



# County of Santa Cruz

## HUMAN RESOURCES AGENCY

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January 11, 2006

Agenda: January 24, 2006

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
 County of Santa Cruz  
 701 Ocean Street  
 Santa Cruz, CA 95060

### REPORT ON COMMUNITY BRIDGES MEALS ON WHEELS PROGRAM

Dear Members of the Board:

Last June your Board received a last day budget report on Community Bridge's supplemental funding request for its Meals on Wheels program, which reported on the various funding reductions the program has experienced in recent years, and the impact on client services. Although economic conditions did not allow for an augmentation of Community Programs funding, your Board directed staff to work with Meals on Wheels to explore alternate service modes that might enhance transportation options to the Watsonville and Live Oak senior dining centers. The purpose of this letter is to provide your Board with that report.

Since budget hearings, all those impacted by the reductions, twenty seniors in Watsonville, and five in Live Oak, have either found their own transportation to the dining centers, or have been offered home delivered meals. Meals on Wheels has also made concerted efforts to increase transportation opportunities for seniors needing rides to the centers. The program has developed links with the Volunteer Centers' Transportation Program, which can offer volunteer drivers mileage reimbursement for providing rides to seniors who do not have transportation. Volunteer recruitment campaigns have been conducted at both the Watsonville and Live Oak senior dining sites, and an ad was placed in the Watsonville newspaper seeking volunteer drivers. Thus far, the attempt to recruit drivers has proven challenging, in part because most seniors do not drive themselves to the Watsonville site, and there has been minimal response to the Live Oak outreach presentation in December. Both Meals on Wheels and the Volunteer Centers remain committed to this service collaboration, and will continue their efforts to recruit volunteer drivers to assist seniors with rides to the dining sites.

Community Bridges has also recently received a federal Department of Transportation grant which will be used for two hybrid vans procured through Monterey Bay Air Quality Control District, and scheduled to be put into service by the end of March, 2006. Depending on availability, it is anticipated that one of the new vans will be able to provide transportation for eight to ten seniors attending the Watsonville Senior Center, and up to five of the seniors attending the Live Oak Senior Center. While this resource will restore

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transportation services to many of those seniors who were impacted by the recent funding reductions, Meals on Wheels will continue to pursue other available strategies to support all seniors needing transportation to dining sites.

At budget hearings, your Board also suggested that Community Bridges consider the feasibility of combining the Jade Street and Live Oak Senior Centers. Such a merger might result in modest savings, however it raises a number of issues that would have to be resolved prior to consolidation. While the question of merging two senior centers located within five minutes of each other merits discussion, it is inherently complex since it involves the commitment of both the City of Capitola and the County to provide services for senior residents, and would impact the availability and quality of senior services in the Mid-County area. Staff has referred this suggestion to the Seniors Council since it serves as the regional Area Agency on Aging, and is charged with the overall planning for senior services in the region. As part of an ongoing effort to maximize resources and improve services, both the Seniors Council and Community Bridges will continue to review the use and operations of Jade Street and Live Oak dining centers, and consider all potential options for enhancing nutrition services for Mid-County seniors. Your Board will be advised in the future in the event there are further developments with regard to this effort.

IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED that your Board accept and file this report on Community Bridges Meals on Wheels program services.

Very truly yours,



CECILIA ESPINOLA  
 Director

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RECOMMENDED:



Susan A. Mauriello  
 County Administrative Officer

cc: County Administrative Officer  
 Auditor Controller  
 County Counsel  
 Community Bridges  
 Seniors Council