

*The County of
Santa Cruz
Annual Report 2019*

THRIVING IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Oliver Potts at LEO's Haven, the new inclusive playground

A NOTE TO THE COMMUNITY

County Administrative Officer



John Leopold
1st District



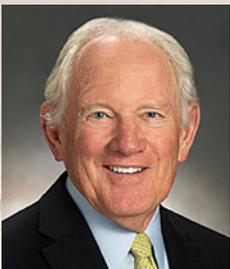
Zach Friend
2nd District



Ryan Coonerty
3rd District



Greg Caput
4th District



Bruce McPherson
5th District

I am pleased to present Santa Cruz County's 2019 Annual Report.

Over the last year, we have built on our work to set a new course for County government on behalf of our residents. These changes include adoption of the County's first-ever two-year budget, our first-ever Operational Plan and the most significant step forward for improving Pajaro Valley flood protection in more than half a century, freeing up state and federal funding for this critical project.

These developments have led to positive change for residents. We recently opened LEO's Haven at Chanticleer Park, the County's first-ever all-inclusive playground. We are also opening the Felton Library and Discovery Park, a project offering both indoor and outdoor educational resources.

We increased year-round shelter capacity for homeless residents by nearly 30 percent. We continued public safety programs such as the Focused Intervention Team, which addresses criminal behavior in downtown areas, while opening new facilities such as the Aptos Public Safety Center, Probation Service Center and South County Behavioral Health Building.

We approved new affordable housing developments, and new medical and dental clinics. We also made it easier to provide housing for teachers, bus drivers and other public employees, and several of our programs won statewide recognition, including our Zero Waste program.

The upcoming year will bring new challenges, but we are ready to meet them. We will continue this work. The residents of Santa Cruz County deserve nothing less.

Thank you,

Carlos J. Palacios
County Administrative Officer



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN

Santa Cruz County is committed to our community. To learn more about our work on behalf of residents, including our Strategic Plan, specific objectives and dashboards measuring how well we're meeting our goals, visit www.sccvision.us.

“AT FIRST, I WONDERED HOW WOULD THEY BE ABLE TO HELP ME? BUT HAVING A NURSE, AND HAVING THAT ONE FRIEND THAT’S NEVER GONNA PUT YOU DOWN, IT MADE SUCH A DIFFERENCE!”

—Mary Lou Arregin, Graduate

COMMITTED TO HEALTHY FAMILIES

Nurse Family Partnership

Mary Lou Arregin and her daughter Autumn are first cohort graduates of this program designed to help first time mothers with challenged resources through their pregnancy and the first two years with their new child.

Many of the young women who come to this program struggle with difficult financial, trauma, addiction or trust issues.

Mary Lou learned about pregnancy myths, and what to watch for and what to do while she was pregnant and after she had her baby.

“This is the best job in the world! We’re working to make our program more appealing to the highest risk women, who don’t realize they want it.” —Nicole Benjamin, Public Health Nurse

For more information about this program, go to www.santacruzhealth.org



PROVIDING FOUNDATIONS FOR LIFE

Good to be home: Pippin Orchard

Thomas Pray grew up in Santa Cruz County and worked for years as a laborer before medical issues cost him and his wife their South County home. They spent seven years camping and living in their van before finally winning a home lottery for Pippin Orchard, a 46-unit affordable housing development created by the County and the City of Watsonville. Now, he and his wife and two dogs have a home and they're on a path to health and stability.

"This has changed my life," Pray said. "Without this home, I don't know where I'd be."

In a region where housing affordability is a challenge for so many, access to attainable housing is one of Santa Cruz County's top priorities. The need is great. To reduce homelessness, childhood poverty and other inequities, more places like Pippin Orchard are needed so that more people like Thomas can find a home.

For more information on affordable housing, go to <https://www.midpen-housing.org>





**“THIS HAS CHANGED MY LIFE,
WITHOUT THIS HOME, I DON’T
KNOW WHERE I’D BE.”**

—Thomas Pray

BUILDING EQUAL PLAYING FIELDS

Where everyone belongs: LEO's Haven

“THEY BUILT THIS FOR ME AND KIDS LIKE ME! THIS IS THE BEST PARK EVER! I NEVER WANT TO GO HOME!”

— Oliver Potts



The chickens...look at all the chickens!!

Located in the center of the county, in the Live Oak community, LEO's Haven is the new Chanticleer Park inclusive playground, and an example of private and public efforts coming together for the whole community. 'LEO' stands for Lauren, Evelyn, and Oliver Potts, three siblings. Because Oliver used a wheelchair for mobility, the kids found it frustrating to play together on most playgrounds. The community rallied with Oliver's parents to create this inclusive playground within Santa Cruz County, so that children of all abilities would have a place to play that was designed for them - a safe, green space where everyone belongs.

More information at <https://www.santacruzplaygroundproject.org>

It's a whole-hearted response to a serious need within the greater Santa Cruz County community for special needs children and their families. These children deal with additional physical and emotional demands, and this playground provides a place where they can play and escape together for a few minutes, or a few hours. It's also a place for parents with similar needs to congregate and support one another.

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

Feeling valuable: Girls Paving the Way

**“WE DID HARD THINGS
AND FUN THINGS. I CARE
ABOUT MYSELF AND
OTHERS MORE NOW”**

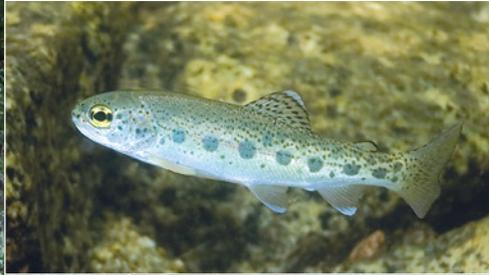


Girls Paving The Way is an example of a kaleidoscope effect of many community organizations uniting their efforts to support one group of middle school girls to realize how valuable they are. Spanning three years, 6th-8th grades, 24 Latina girls in south Santa Cruz County have had the opportunity to gain a well-rounded view of the world, and envision themselves able to do and be much more than they imagined. The curriculum ranged from mentorship five days/week after school to homework support to special field trips, kayaking, swimming, and experiencing life beyond home and school. The program was a partnership between Santa Cruz County Parks, UC Santa Cruz, YWCA Watsonville, the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County and many others who contributed to its success.

Read all about it at <https://www.cfsc.org/updates/girls-in-pajaro-valley-initiative>

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Fish story: Upper Zayante Habitat Restoration



**“WE ONLY GET
PROJECTS
DONE BECAUSE
WE’RE WORKING
TOGETHER.”**

—Kristen Kittleson



Healthy streams play an essential role in our communities by providing water supply, recreation and habitat for fish and wildlife, including our local, native endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead. Fallen trees and wood in the stream contribute to a healthy environment for coho and steelhead by creating habitat that supports reproduction and young fish. It also provides places for young fish to hide from predators and to escape from high flows. For humans, wood in streams can stabilize banks and channels, promote groundwater recharge and reduce flooding.

To encourage healthy fish habitat and watersheds and bring threatened and endangered species back from the brink, numerous organizations, backed by state funding, partnered to enhance coho and steelhead stream habitat in Upper Zayante Creek. The County has partnered on similar projects throughout the Santa Cruz Mountains, and believes protecting the environment requires working closely with community partners dedicated to a common goal.

Pictured from left to right: Lisa Lurie, Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County; Kristen Kittleson, County of Santa Cruz; Carly Blanchard, San Lorenzo Valley Water District; Chris Berry, City of Santa Cruz Water Department; Jon Jankovitz, California Department of Fish and Wildlife; Amanda Ingham, NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region