



COUNTY CURRENTS

Santa Cruz County

www.santacruzcounty.us

Fall 2022

A publication of the County Administrative Office Carlos J. Palacios, County Administrator



In late 2021, privately-owned Watsonville Community Hospital filed for bankruptcy, threatening to impact healthcare throughout the County, including reducing the number of local emergency rooms to one. The County led a coalition of local partners in rescuing Watsonville Community Hospital and establishing public ownership of the hospital for the first time in more than two decades. Thanks also to State Sen. John Laird and Assemblymember Robert Rivas, among others, who helped with legislation to assure the hospital did not close. The hospital is implementing a turnaround plan, and major decisions are now overseen by the Pajaro Valley Health Care District, a public agency. See www.pvhcd.org for more.

Renovations are underway at **Aptos Public Library**, one of numerous projects funded by voters through **Measure S**.

The new 12,400-square-foot space will include greatly expanded amenities and is a "net zero" structure that produces as much energy as it uses.



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RESIDENTS URGED TO BUY WEATHER RADIOS

The Santa Cruz County Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience (OR3) in collaboration with Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1 have added a new tool for alerts and warnings during disasters.

OR3 is encouraging residents living in high fire danger areas to consider purchasing NOAA All Hazards Weather Radios as the County heads into peak fire season. The radios will give residents access to important emergency notifications and information distributed through the National Weather Service radio system specifically tailored by County Emergency Managers, and will supplement CodeRED, Zonehaven and other community alert systems in place throughout Santa Cruz County.

The radios can operate on batteries, solar or via a hand crank, and thus remain effective despite power outages or any loss of cellular service. They are widely available at retailers and online, and typically cost \$20-\$40. Look for the symbol at right.



All residents should sign up for CodeRED notifications by visiting www.scr911.org and clicking on the CodeRED banner. Residents may also download the CodeRED app. Residents should also know their evacuation zone by visiting <https://community.zonehaven.com> and entering their address in the search bar. To learn more about local hazards and how to prepare you and your family (including pets), visit the OR3 "Plan and Prepare" page at <https://santacruzcounty.us/OR3/Response/PlanandPrepare.aspx>.

PESTICIDE NOTIFICATION PILOT LAUNCHES

The County of Santa Cruz is pleased to partner with the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) to offer a pilot pesticide notification program to advance environmental justice and provide advance notice to residents living near agricultural properties where regulated pesticide applications may occur.

The voluntary pilot program, one of four established throughout the State of California, provides residents of the Senior Village Community in Watsonville with an online database search function, and the option to sign up for notifications, for planned pesticide applications within a one-mile radius of a valid street address. Notification to residents within the pilot community will be provided at least 36 hours prior to the scheduled pesticide application.

"We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with DPR on this pilot project and look forward to receiving comments and feedback from our community and

growers, which will be important as DPR develops a statewide notification system," County Agricultural Commissioner Juan Hidalgo said. The notification system will advance the state's goal of providing community access to information in advance of applications and complement existing pesticide laws and regulations that protect public health and the environment.

Residents may use the system's search function or sign up to receive a text or email notification by visiting the Agricultural Commissioner's Office webpage at www.agdept.com, clicking on "Pesticide Notification Pilot Project" and selecting "Subscribe Now".

Additional information on the county-led pilot projects can be found on the DPR's website. People with questions may call the Santa Cruz County Agricultural Commissioner's Office at (831) 763-8080.



Parks & Rex Redux



The 6th annual Parks & Rex celebration at Simpkins Family Swim Center is in the books! The yearly event brings family, food and dogs together for a fun-filled afternoon. For a list of local County Parks events and classes, visit www.scparks.com.

\$15M FOR LOCAL GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY

The groundwater sustainability agencies for the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin and for the Pajaro Valley Basin have each been awarded \$7.6 million to help implement projects to create sustainable groundwater basins.

The grants are part of \$150 million awarded statewide through the Sustainable Groundwater Management (SGM) Grant Program, which is overseen by the California Department of Water Resources, which works with local water agencies and partners to promote healthy and sustainable groundwater basins. The awards went to the Mid-County Groundwater Agency and the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency.

"This success is a reflection of all the hard work that our local agencies have put in to groundwater management, and we are grateful that the Department of Water Resources recognizes both the local need for this funding and our ability to put it to good use," said Sierra Ryan, water resources manager for Santa Cruz County. "This funding will go a long way in helping us achieve local groundwater sustainability."

Funding for the Mid-County Groundwater Basin be overseen by the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency and would help relocate coastal wells, increase aquifer injection to improve groundwater supplies, improve groundwater and hydraulic modeling in the basin, and more.



'A Santa Cruz Like Me' effort seeks diverse representation

Did you know Santa Cruz County has approximately 40 standing committees and commissions that must be appointed by the Board of Supervisors?

Unfortunately, filling this many positions in a way that represents the community is often a challenge, and the County is undertaking an effort to improve economic, racial, age, disability, gender, geographic and other forms of diversity within local government.

Known as "A Santa Cruz Like Me," this partnership with Santa Cruz Community Ventures has made some preliminary finding when it comes to those advising the Board of Supervisors on important decisions.

[According to a 2021 report](#), there was no young adult representation on any County committee or commission. South County and Latino populations comprised roughly half of the expected representation when compared to County demographics. Homeowners and those with college degrees were overwhelmingly overrepresented as

well.

To further study the report and begin to implement changes, County staff is working on the creation of resources for committee and commission liaisons to aid in reviewing boards and commissions processes, including the demographic data review as part of the onboarding process for appointees, and clarifying the roles of those involved in the appointment and management of these bodies.

County staff is establishing a seven-member working committee comprised of up to three currently appointed members of boards and commissions, up to two liaisons of boards and commissions, and up to two community partners that work with demographic groups currently underrepresented.

Along with demographic data gathering efforts, the committee will be charged with reviewing data variances and proposing solutions to address issues identified in the report.

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County



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www.santacruzcountyjobs.com



Project Homekey delivers supportive housing to County

The State-funded [Project Homekey](#) offers competitive, project-specific awards to create a range of housing types to address homelessness, from hotel and motel conversions to single-family homes and multi-family apartments.

Consistent with the County's strategic framework to address homelessness, the County of Santa Cruz applied for Homekey funding for four projects to house extremely low income individuals and families at risk of homelessness. The County is pleased to report that two of these projects has been approved so far, and will reduce the impact of homelessness on individuals, families and the community.

Park Haven Plaza

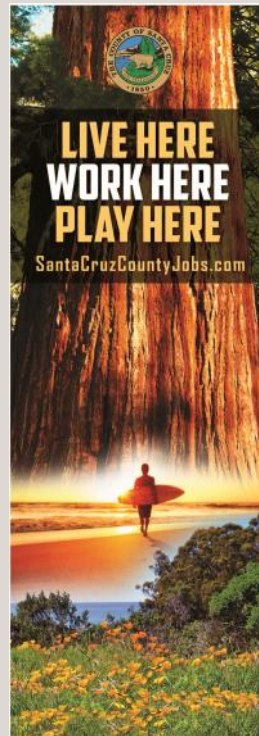
The project will provide 35 units, 31 for very low-income veterans and youth exiting the

foster care system, and four units set aside for families with children under age 18, and one manager's unit. The project construction will be modular construction and is located near major transit and traffic routes and is near Cabrillo College, providing residents with educational and programmatic opportunities offered through the school.

Veteran's Village

In partnership with the Santa Cruz Veterans Memorial Building Board of Trustees, the project converts an existing motel at 8705 Highway 9 into 20 units of permanent supportive housing for veterans as risk of or currently experiencing homelessness. The project will offer up to nine modular or newly constructed units to supplement existing structures, serving an estimated 20-24 tenants.

OCTOBER 27 CAREER FAIR



The County of Santa Cruz is pleased to invite members of the public to the second annual [County of Santa Cruz Career Fair](#), to be held October 27th from 4-7 p.m. at the County Governmental Building, 701 Ocean Street.

Returning for the first time since the pandemic, the Career Fair offers residents of all skill levels a chance to discuss career opportunities with representatives from more than twenty County departments, including Animal Services, Auditor-Controller-Treasurer-Tax Collector, District Attorney, Health Services and Human Services, Parks and Recreation, Probation, Public Works and many more.

Santa Cruz County employs local residents in a wide variety of roles and offers competitive pay and benefits. Attendees will be able to network with department representatives and learn how to get a job with the County.

REPORT: LOCAL LABOR MARKET DECLINING

A new study by the Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board demonstrates significant changes in the county's labor market, with a long-term decline in labor force participating rates accelerating dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, about 6,400 local employees left the labor market during the pandemic and have not returned, representing a 5 percent decline in overall labor market participation. Lower-wage industries were especially impacted — intensifying the longer term trend — while there has been an increase in the proportion of higher-quality jobs, leading to an overall improvement in local job quality. The 2022 State of the Workforce report also found remote work having a significant impact, with employees spending 27 percent less time at the workplace, potentially contributing to declines in destination shopping

and other impacts to the local economy.

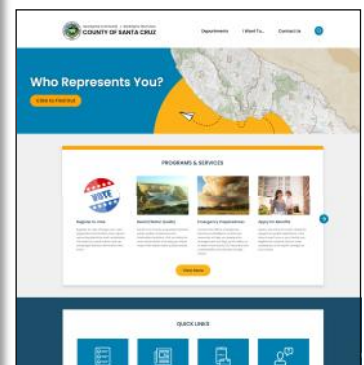
The health care industry also faces potential disruption, part of a nationwide trend. With many leaving the sector due to burnout or other reasons, many healthcare occupations are expected to see high demand in the coming years, until training and education pipelines can fill the gaps. The agricultural workforce continues to decline. Peak farm employment was 32 percent higher in June 2010 than in June 2021, with the pandemic only partly contributing to a longer-term trend.

The report makes several recommendations, including establishing programs to increase labor force participation and supporting workforce recruitment and retention efforts in the health care and hospitality industries.

To read the report, visit <https://workforcesc.com/publications>.

Visit our new homepage!

With so many residents visiting us on the web for services, the county is in the process of rejuvenating its online presence to better serve residents. While there is much work to be done, our new homepage is complete, with many more changes to come in the coming year. Find us at www.santacruzcounty.us!



Point-In-Time Count Shows Progress Among Vulnerable Groups, Slight Overall Increase

Santa Cruz County's biannual Point-In-Time (PIT) Count provides an overview of homelessness over time in Santa Cruz County. The PIT Count results in a conservative estimate of the numbers of people and households experiencing homelessness on a single night and also provides demographic, health, economic, housing and other information about those in our community currently living without a stable home.

The 2022 PIT Count demonstrates progress in addressing family and youth homelessness locally. Compared with 2019 data, the 2022 data shows a 59 percent decrease in overall homelessness among families and a 94 percent decrease in unsheltered homelessness among families. Significant resource investments and collaborations focused on serving these populations coupled with more community support and private-market housing options for these groups likely contributed to these declines.

Overall, the 2022 PIT Count results show a small 6 percent increase in the numbers of people living without a home in Santa Cruz County since 2019, the last year the PIT Count was conducted. The data shows an estimated 2,299 people experienced homelessness at the time of the count, including 1,774 who were unsheltered. However, the 2022 count data shows statistically significant increases in the numbers of people experiencing homelessness who self-report substance use disorders (1,073) and seri-

ous mental illness (818). Furthermore, the numbers of veterans experiencing homelessness more than doubled from 2019. Resource and eligibility limitations for serving these populations, limited housing-focused outreach, stigma associated



with behavioral health conditions, and closures or reductions in residential capacity during the pandemic may have contributed to these increases. Behavioral health treatment efficacy is limited when people do not have stable living environments.

Deeper and sustained investments, cross-system collaboration, and community support for serving these populations are needed to shift these trends.

"The 2022 PIT Count shows significant progress in addressing homelessness among families and youth," said Robert Ratner, director of the County of Santa Cruz Housing for Health Division. "However, there have been significant increases in homelessness among seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities. The lack of affordable housing remains the biggest barrier to preventing and ending homelessness in the community. We have more work to do to meet the objectives set forth in our Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz shared framework to ensure all residents have stable, safe, and healthy places to live."

Inadequate local housing supply

and related high housing costs, especially for renters, continue to be both a significant contributor to homelessness and an inhibitor to reducing the numbers of persons experiencing homelessness.

Current data shows that just 65 percent of homeless individuals with subsidized housing vouchers have been able to find a home, and Santa Cruz

County overall remains behind on capacity targets for housing in key areas, including very low-income affordable housing. A recent report released by the National Low Income Housing Coalition ranks Santa Cruz County as the second most expensive rental market in the country and the least affordable for average local renters. Through Project Homekey and other efforts, the County and local cities are pursuing additional options to increase the availability of affordable housing.

In the Bay Area, homelessness

is up overall 9 percent. This includes San Francisco (down 3.5 percent), Santa Clara County (up 3 percent), Alameda County (up 22 percent), Contra Costa County (up 35 percent) and others. Homelessness in Monterey County declined 15.5 percent and in San Benito increased 21 percent since the most recent PIT Count.

PIT Count methodology is known to undercount the number of people experiencing homelessness and excludes people experiencing homelessness staying in institutional settings, those in temporary situations, and those living in unsafe or overcrowded spaces. The count likely undercounts unsheltered people on a single night due to challenges locating people in hidden areas or situations, particularly during a pandemic.

The full Point-in-Time Count report will be posted on the Housing for Health Partnership website, at [https://](https://housingforhealthpartner-)



REJUVENATION: The Live Oak Branch Library upgrade is the latest Measure S project to benefit the community, with a celebration held Oct. 1. For a full list of completed and underway projects, go to https://www.santacruzpl.org/measure_s.

Meet Your Supervisor

Manu Koenig

District 1 includes Live Oak, Summit Road Soquel and parts of Capitola and Santa Cruz.



Zach Friend

District 2 includes Aptos, Corralitos, part of Capitola and the South County coast.



Ryan Coonerty

District 3 includes much of Santa Cruz and the North Coast.



Greg Caput

District 4 includes most of Watsonville and the Pajaro Valley.



Bruce McPherson

District 5 includes the San Lorenzo Valley, Scotts Valley and parts of Santa Cruz.



Click on each supervisor to learn more about them and their responsibilities, including how to reach them during constituent office hours.

Annie Morhauser named 2022 Artist of the Year

Annie Morhauser has been named 2022 Artist of the Year by the Santa Cruz County Arts Commission.

The Artist of the Year award is presented to local artists for outstanding achievement in the discipline of performing, visual, or literary arts who have also made a substantial contribution to the cultural enrichment of Santa Cruz County. Morhauser is the founder of Annieglass, a highly successful line of glass tableware and sculpture sold worldwide. Hand-crafting her glassware in Santa Cruz County since 1983, she developed her company throughout the years to become one of the largest and most successful American glass studios.

By combining skills as a designer, artisan, and businesswoman, Morhauser has built a highly regarded brand and has been fea-

tured in the collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow, Scotland, and the Corning Museum of Glass in Corning, New York. She has won numerous design awards and patents for her work. Annieglass can be purchased in the finest stores, and is collected by chefs, celebrities, bridal couples and many loyal local customers. Annie has accomplished something rare: crossing over into the commercial world while tenaciously retaining



A free **Profile Performance** will be held at the Crocker Theater, Cabrillo College, on October 22, 2022 from 7-9 p.m. Morhauser will premiere a film that tells her story of resilience and success, followed by questions.

her fine art approach. Her downtown Santa Cruz store was one of the first to reopen after the 1989 earthquake, despite the destruction of more than four tons of glass in her studio. Next year, Morhauser will celebrate 40 years of creating sculptural glassware with her skilled team of artisans. The Annieglass studio, originally 400 square feet in the Old Sash Mill, is now a manufacturing facility of more than 16,000 square feet in Watsonville. Twice each year a new collection is introduced. Annieglass has invigorated the ancient craft of glassmaking with new technology and original design.

Annie came to Santa Cruz in 1977. She learned glassblowing at the College of San Mateo and San Francisco State University before receiving a scholarship to the glass program as a student of Marvin Lipofsky at the California College of Arts and Crafts.

Quick Guide

Citizens rely on county government for many needed services. Use this handy guide to find who to call, or come find us on the web at: www.santacruzcounty.us.

Main Number
(831) 454-2000

Board of Supervisors
(831) 454-2200

Agricultural Commissioner
(831) 763-8080

Animal Services
(831) 454-7303

Assessor's Office
(831) 454-2002

Benefits
(888) 421-8080

County Clerk/Elections
(831) 454-2060

Economic Development
(831) 454-2728

Environmental Health
(831) 454-2022

Health Services Agency
(831) 454-4800

Parks and Recreation
(831) 454-7900

Planning Department
(831) 454-2580

Public Works
(831) 454-2160

Recycling Information
(831) 454-2333

Sheriff/Coroner
(831) 471-1121
(call 911 if emergency)

Superior Court
(831) 763-8060

Tax Collections
(831) 454-2510