all the amino acids our bodies need. Carbs: less than 1 gram (and more than 6 grams of protein)

Edamame: Rich in healthy fiber, soy protein, antioxidants, and vitamin K, this snack also helps prevent the risk of heart disease. Carbs: 15 grams per cup (and 8 grams of fiber)

Pear with a handful of almonds: Pears are rich in essential antioxidants and fiber. Almonds contain healthy fats, fiber, protein, magnesium, and vitamin E. Carbs: 16 grams in small Asian pear and 12 almonds

Hummus and veggies: Hummus is delicious, versatile, and packed with nutrients. Choose your favorite seasonal vegetables and get dipping! Carbs: 15 grams in 3 tablespoons of hummus with 4 baby carrots and 4 small celery sticks

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

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