



AREA AGENCY ON AGING

San Benito & Santa Cruz Counties

FOSTER GRANDPARENT/SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM

Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara & Santa Cruz Counties

PROJECT SCOUT
Tax Counseling Assistance

AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CONNECTION
Navigating the San Benito County Senior & Disability Services Network

AREA AGENCY ON AGING ADVISORY COUNCIL

Wednesday August 19, 2026

10 a.m. – 12 Noon

Hybrid in-person - Zoom Meeting

San Benito County Epicenter
440 San Benito Street, Hollister, CA

Guests can also join via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86490817703>

Meeting ID: 864 9081 7703

One tap mobile

+16699006833, 86490817703# US (San Jose)

Dial by your location

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/k6W3Ygvu>

AGENDA

- 10 a.m.
1. Welcome, Call to Order and Introductions
 2. Additions & Deletions to the Agenda
 3. Receive Announcements from Advisory Council Members
 4. Comments from Members of the Public on Items Not on the Agenda
- 10:10
5. Approve minutes of the June 2026 Advisory Council Meeting

175 Westridge Drive, Watsonville, California 95076 www.seniorscouncil.org
PHONE: AAA – (831) 688-0400 • FG/SCP – (831) 475-0816 • SCOUT – 1-877-373-8297 • FAX: (831) 688-1225

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MONTEREY, SAN BENITO, & SANTA CRUZ COUNTIES & YOUR PRIVATE DONATIONS

- 10:15 6. Committee Reports
 A. Triple A Council of California
 B. Advocacy Committee
 a. State & Local Funding
 b. Candidate Forum(s)
- 10:45 7. Executive Director's Report
 A. Budget Shortfalls
 B. Agency Operations
 C. SB 1249 & CDA's 2030 Plan
 D. Master Plan for Aging Local Playbooks
- 11:25 8. Program Reports (written)
 A. Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion Program
 B. Aging & Disability Resource Connection (ADRC)
 C. Volunteer Coordination Project
 D. Project SCOUT
 E. AAA Updates
- 11:50 9. Miscellaneous Correspondence & Other Items
- 12 noon 10. Adjourn

Next Meeting:
Wednesday September 16, 2026
10 am to 12 Noon
Seniors Council Conference Room
175 Westridge Dr., Watsonville, CA

Questions, Clarifications or Additional Information:

If you have a question or wish clarification or additional information about any agenda item or attached materials, please telephone Seniors Council Executive Director Clay Kempf at 688-0400 ext. 115 before the meeting. If you get voicemail, please leave a detailed message so that a response can be made.

Distribution of Materials:

If you have information to share with members of the Board, a table or other suitable space will be provided on which you may make it available. It is the wish of the Executive Committee that meetings not be disrupted by distribution of paperwork or other items.

Accessibility:

This organization attempts to make meeting content understandable in languages other than English. All Meeting rooms are accessible for people with disabilities. If you wish to discuss reasonable modifications or accommodations for language or disability, please contact the Seniors Council office at 688-0400 at least 48 hours before the meeting.

Seniors Council Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Seniors Council to enable older persons to function with independence and dignity in their homes and in the community to their fullest capacity.

Area Agency on Aging Mission

To provide leadership in addressing issues that relate to older Californians; to develop community-based systems of care that provide services which support independence within California's interdependent society, and which protect the quality of life of older persons and persons with functional impairment; and to promote citizen involvement in the planning and delivery of services.



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PROJECT SCOUT
Texas Continuing Assistance

AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CONNECTION
Navigating the San Benito County Senior & Disability Services Network

AREA AGENCY ON AGING ADVISORY COUNCIL
(Held in person at Watsonville office with hybrid Zoom broadcast)

June 17, 2026

MINUTES

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Susan Westman (City of Capitola)
Steve Clark (City of Scotts Valley)
Tara Ireland (Empowered Aging; AAA Service Provider)
Mindy Sotelo (San Benito County Board of Supervisors)

ALTERNATES PRESENT:

Sandy Brown (alternate J. Cummings)
Regina Kelbert (alternate K. De Serpa)
Jacques Bertrand (alternate S. Westman)

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Mark Johannessen (At-large, Seniors Commission)
Stephanie Auld (Representative of Persons with Disabilities)
Justin Cummings (Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors)
Ari Parker (City of Watsonville)
Dolores Morales (Councilmember, City of Hollister)
Scott Freels (City of San Juan Bautista)
Gabriela Trigueiro (City of Santa Cruz)
Kimberly De Serpa (Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors)
Angela Curro (San Benito County Board of Supervisors)

VACANCIES: Representative of Persons with Low Income; CSL Rep.; At Large Rep.

STAFF PRESENT:

Clay Kempf, Seniors Council Executive Director; Patty Talbott, AAA Administrator; Zach Johnson, Seniors Council Administrative Services Officer; Britt Bassoni, ADRC; Corey Shaffer, Volunteer Project; Crystal Ortiz, ADRC

OTHERS PRESENT:

text

1. Welcome, Call to Order and Introductions

Acting Chair Steve Clark called the meeting to order at 10:08AM. Introductions were skipped.

2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

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5-1

None.

3. Receive Announcements from Advisory Council Members

None.

4. Comments from Members of the Public on Items Not on the Agenda

None.

5. Consent Agenda

Advisory Council members were referred to minutes of the May AAA Advisory Council meeting.

MOTION, Sotelo/Brown, to approve the minutes of the May 2025 AAA Advisory Council meeting.

PASSED

6. Committee Reports

A. *Resource Development Committee* –

B. *Advocacy Committee*

- a. State & Local Funding – SB 1249 and CDA 2030 plan still looming. Current controversy is over Intrastate Funding Formula, which has not been updated in a long time. Conflict between urban and rural PSAs. One potential change would lower threshold for unspent funds from 95% to 90%, with leftover funds distributed. Going through committees now.

CDA will be monitoring Seniors Council programs and fiscal soon.

CORE funding still being worked on, with an emphasis on prioritizing safety net services; Sandy credited Supervisors De Serpa and Cummings for their efforts. Tara noted that Supervisors used to visit programs, and would welcome them doing so to gain understanding of impact. Broad discussion about CORE process, funding allocations, and confusing/arbitrary criteria for assessing proposals. Additional discussion of desired funding priorities and political realities, including proposed tax measure; concern about rollout of this measure. Group discussed other options, including increasing hotel/short-term rental tax rates.

Clay pointed to 6.B-9 in packet for budget.

- b. SB 1261 – John Laird's bill to protect ADRCs is associated AAA is de-designated. Full support from Seniors Council.

c. *Candidate Forum(s)* –

7. Executive Director Report

- A. Budget Shortfalls – Agency is in crisis due to multi-year funding being counted as reserves. This means available reserves are closer to \$300,000 than the \$600,000 expected. Funds also must be spent in this fiscal year. Projected budget situation for 26-27 has not changed other than reserve levels. Of remaining reserves, about \$80k are obligated, \$230k unobligated.

- B. Agency Operations – FGP/SCP grant up for renewal, at a time when Fed government is trying to end AmeriCorps. Project SCOUT stable for now; facing some cuts. ADRC funding remains flat, no room for increasing expenses.

Broad discussion of funding situation nationally and impacts on volunteer-based programs.

- C. SB 1249 & CDA's 2030 Plan – discussed previously.

- D. Master Plan for Aging Local Playbooks – Presenting to SV City Council tonight. Ongoing tension with County efforts focusing more on their Needs Assessment and their priorities, including spreadsheet that includes nothing from LP. Group discussed long-running lack of engagement from County's side.

Zach reported on recent Seniors Commission meeting, despite being unable to present due to lack of quorum.

8. Program Reports (written)

- A. FGP/SCP –
- B. ADRC –
- C. Volunteer Coordination Project –
- D. Project SCOUT –

9. Miscellaneous Correspondence & Other Items

No July Meeting; August meeting in Hollister at 440 San Benito St. (Community Foundation for San Benito County)

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at
Minutes prepared by: Zachary Johnson

Next Meeting: **AUGUST 19, in HOLLISTER** [no meeting in July]



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Date: 8-14-26

To: AAA Advisory Council

From: Clay Kempf, Executive Director

RE: Triple-A Council of California

BACKGROUND

The Area Agency on Aging Council of California, usually referred to as TACC, is a long-standing entity that meets quarterly in Sacramento and is made up of a single representative from each of the 33 AAA Advisory Councils. TACC is overseen by the California Commission on Aging. TACC was established by the Older Californians Act with the mission of opening communication and collaboration among local advisory councils and key state partners. The purpose and goals of TACC include:

- Learn through the exchange of information, ideas, trends, and exposure to new models of service delivery,
- Advocate on issues of concern in local/state planning processes, and
- Strengthen the effective advocacy and leadership skills of local advisory councils.

CURRENT STATUS

Due to the time and travel commitment required of TACC participation, no members of our Advisory Council have been able to accept the responsibility of the role. HOWEVER, there is good news. I've noticed that recent meetings of TACC have been virtual, and therefore no longer require travel to Sacramento.

Minutes of the last two meetings have been included in your packets, along with TACC's bylaws.

ADVISORY COUNCIL ACTION

Staff encourages the AAA Advisory Council to discuss the role of TACC and re-consider the appointment of a representative and possibly an alternate to TACC in light of meetings now being held virtually.

6A-1

TACC Bylaws

The Bylaws of the Triple-A Council of California as amended February 26, 2020.

BYLAWS

of

THE TRIPLE-A COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

ARTICLE I Purposes

Section 1. Purposes:

The mission of the Triple-A Council of California (TACC) is to:

- Promote communication and collaboration among local Area Agency on Aging advisory councils, and key state partners;
- Educate through the exchange of information, ideas, trends, and models of service delivery;
- Advocate on issues of concern in local/state planning processes; and
- Strengthen the effectiveness of local advisory councils.

ARTICLE II Membership

Section 1. Membership

The TACC Membership consists of the Presidents, Chairpersons or designee of each of the 33 Area Agency on Aging advisory councils. TACC members must be confirmed by the Area Agency on Aging Director (or designee) in writing to the TACC office prior to attending their first meeting.

Section 2. Size and Qualifications:

The Membership shall consist of no less than thirty-three (33) and no more than thirty-six (36) members who:

1. Are serving as the current Chairperson, President or designee of an advisory council to an Area Agency on Aging (AAA) in the state of California as required by section 9403 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code (advisory councils

are defined in the Older Americans Act of 1965 as amended and in the Federal Register, page 33772, paragraph 1321.57 dated August 31, 1988.); or

2. Are currently serving as an elected officer of TACC; or
3. Are the Immediate Past President.

Section 3. Alternate Members:

- A. One Alternate member may be designated to substitute for the member in her/his absence.
- B. The Alternate member shall be appointed by the Area Agency on Aging in accordance with Advisory Council bylaws and must be a member of that council.
- C. Acting for the member, the Alternate member shall have all rights and privileges of a member subject to restrictions contained in the bylaws.
- D. If the member and Alternate member are both present at a TACC meeting, only the member shall be entitled to TACC reimbursement for that entire meeting.

Section 4. Voting:

Each member in attendance at a meeting shall have one vote. Alternate members may vote only in the absence of a member.

Section 5. Regular and Special Meetings:

- A. All meetings of TACC shall be held in Sacramento, California, unless the members decide otherwise.
- B. Regular meetings shall be held at least twice a year.
- C. The President, or five (5) members, may call a special meeting or change the date and time of a meeting on written request to the Executive Committee. Such meetings shall be held in accordance with the Bagley Keene Open Meeting Act. (Gov. Code Section 11120-1132.)

Section 6. Quorum:

- A. A quorum for the transaction of business shall be comprised of one-third (1/3) of the current Membership.
- B. A meeting at which a quorum is initially present may continue to transact business notwithstanding the withdrawal of members, if any action taken is approved by at least a majority of the required quorum for such meeting.

- C. Each member or Alternate member shall have one vote, and shall vote in person.

Section 7. Compensation:

The members and Alternate members shall serve without compensation, provided, however, that nothing in this section shall prohibit reimbursement of the members or Alternate members for their actual allowable expenses which have been fixed and determined by State Law.

In those instances where the local AAA provides reimbursement for its council member to attend TACC, members shall comply with AAA reimbursement rules.

ARTICLE III Officers

Section 1. Officers:

The officers of the TACC shall be a President, Vice President, and the Immediate Past President.

Section 2. Election of Officers:

- A. Nominations for these offices shall be made by the Nominating Committee and delivered by postal mail or email to all TACC members at least 10 days prior to the meeting closest to July 1. Additional nominations may be made by the members at this meeting. The consent of each nominee shall be obtained prior to the nomination.
- B. Election and installation of officers shall take place at the meeting closest to July 1st.
- C. All officers shall have served at least one year on an advisory council to an Area Agency on Aging in California prior to election.
- D. Officers shall assume their offices at the conclusion of the meeting at which they are elected and shall serve until the next annual election. The term of office shall be for one year.
- E. Any President or Vice President elected to serve more than six (6) months of a vacated office shall be considered to have served a full one-year term.
- F. No officer shall be elected to hold a specific office for more than two consecutive terms.

6.A-4

- G. An officer may continue to serve or be elected or re-elected as an officer. However, a member may not hold an elective position for more than six (6) consecutive years.

Section 3. Removal and Resignation of Officers:

- A. An officer may be removed for cause from office by a vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the Membership. The proposed action shall have been placed on the agenda and the officer shall have been notified in writing prior to the meeting.
- B. A vacancy occurs when an officer is no longer a member of a local advisory council.
- C. Any officer may resign at any time by giving written notice to the Membership. Any such resignation shall take effect on the date of receipt of such notice or at any later time specified therein. Unless otherwise specified, the acceptance of such resignation shall not be necessary to make it effective.

Section 4. Vacancies:

Vacancies in Executive Committee offices occurring between annual elections shall be filled for the unexpired term of the office by the same procedure used in the annual elections.

Section 5. Duties - President:

The President:

- A. If present, shall preside at all meetings of the TACC.
- B. Shall appoint chairpersons and members of committees subject to approval of the TACC.
- C. May be given additional duties consistent with these bylaws.
- D. May represent TACC personally, or may appoint a member to represent TACC to any outside association or group as would be appropriate the organization's function and/or purpose.
- E. Works with staff to develop meeting agendas.

6.A-5

Section 6. Duties – Vice President:

In the absence, or the inability to act, of the President, the Vice President shall act with all the authority of the President.

As directed by the President, the Vice President shall provide orientation and training for new members.

Section 7. Immediate Past President:

The Immediate Past President shall serve as a member of the Executive Committee.

In the event that the Immediate Past President is no longer a member of TACC, a Member-at-Large will be elected to serve.

ARTICLE IV Committees

Section 1. Standing Committees:

Standing committees of the TACC shall be as follows:

A. Executive Committee

1. The Executive Committee shall consist of the elected officers (President and Vice President) and the Immediate Past President. All members of the Executive Committee shall have voting privileges.

2. The Executive Committee serves in an advisory capacity to the President and to the TACC and is empowered to act for the TACC in an emergency. Such action must be approved by the TACC retroactively at the next regular meeting.

B. Nominating Committee:

1. The Nominating Committee shall be recommended by the President and ratified by a consensus of those members present. The Nominating Committee shall consist of three members: the Immediate Past President and two members. In the event there is no Immediate Past President the President shall recommend three members from the membership to serve as the Nominating Committee.

Should the services of the Committee be required earlier due to a vacancy in an office, it shall be so selected at the first regular meeting after the vacancy occurs. A quorum must be present at the time of the selection.

2. The Nominating Committee shall present a slate of nominations for officers of the TACC in accordance with the provisions of Article III, Section 2.

3. Vacancies in the Nominating Committee occurring after its selection, but prior to the meeting in which officers are elected, shall be appointed by the President.

Section 2. Other Committees:

TACC may establish additional committees, advisory groups, or task forces, with fixed terms. Such groups are advisory to the Membership and no action may be taken by them except to make recommendations. The Membership and chairpersons shall be appointed by the President subject to the approval of the TACC Membership.

Section 3. Membership:

With the exception of the Executive and Nominating committees, the President may appoint non-members to serve as committee members. The committee chair must be a member and the majority of the committee members must be members.

ARTICLE V Amendment of Bylaws

Section 1. Amendment:

Any member may propose amendments to these bylaws. Proposed amendments must be submitted in writing to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for reviewing the proposal, placing the proposal on the agenda for the next regular meeting, and presenting a recommendation to the Membership at that meeting. These bylaws shall be amended only with the concurrence of two-thirds (2/3) of the members present and voting.

Section 2. Effective Date:

Amendments shall become effective immediately upon their adoption.

ARTICLE VI Parliamentary Procedures

All meetings shall be conducted according to "Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised," except when in conflict with these bylaws or with the laws of the State of California.

Original bylaws adopted August 19, 1978, amended February 16, 1979, February 16, 1981, October 7, 1982, July 24, 1986, May 27, 1987, January 26, 1989, May 24, 1989, March 23, 1994, January 25, 1995, December 4, 1996, January 27, 1999, March 22, 2000, November 20, 2002, March 9, 2005, July 26, 2006, September 10, 2008, November 17, 2008, February 5, 2009, May 3, 2012 and May 10, 2017 are on file with the Triple-A Council of California.



Ted Smith, President
Joyce Gandelman, Vice President
Bobbie Wartson, Immediate Past President

TACC GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

March 12, 2026

Ted Smith, President

1. Welcome

2. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

President Smith called the meeting to order at 1:08 pm and led the pledge of allegiance.

3. Roll Call and Establish a Quorum

Executive Director Karol Swartzlander called the roll.

A quorum was established.

4. Approve TACC General Meeting Minutes from November 5, 2025

M/S/C (Wartson/Mungia)

The Minutes from the November 5, 2025 General Meeting were approved.

5. Public Comment for items not on this Agenda

None.

6. President's Remarks

President Smith discussed scams targeting older adults.

7. Staff Report (Swartzlander)

- **CCoA Update**

Patrick Smith was promoted to Legislative Director of the CCoA.

Swartzlander introduced the new Administrative Analyst, Kourtney Hobart.

Smith's previous position will be posted and filled as soon as possible.

The Commission's Legislative advocacy day was a success. Materials will be shared with TACC members to support local legislative outreach.

- Upcoming 2026 TACC General Meetings: May 14, September 17, and November 17 to 19 in concert with the C4A Conference in Garden Grove.

6. A - 8

Triple A Council of California (Area Agency on Aging Advisory Councils of California)

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TACC

Ted Smith, President
Joyce Gandelman, Vice President
Bobbie Wartson, Immediate Past President

8. Presentation: 3 Cheers for Respite: Filling a Need in Marin County

Tricia Wiig, Director of Children, Youth and Family Ministries, Mt. Tam United Methodist Church

Lou Hexter, Mill Valley Resident and Steering Committee Member

Wiig introduced Marin County's new respite program which will provide care to older adults living with dementia and bring relief to their caregivers. Called "Three Cheers for Respite," the program is based on the Respite for All program, which began 14 years ago in Montgomery, AL, and has expanded to other states. It follows a social model for a safe and enriching environment and will operate as a licensed social-day program for four hours a day. Participants will be interviewed before being accepted into the program, and volunteers will be background checked. Hexter provides volunteer recruitment and management expertise. Well-trained and responsible volunteers are needed for many open positions. The tag line for the program is "Connecting hearts and creating smiles." Tuition assistance will be available. The community has been very supportive. Visit respiteforall.org to learn more about the national program.

9. Presentation: California Commission on Aging Legislative Update

Karol Swartzlander, Executive Director, discussed CCoA's sponsored bill, AB 2283: State Public Guardian. This bill would establish a State Public Guardian, who would, among other duties, guide local Public Guardians, develop standardized referral processes, and explore developing a single state reporting system.

10. Planning and Service Area (PSA) Reports

- Member Reports: Links to the spreadsheet consolidating all quarterly reports are in the calendar event for this meeting.
PSA Survey results: Links to the spreadsheet consolidating all annual reports are in the calendar event for this meeting. Submit changes to ccoa@ccoa.ca.gov as needed.
- Members discussed current successes and challenges within their Advisory Councils.
- Topics included Master Plans for Aging, site tours of community-based organizations, and affordable housing projects.



Ted Smith, President
Joyce Gandelman, Vice President
Bobbie Wartson, Immediate Past President

- Members received an update from PSA 6 on possible council mergers due to reduced funding and from PSA 18 on the cancellation of their AAA's resignation and the associated public hearing. The County of Ventura, supported by community members and organizations, intends to continue to provide services under the Older Americans Act and Older Californians Act.
- Members discussed the benefits and obstacles to holding in-person Advisory Councils. Some find a combination of in-person and virtual meetings works. Roaming locations allow Council members to get to know community-based organizations and foster relationships between members. Tours and site visits can educate Council members while building connections with the community.

11. Presentation: Get Loud to Protect Behavioral Health (BH) Programs for Older Adults

Janet C. Frank, MSG, DrPH, Commissioner, California Commission Aging, Behavioral Health Committee Chair

Frank provided an overview of older adults' behavioral health challenges and the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA). The county implementation process provides opportunities for community members to give input on each county's three-year Implementation Plan (IP). BHSA expanded services to people with drug abuse disorders and carved out 30% of funding to housing interventions for people with serious BH needs, including those chronically homeless. Prevention funding is now shifted to the CA Dept of Public Health. TACC Members are encouraged to locate their county's BH leadership from their county's BH Toolkit on the California Department of Aging's website. Each county offers a 30-day comment period for the public to weigh in. Counties whose IPs have already been released are showing sharp cuts to older adult Intervention and Prevention programs. CCoA will share an action guide and a fact sheet to guide local advocacy for older adult BH programs.

Frank noted that funding for BH cannot be used for dementia programs, as dementia is considered medical and is treated and paid for separately.

6. A - 10

Triple A Council of California (Area Agency on Aging Advisory Councils of California)

tacc.ccoa.ca.gov | (916) 419-7591 | ccoar@ccoac.ca.gov



Ted Smith, President
Joyce Gandelman, Vice President
Bobbie Wartson, Immediate Past President

12. Presentation: Implementing the Sonoma County Master Plan for Aging: Community Driven Change

Joni Huntsperger, Master Plan for Aging Implementation Coordinator, County of Sonoma Human Services Department

Huntsperger presented a summary of Sonoma County's process in drafting its Master Plan for Aging (MPA). The MPA work group includes the following Action Teams: Economic Security, Wellness/Equity/Inclusion, Transportation, Caregiving, Housing, Health and Human Services, and two area-specific Action Teams. Their strategy was to design from the margins by emphasizing and including the perspectives of people with the greatest needs, building understanding, and shifting mindsets. The MPA relies on resource distribution, community data collection, and community organizing. Sonoma County secured a grant to hire a full-time MPA Coordinator for two years and has applied for another two-year extension.

13. Topics for Future Meetings

Members suggested future meeting presentations, including a legislative update on developments at the Capitol relating to older adults, ageism, impacts of HR1, and a debrief of the May C4A Strategic Planning meetings.

14. Member Comments

Members requested information on legislation, the gubernatorial race, and local advocacy. CCoA's disaster response paper is getting used to guide local preparedness actions.

15. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:47 pm.

6.A-11



Ted Smith, President
Joyce Gandelman, Vice President
Bobbie Wartson, Immediate Past President

TACC GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

May 14, 2026

Ted Smith, President

1. Welcome, Call to Order, and Pledge of Allegiance

Ted Smith, TACC President, called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call and Establish a Quorum

A quorum was established.

3. Approve TACC General Meeting Minutes from March 12, 2026.

Approved with no revisions.

4. Public Comment for items not on this Agenda

None.

5. President's Remarks

President Smith shared a report from the Pasadena City Council's May 13 town hall.

6. Staff Report

CCoA Updates

- Interviews are occurring for the Legislative and Policy Analyst position with a potential onboarding date early- to mid-June.
- CCoA has an informational hearing planned for June 11, 2026 titled, Nowhere to Go: Addressing the Crisis in Supportive Housing for Older Californians.
- The Age Inclusive Management Strategies cohort began monthly meetings in April. Five state agency partners are involved in this pilot project in California.

TACC Updates

- Upcoming 2026 TACC General Meetings: September 17 (hybrid), and November 17-19 in concert with the C4A Conference in Orange Grove. All are encouraged to attend. Expenses for attendance of one TACC representative from each PSA will be reimbursed.

6.A-12

Triple A Council of California (Area Agency on Aging Advisory Councils of California)

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TACC

Ted Smith, President
Joyce Gandelman, Vice President
Bobbie Wartson, Immediate Past President

7. Presentation: From Advocacy to Impact: C4A Advocacy Day and H.R.1's Effect on Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)

Christina Mills, Executive Director, C4A

Paul Dunaway, Sonoma AAA

Mills and Dunaway shared a presentation on AAAs and their influence in the community. Thirty-three Areas of Aging in 52 counties offer support to older adults, adults with disabilities and caregivers. The implementation of SB 1249 may result in changing some AAAs. H.R. 1 is resulting in changes to Medi-Cal, In-Home Support Services (IHSS), nutrition programs, and supportive housing. Currently, the state is at the mid-point of the Master Plan on Aging (MPA) initiative. The next five years will be crucial to sustaining the services offered by AAAs. In response to a growing need, C4A is exploring opportunities to offer advocacy training and education to the AAAs.

8. Presentation: Advancing Rural Aging Policy in California

Pauline DeLange Martinez, PhD, Research and Community Engagement Manager, Family Caregiving Institute, Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing, UC Davis

Building on input shared with TACC in 2025, Dr. Martinez presented the final Aging in Rural California policy brief series and explored how current federal and state developments—including Medicaid reductions under H.R. 1 and the Rural Health Transformation Program—shape opportunities for action. Drawing on community-engaged research across seven rural counties, the presentation highlighted practical policy solutions to strengthen health care, long-term services and supports, and housing. Opportunities were identified for AAAs to advance rural aging equity.

Dr. Martinez shared policy briefs for local advocacy. She encouraged council members to reach out to the California Department of Healthcare Access and Information (HCAI) to prioritize older adults in the Rural Health Transformation Program. Policy recommendations include long-term services and support, especially for caregivers. HCAI is advancing initiatives in technology, billing systems, scholarships, clinical rotations, and staff retention for mutual benefits

9. Presentation: California Commission on Aging Legislative Update

Patrick Smith, Legislative Director, CCoA

- Swartzlander shared an update in Smith's stead.



TACC

Ted Smith, President
Joyce Gandelman, Vice President
Bobbie Wartson, Immediate Past President

- The AB 2283 Conservatorship bill is currently in suspense following a California Department of Social Services cost estimate in the millions. Staff will follow up with the California Department of Social Services to clarify the cost analysis and the bill's rationale and to explore options for reintroduction.
- The Governor's State Budget Revision was released. CCoA is analyzing the budget and does not yet have comments.

10. Planning and Service Area (PSA) Survey results

Submit changes to ccoa@ccoa.ca.gov as needed.

The compiled PSA Survey Annual Report is available online.

11. PSA Reports

The compiled PSA Quarterly Report link will be shared by email.

12. Member Comments

- Tita Bladen shared that the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors announced the elimination of senior day care services, which is offered at only one local facility. In addition, senior legal services are being moved to a contractor and out of the AAA.
- Jill Kleiner announced that a local 5% sales tax is being offered to voters to consider to replace funds lost from HR1.
- Susan Mallett commented that her county is coordinating efforts to address the impact of HR1. Especially the impact on CalFresh enrollment and Medi-Cal. The county is training their outreach workers to understand reporting requirements and how to keep clients enrolled. They are also considering a 1% sales tax to fund services.
- Ted Smith shared that the annual Senior Rally Day occurs this year in May, which is also Older Americans Month.
- Kristi Denton Cohen shared that her PSA hosted a "scam jam" to educate the community. Several classes were offered. One recommendation is to have a family "safe" word to use if a scammer attempts to impersonate you. Cohen is terming off TACC and is sad to go.
- Jenny Helman in Sonoma County announced that they have a senior resource fair planned for September.
- Bobby Warton commented that four local council members were recalled who have been serving for many years. Her PSA is hosting an elder abuse awareness event in June.
- Joyce Gandelman is preparing a local proclamation for Older Americans Month. Local older adults will be recognized for their volunteerism.
- Suggested topics for future meetings:

6.A-14

Triple A Council of California (Area Agency on Aging Advisory Councils of California)

tacc.ccoa.ca.gov | (916) 419-7591 | ccoa@ccoa.ca.gov



TACC

Ted Smith, President
Joyce Gandelman, Vice President
Bobbie Wartson, Immediate Past President

- Progress of the Interstate Funding Formula and SB 1249.
- CA 2023 presentation
- HR1 periodic updates on how changes are being addressed in California
- Debbie Deam spam webinar

13. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 3:23 pm.

6.4-15



AREA AGENCY ON AGING

San Benito & Santa Cruz Counties

FOSTER GRANDPARENT/SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM

Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara & Santa Cruz Counties

PROJECT SCOUT

Tax Counseling Assistance

AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CONNECTION

Navigating the San Benito County Senior & Disability Services Network

Date: 8-13-26

To: Seniors Council Board of Directors, AAA Advisory Council

From: Clay Kempf, Executive Director

RE: Advocacy Committee Report

Our Advocacy Committee had another productive meeting this month, and furthered our focus on specific efforts, roughly falling into the categories of local efforts and communications, and state-level advocacy around promoting the goals and ideals of the Master Plan for Aging while countering the continued threats presented by SB 1249 implementation.

STATEWIDE INFLUENCE

The appointment of Wayne Norton to the California Commission on Aging couples nicely with Pam Arnsberger being a member of the statewide Aging & Disability Resource Connection Advisory Group. Combined with Christina Mills leadership and advocacy work as the relatively still new Executive Director of the California Association of Area Agencies on Aging (C4A), we have the opportunity to again have statewide impacts with our ideas and concerns.

We want to push achieving the goals of providing more and better services to older adults that the Master Plan for Aging (MPA) envisioned and described, and avoid creating a bigger and more complex bureaucracy around those services. Strength in numbers is important here, and we're at least somewhat optimistic that others will embrace and support the ideas we bring forth. We're small in numbers, but not in creativity, and have a history of being the AAA that has initiated state-wide solutions to complex problems. And if we don't do it, who will?

LOCAL JURISDICTIONAL FUNDING & SUPPORT FOR PROGRAMS SERVING OLDER ADULTS & PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The County of Santa Cruz is revisiting their Community Program Funding (CORE) and will be holding a meeting the afternoon of Wednesday, August 19 afternoon to share information about upcoming changes to the next round of funding. Supervisors Justin Cummings and Kim De Serpa and their staff are leading the effort.

175 Westridge Dr., Watsonville, CA. 95076 www.seniorscouncil.org

PHONE: AAA – (831) 688-0400 • FG/SCP – (831) 475-0816 • SCOUT – 1-877-373-8297 • FAX: (831) 688-1225

SUPPORTED BY FEDERAL, STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS, THE UNITED WAY, AND YOUR PERSONAL DONATIONS

6.B-1

Meanwhile, we've been researching local public funding for senior service agencies since 2008, and the funding is about 78% of what it was at that time. Adjusted for inflation, the dollars only have 38% of their original buying power. Coupled with the doubling of the 60-plus population, available funding per senior is about 20% of where it was in 2008! In non-adjusted dollars, Santa Cruz County and City are about 90% of their former levels, Watsonville is at 75%, and Capitola at 31%. United Way has completely and intentionally eliminated all funding for older adults. The research has included the County of Santa Cruz, United Way, and the cities of Capitola, Scotts Valley, Watsonville, and Santa Cruz.

In San Benito County, the County has adopted a method by which they commit to providing ongoing funding for the AAA, senior meals, senior legal services, and long term care ombudsman that is tied into County revenue and inflation, resulting in increases to each program. While these increases have been relatively small, they send a very strong message that the County is committed to serving its older adults and that they clearly view community-based organizations as partners in that effort. Unfortunately, the City of Hollister has taken a different approach, and eliminated their funding to all of those programs except the AAA about a dozen years ago. This past year they retroactively de-funded the AAA *and* started charging rent to senior programs located in the Pauline Valdivia Memorial Center. I've been told that funds from the Senior Center Bond Act of 1984 were originally used to contribute to the costs of the back wing of the center.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the City of San Juan Bautista. With a population of only 2,128 people, SJB's annual city revenues are less than \$3 million per year, and as such, they have very limited ability to make meaningful financial contributions. Nevertheless, the City provides free use of their Community Center for activities such as the senior lunches and social activities provided by Martha's Kitchen and the Mary Velasco Sellen Senior Center.

MESSAGING

Our Advocacy Committee is developing details on how our local network of service providers can work together and provide both positive and challenging messages to our local governments and communities. We are breaking this strategy into developing talking points to highlight for each quarter of the year, highlighting 1) Funding shortfalls; 2) Collaborative Efforts (among providers and/or in partnership with communities); 3) Food, Safety & Shelter, and 4) To be Determined based on emerging needs or challenges.

Our goal is to provide a 1-3 page informational item and/or talking points for each topic to be shared as a consistent message under public comments at City Council meetings. We'll need not only our own Board members and staff, but also the staff

(and Board?) of other organizations to share these messages if we're going to succeed. We also want to encourage creative ways cities and others can provide support beyond the checkbook; for example by promoting or co-sponsoring events, reducing rents, etc.

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATION & RELATED ITEMS

California Department of Aging's (CDA) California 2030 Plan and implementation of SB 1249 continues to be one of, if not THE top discussion item among AAAs statewide. As previously reported, SB 1249 implementation has replaced the positive and creative efforts that were generated by California's Master Plan for Aging for most of the state's AAAs.

The relatively good news is that the past month hasn't included much in the way of new activity around this item, other than the continued progress of Senator John Laird's SB 1261. SB 1261 is the bill that protects ADRCs from being de-certified and defunded by CDA in the case when a AAA or an Independent Living Center (ILC) changes from one agency or operational model to another.



AREA AGENCY ON AGING
San Benito & Santa Cruz Counties

FOSTER GRANDPARENT/SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM
Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara & Santa Cruz Counties

PROJECT SCOUT
Tax Counseling Assistance

AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CONNECTION
Navigating the San Benito County Senior & Disability Services Network

Date: 8-14-26

To: Seniors Council Board of Directors, AAA Advisory Council

From: Clay Kempf, Executive Director

RE: Executive Director's August Report

STAFFING & BUDGET SHORTFALLS

I'm sad to report that Fiscal Specialist extraordinaire Hilary Minugh has accepted a new position as Watsonville Wetlands Watch's new Fiscal Officer. We'll miss her skills and personality tremendously. That being said, congratulations to her, and Wetlands Watch has made a great hire.

We're also extremely grateful that Wetlands Watch is allowing Hilary to continue working for us two days per week while we recruit and train her replacement. We have been running ads for the position and are in the process of interviewing selected candidates, with the first interview taking place yesterday.

Program Directors are currently in the process of developing their 2026-27 budgets now that we have information about current year funding (e.g., award of approximately \$1 million in Americorps grants to Foster Grandparent & Senior Companion). Along with that, some brief discussions about re-designing how our programs operate and evolve with new demands and funding constraints.

As reported last month, Americorps is planning a national virtual celebration of volunteers as part of America's 250th anniversary. Our Board, Advisory Council members, volunteers and project staff, are all invited to join us for the **2026 AmeriCorps Seniors Nationwide Celebration** to honor service, connection, and community.

7-1

Date: Tuesday, September 15, 2026
Time: 2:00–3:30 p.m. ET (in place of the September TA Call)
Theme: *A Nation of Service*

How to Participate

- **Host a local celebration** for your volunteers and staff. You may choose to hold this during or in place of your September In-Service Training if that timing works well for your project.
- **Log into the national broadcast live** from 2:00–3:30 p.m. ET.
- Feel free to extend your local celebration with additional activities before or after the national program.
- Register your group for the national broadcast.
 - Register once per location, not per individual.
 - If you will have more than one gathering site, submit **one registration per site** using the name of the staff member leading that location.

In even better news, the status of our application for funding for the two programs has changed from pending to awarded!

The funding requests encompass the three fiscal years of 2026-2029. Totaling well over \$1 million per year, these grants provide the vast majority of funding for both programs, and represents our second-largest funding source, topped only by the Older Americans Act administered by California's Department of Aging. Cristina has applied for increases over her current grant amounts, and we're all crossing our fingers that those submissions will be successful. The revisions are mainly around the new requirement that answers to each of the grant questions follow a very specific format. It appears the review process has been modified significantly and is morphing from an art into a checklist.

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF AGING

No news on the search for or appointment of an interim CDA Director in response to Susan DeMarois upcoming resignation has been announced, but rumors are starting to circulate. We're curious, of course. The Director of CDA is a Governor-appointed position, so we don't know what will occur next.

Preparation for CDA's upcoming monitoring reviews of our operations in the coming months. Program Monitoring will take place the week of September 14, followed by HICAP Monitoring the following week. Fiscal will be reviewed the week of October 12. All reviews are now conducted remotely, so we won't have CDA staff occupying our office during those three weeks. There are, of course, pros and cons of having them present; in person monitoring always helped CDA to understand our operations better, and the nature of our communities and service providers.

Seriously good news came from CDA with the announcement of additional funding for our HICAP (Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program), with an increase of about \$50,000 this year and \$77,000 in the future to hire additional staff. We have received over 25 separate documents to explain this funding, ranging from its intended use to revised contracting language to new reporting requirements. We're hoping CDA staff will provide some verbal explanations and maybe even some question-and-answer sessions to help us decipher the two-dozen-plus documents and various e-mails received so far. Unfortunately, no increase in administrative funds were included as part of the allocation.

MASTER PLAN FOR AGING (MPA) LOCAL PLAYBOOKS

We continue to promote and share the content of our MPA Local Playbooks throughout our PSA. Next steps for the workgroups and for the overall evolution of the playbook is an item we have yet to develop a plan for, but Corey, Zach, Britt and I will develop plans around that concept in the coming months, incorporating finding a new funding source to support the work.

Corey continues to promote the plan and highlight her work around volunteerism as of the our local playbook outcomes, and continues to receive positive reactions.

As reported last month, I made a presentation before Scotts Valley about our local playbook in partnership with Alicia Morales of Santa Cruz County. The 15-slide presentation focused on the Santa Cruz County Needs Assessment that we worked closely with the County to develop. Only two slides had our input, making for an interesting presentation, especially around the state & local history of the MPA and our playbook.

The Aging and Long Term Care Commission of San Benito County continues to be the oversight committee for the San Benito County Playbook, and includes the item as a standing report at their monthly meetings. Britt, Corey and I share pertinent information at each meeting. Those efforts are embraced, and the County and the community at large does a nice job of working cooperatively and promoting the collaborative nature of the effort.

SERVICE PROVIDER UPDATE

Service delivery in Hollister at the Pauline Valdivia Memorial Center continues to evolve, with remodeling work still in progress and building entrance compromised and porta-potties still in use instead of the bathrooms in the building.

We are pleased to report that at long last Jovenes de Antaño has completed the paperwork to transfer the second of two vehicles purchased with AAA funds to Martha's Kitchen. The first vehicle was transferred without incident in July of 2025. I'm

not sure what caused their reluctance to complete the transfer for the second vehicle, but it's done at last. Jovenes has also given up their office lease at the center while they reorganize and decide what their future will be.

Attached for everyone's information is a one-page sheet depicting who our contracted service providers are for the FY 2026-27, along with contract amounts and service category. These amounts will probably change here and there as budget amendments from the state are received; usually we see small increases. HICAP funding has already received an augmentation of about \$50,000.

Future packets will include additional provider information showing their service units for 2025-26, along with contracted service unit goals.

We're also planning on highlighting our own direct service programs in coming months as part of a "Board Enrichment Series" that Advisory Council members can certainly join. These presentations will take place after some of our Board meetings and can be viewed remotely as well as in person. The idea is we'll hold about an hour long session to provide more information on various topics, starting with presentations about our direct services. More to come on that topic.



ADRC of San Benito County Staff Report – August 2026

ADRC No Wrong Door Network program staff have completed update work on the San Benito Aging & Disability Resources Directory for 2026. The print-copy update is the first since 2024, but the digital directories, available at <https://sanbenitoadrc.org/resource-directory/>, have been continually updated during this time, and both the English and Spanish version available via the URL are always the most comprehensive and up-to-date versions available. An added benefit of the on-line digitized versions of the Resources Directories is that one is able to print just the section or sections needed, in a PDF format, saving resources and otherwise supporting changing needs for resources and service information.

Now that the update has been completed, staff have turned their attention to distributing the English-language version, while also simultaneously working to complete a Spanish-language version of the same updated directory. There have been a couple of delays owing to end-of-fiscal-year priorities, and then formatting challenges, but we hope to have the finished Spanish-language version of the directory ready to distribute by the end of September.

ADRC No Wrong Door program staff continue to assist individuals from their office location inside the PVMCC, despite on-going renovation and construction work taking place there. Please note that, while the front doors are closed and locked, access to the building and the ADRC and Martha's Kitchen offices, and the congregate dining site -- along with scheduled HICAP office hours in the ADRC-adjacent office -- can still be had through entrances on either the north or south side of the building. ADRC staff are still available to assist with everything from simple information or referral requests to complex and more work intensive person-centered case management or transition assistance needs. At least a couple of the advantages stemming from working directly with ADRC staff is their comprehensive knowledge of area service supports, especially in the older adults and disabilities service realms, and ADRC staff's willingness to help in creating and initiating a collaborative care plan, in which the consumer can and is encouraged to take an active role in addressing their needs. ADRC staff is skilled in determining potential eligibility and in helping to complete applications for assistance, with the goals of effectively addressing and resolving consumer needs where possible.

ADRC No Wrong Door management and administrative staff have been exploring ways, over the past several years, and more intentionally during the course of this past fiscal year and on-going, to achieve greater program funding sustainability and to gather more local funding support for the importance services provided by ADRC program staff and by ADRC No Wrong Door Network partners. Topics of interest and discussion have included the cultivation of donations from local individuals and business, the introduction and adoption of fundraising from local events and activities, seeking philanthropic support from local, regional, and state-based foundations, and applying for program and services specific grants from private and public institutions. While the ADRC project has submitted a balanced budget to CDA this year and has received approval for it, the current financial situation is extremely tight and the budget has incorporated into it only very minimal office supplies, no advertising or promotion, and no staff training -- although we will still pursue on-going no-cost training options. Additionally, we have had to reduce staff hours, and organizationally, we have suspended both merit-based raises and cost of living increases in an effort to further reduce expenses. Obviously, such a pared back budget and

reduced hours will likely result in a reduction of service capacity, the possible inability to retain quality staff, and greater and longer-term program instability. The challenges confronting our efforts to diversify funding support are many, at a time when many other non-profit organizations and programs are also confronting their own funding challenges, making grant and foundation support spaces crowded and more competitive than ever.

ADRC staff completed State Program Data Reporting for the FY25/26 service year, and although some service category numbers were down, increases in service numbers were also seen. For the ADRC's first full year without the I&A support data provided by former Core Partner Jovenes de Antano, the number of individuals served with I&A support decreased somewhat. However, the ADRC saw year-over-year increases in Short Term Case Management, Person-Centered Option Counseling, and Transition Assistance services during the same period.

No Wrong Door (NWD) Network partners continue to be encouraged to provide data for the services they delivered to consumers in San Benito County. As a reminder, ADRC hub site program staff never claim these data and these delivered services as their own, but instead use the reported data to shine a bright light on the efforts of locally-focused programs and organizations - - as a part of the NWD Network - - to help meet the service needs of older adults, individuals living with disability, and caregivers, and to help them navigate complex service systems to access the support they need to live safely and successfully in their community of choice. The ADRC is by definition our local collaborative of NWD service providers working in a coordinated and communicative manner, and for the benefit of consumers, as well as those participating programs and organizations. Data sharing on behalf of the ADRC is indicative of the strength of our local partnerships, and can also be a leverage in pursuit of additional and expanded funding opportunities.

Finally, and to reiterate an important aspect of current ADRC work mentioned in previous reporting, inclusive and diverse communities make for stronger individuals and families and more resiliency for all, and the ADRC is proud to be an on-going and forward-looking champion of such an inclusive, positive, and strengths-based approach to addressing both individual and community needs. The ADRC serves all individuals, families, and caregivers regardless of income, ethnic origin, or immigration status, per the statute and regulation which created the ADRC No Wrong Door Network federally and within the State of California. Additionally, and as an on-going focus of the ADRC in 2026 and 2027, we will continue to advance the connection and further the collaborative work being done between the ADRC of San Benito County, the Community Foundation for San Benito County, and the San Benito Connect – Volunteer Services Development Program, as this partnership benefits a number of local non-profit programs and organizations. Volunteers are at the core of community-based services provision, while at the same time, volunteerism represents an incredible opportunity for older adults and those living with disability to engage and serve others in need, thus increasing their own feelings of self-worth and self-determination.



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Navigating the San Benito County Senior & Disability Services Network

Monthly Report to the Board of Directors – Seniors Council of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties

Submitted by Corey Shaffer, Community Coordinator

Senior Services Planning and Volunteer Engagement

San Benito County, Seniors Council

For the Month of June 2026

Although June was impacted by personal bereavement following the passing of my mother on June 2, I continued supporting key initiatives and community partnerships throughout the month.

San Benito Seniors Connect Newsletter

- Distributed the June 2026 edition of the **San Benito Seniors Connect** newsletter (newsletter summary attached) to subscribers.
- Continued development and content planning for the July newsletter.
- Promoted local resources, community events, volunteer opportunities, and healthy aging information throughout San Benito County.

Community Outreach & Presentations

- Co-presented with Clay Kempf at the **San Benito County Behavioral Health Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee (EDIC)** meeting (presentation flyer attached).
- Shared information about California's **Master Plan for Aging**, community partnerships, and the **SBC Connect Volunteer Network**, highlighting efforts to strengthen volunteerism, community engagement, and access to local resources for older adults and adults with disabilities.

Community Partnerships

- Attended **Community Chats with Cassandra**, hosted by the Community Foundation for San Benito County, which brought together nonprofit and community leaders to discuss evolving health and human service needs throughout the county.

- At the conclusion of the meeting, Executive Director **Cassandra Karshtov** invited me to provide a brief overview of the **SBC Connect Volunteer Network**, highlighting how the platform connects volunteers with local organizations and supports community engagement throughout San Benito County.

San Benito Seniors Connect Newsletter Performance

The **San Benito Seniors Connect** newsletter continues to demonstrate strong community engagement.

Past 12 Months

- Emails Sent: **6,380**
- Emails Delivered: **6,182 (97%)**
- Overall Open Rate: **56%**
- Overall Click Rate: **6%**
- Total Opens: **3,451**
- Total Clicks: **396**

The June 2026 newsletter was one of the strongest-performing editions of the year, achieving:

- **67% Open Rate**
- **11% Click Rate**

SBC Connect Volunteer Network (sbcvolunteers.org)

- Continued monitoring and management of the SBC Connect Volunteer Network website.
- Supported volunteer recruitment efforts while monitoring website activity, volunteer registrations, and community engagement analytics to help expand the network throughout San Benito County.

Looking Ahead

- Publish the July edition of the **San Benito Seniors Connect** newsletter.
- Continue expanding awareness of the **SBC Connect Volunteer Network** through community outreach and partnerships.
- Strengthen relationships with local organizations to increase volunteer opportunities and community engagement.
- Continue implementation of the local **Master Plan for Aging** initiatives in collaboration with community partners.
- Facilitate the **San Benito County Master Plan for Aging Workgroups Goals and Strategies Meeting on July 30**. The meeting will bring together representatives from all five Master Plan for Aging workgroups to provide progress updates, discuss goals and strategies, identify next steps, and continue advancing implementation of the Local Master Plan for Aging in San Benito County.

8.C-2

JUNE 2026

San Benito Seniors CONNECT

♥ Stay healthy. ♥ Stay connected. ♥ Stay supported.



MAY INTO CONNECTION

May was a meaningful month of connection, recognition, and community collaboration across San Benito County. Thank you to our partners, volunteers, and everyone who helps create a stronger, healthier, and more age-friendly community for older adults.

Together, we are building a community where older adults thrive. ♥



JUNE HIGHLIGHTS



**MEN'S
HEALTH
MONTH**



**ALZHEIMER'S &
BRAIN AWARENESS
MONTH**



**ELDER ABUSE
AWARENESS
MONTH**



**PRIDE
MONTH**



**FLAG DAY
JUNE 14**



**JUNETEENTH
JUNE 19**



**FATHER'S DAY
JUNE 21**



**FULL MOON
JUNE 29**



UPCOMING EVENTS & CLASSES

- 6/01-6/30 - Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month
- 6/01-6/30 - Pride Month
- 6/04 - Bingo Night, 7PM-9PM, The GardenShoppe, 364 7th St., Hollister
- 6/06 - Aromas Bulky Drop-off Event, 8AM-10:30AM, Aromas Community Park
- 6/07 - Hello June, 12PM-4PM, Damm Vineyards, 3028 Cienega Rd., Hollister
- 6/14 - Flag Day
- 6/18 - Casino Night, 7PM-11PM, The Brass Tap, 1701 Airline Hwy., Hollister
- 6/19 - Juneteenth
- 6/16 - The Wild Goddess Vinyl - Womens Plant Night, 6PM-9PM, Palette & Pour, 650 San Benito St., Hollister
- 6/20 - Luke Combs & Eric Church Tributes, Guerra Cellars, 500 John Rd., Hollister
- 6/20 - Fire Fall Landscape Painting Adult Workshop, 1PM-3PM, 35 5th St., Hollister
- 6/20 - Father's Day BBQ at the Overlook, 3PM, Paicines Ranch, 13388 Old Airline Hwy., Paicines
- 6/21 - Father's Day
- 6/21 - Summer Begins
- 6/22 - VFW Post 8242 2026 Golf Tournament, San Juan Oaks Golf Club, 3825 Union Rd., Hollister
- 6/25 - Boozy, Bees Book Bonding, 7PM-8:30PM, The GardenShoppe, 364 7th St., Hollister
- 6/29 - Full Moon

THIS MONTH'S VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

HOLLISTER
DOWNTOWN

Volunteers Needed

We are currently looking for people with a strong commitment to our community to assist us with our events.

350 South St. Ste. 102
Hollister, CA



We need help with:

- ✓ Farmers' Market
- ✓ Downtown Clean Up
- ✓ Street Festival & Car Show
- ✓ Saddle Horse Show Parade
- ✓ Lights On Celebration

If you think you are willing to help us for our community events, then you may submit your interest today!

8.C-3



HEALTH & WELLNESS TIP

Summer Safety for Seniors

Stay hydrated, avoid peak heat hours, stay cool, and check on others. Small steps can help prevent serious health complications.



STAY



SHADE



STAY



STAY



Thank you to our community partners, volunteers, and supporters! ♥



San Benito County

**BEHAVIORAL
HEALTH**

Supporting your mental health and recovery journey



**SALUD
CONDUCTUAL**

Apoyo en la salud mental y el viaje de recuperación



Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee



Building Connections: Volunteering, Inclusion & Aging Well in San Benito County



This presentation will highlight local efforts to support older adults and adults with disabilities through the Master Plan for Aging, along with the development of SBC Connect, San Benito County's volunteer platform. In collaboration with the Community Foundation for San Benito County, this work focuses on strengthening community connections, increasing volunteer engagement, and improving access to local resources.



Corey Shaffer is the Community Coordinator for Senior Services Planning and Volunteer Engagement with the Seniors Council, serving San Benito County. In this role, she supports the local implementation of California's Master Plan for Aging by working with community partners to improve services and supports for older adults and adults with disabilities.

In collaboration with the Community Foundation for San Benito County, Corey leads efforts to strengthen volunteerism and community connection through SBC Connect, San Benito County's volunteer platform. She also manages the San Benito Seniors Connect newsletter, which shares local resources, programs, and opportunities to help residents stay informed and engaged. Corey is passionate about building partnerships and creating a more inclusive, connected, and supportive community for all.



Seniors Council
Concilio de Personas Mayores
Service • Support • Advocacy

This meeting is open to all San Benito County community members, community partners and providers.
The zoom link can be requested via the email below

LUNCH IS PROVIDED WITH RSVP
PLEASE INDICATE ANY
SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS VIA EMAIL:
LCOOMBES@SANBENITOCOUNTYCA.GOV

THURSDAY
JUNE 4
11 AM

REDWOOD ROOM
1131 COMMUNITY PKWY
HOLLISTER



SERVICE ♦ SUPPORT ♦ ADVOCACY

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

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Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara & Santa Cruz Counties

PROJECT SCOUT

Tax Counseling & CalFresh Assistance

AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CONNECTION

Navigating the San Benito County Senior & Disability Services Network

Project SCOUT July 2026 Report

2026 July Tax Prep Options:

- 1-ALL: Project SCOUT Tax Facilitated Self Assistance ONLINE <http://tinyurl.com/SCOUTFSA>
- 2-Project SCOUT VITA (Ad hoc, remote, & special events all throughout Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties by appointment).
- 3-Santa Cruz Public Library Downtown one Saturday per month by appointment.
- 5-Watsonville Senior Center by appointment.
- 6-San Juan Bautista Public Library one day per month by appointment.

2026 July Tax Production Totals:

- Number of Tax Returns prepared and processed – 2037
- Primary or secondary 60 years old or older – 985 or 48%
- Average income of those serviced – \$31,812.00
- Dollar Amount of Federal refunds including credits – \$1,764,349.00
- Dollar Amount of State refunds including credits – \$425,055.00
- Dollar Amount of TOTAL refunds – **\$2,189,404.00**
- Money back in the wallets of our clients, including average return cost of \$240.00 –
\$2,678,284.00!

2026 July Calfresh Services:

Besides taking Calfresh requests, Project SCOUT assesses all seniors and disabled assisted with free tax prep for CalFresh qualification. Those who qualify are contacted and offered CalFresh services.

- Number of Senior and disabled clients assessed for services – 58 (54 SCC, 4 SBC)
- Number of clients assisted with Calfresh in Santa Cruz County – 7
- Number of clients assisted with Calfresh in San Benito County – 3

8.D-1

2026 July Recap:

Project SCOUT closed its doors to services for the last two weeks of July 2026. Those contacting Project SCOUT were informed via phone and email to contact us back in August for services.

Project SCOUT admin submitted and is working on two important grants: ABC Initiative Implementation Grant offered through Prosperity NOW with support from the CITI Foundation. This grant is for IRS Sponsored VITA programs (not open to TCE) with the purpose of integrating child savings education, referrals, and account access such as section 530A accounts into tax-time services. Project SCOUT requested \$35,000.00.

Project SCOUT admin is also working on Golden State Opportunity's RFP for services during 2027 tax season up to June 2027. As with our last cycle completed with Golden State Opportunity, Project SCOUT is providing two RFP's for Statewide Education and Outreach @ \$25,000.00 (Santa Cruz County), and Rural Counties @ \$25,000.00 (San Benito County).

Best Practices:

Project SCOUT assisted taxpayer ATP from Capitola who had recently lost her husband, who had always done their taxes. Anxious and distraught, she was seen at our Downtown Santa Cruz Library site and was assisted by one of our caring volunteers. The volunteer guided ATP from the initial process of gathering all her documents to the completion of the tax return which took over a month, and in the words of ATP "would not have been possible without the wonderful help of (volunteer) MR". Not only is the stress of having to complete her taxes in such a difficult time behind her, but she is now expecting a refund of \$5473.00 which will help her navigate recent funeral costs and others. ATP has been incredibly grateful of our services and is proof of the paramount effect Project SCOUT has on those we serve.



**Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service
Taxpayers Services Division**

Grant Program Office (GPO)
401 W. Peachtree Street, Stop 420-D
Atlanta, GA 30308

August 4, 2026

Eduardo Santana
Program Director
Seniors Council of Santa Cruz and
San Benito Counties
234 Santa Cruz AVE
Aptos, CA 950762797

Administrative Review Letter

Re: VITA/TCE Grant **26VITA0291**

Dear Eduardo Santana:

An administrative review was conducted by the Internal Revenue Service's Grant Program Office on 05/28/2026 with regard to your **2026 VITA/TCE** Grant. The purpose of this review was to make an assessment of whether your grant funds are being used appropriately and effectively in compliance with the terms and conditions of your grant agreement. The review was also conducted to assist with any issues encountered due to administration of the grant.

An administrative review is not as extensive with regard to the verification of grant related funding and expenses. Therefore, it does not preclude reviews conducted by our Quality Program Office or the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration.

The review showed your organization is in compliance with grant program guidelines and terms and conditions of your 2026 grant agreement.

Thank you for your cooperation during the review. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact the Grant Program Office at grant.program.office@irs.gov.

Sincerely,

David A. Eckert
Chief, Grant Program Office
Stakeholder Partnerships, Education & Communication

8.D-3



DATE: August 15, 2026

TO: AAA Advisory Council
Seniors Council Board of Directors

FROM:  Patty Talbott, AAA Administrator

RE: **AAA UPDATES**

Contracts

Service provider contracts are finalized and being uploaded for review and DocuSign. I have prepared a list of all current Area Plan funded contracts, amounts and services to be provided, which is included in this report.

2026-27 Update to the 2024-28 Area Plan

The required annual update to the 4-year Area Plan on Aging was prepared and submitted to the Department of Aging. I have already received feedback from CDA and there were just a couple of minor changes to submit in order to receive final approval, which is in process. The complete update is incorporated into the full Area Plan and is located in that section of our webpage. It can be found under "Programs – Area Agency on Aging – 2026-27 Update"

CDA Monitoring

Preparing for the CDA monitoring next month has been very time consuming, requiring the scanning, labeling and uploading of many documents ahead of the interviews next month. I'm grateful to our providers for their cooperation as they all received and responded to numerous document requests from me during this busy time of year.

Senior Farmers Market Vouchers

Distributions at the farmers has been completed and went very well this year. Kudos to our RD Caren Dix, who led a dedicated and well-organized team of staff who made it happen.

8.E-1

8.5-2

SENIORS COUNCIL/AREA AGENCY ON AGING
2026-27 AAA PROVIDER FUNDING CONTRACTS and AAA DIRECT SERVICES

PROVIDER	SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED	COUNTIES SERVED	FUNDING	SOURCE
SANTA CRUZ AND SAN BENITO COUNTIES				
Health Projects Center	Family Caregiver Support Program (IIIE)	Santa Cruz & San Benito	\$148,896	Area Plan
Senior Network Services	Ombudsman and Elder Abuse Prevention	Santa Cruz & San Benito	\$193,212	Area Plan
Senior Network Services	HICAP (Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy)	Santa Cruz & San Benito	\$301,250	HICAP
Senior Network Services	MIPPA (Medicare Outreach)	Santa Cruz & San Benito	\$41,144	MIPPA
Senior Legal Services	Legal Services (IIIB)	Santa Cruz & San Benito	\$92,000	Area Plan
Volunteer Center	Health Promotion (IIID) Matter of Balance	Santa Cruz & San Benito	\$22,851	Area Plan
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY ONLY				
Comm. Bridges/Meals on Wheels	Home Delivered and Congregate Meals (IIIC)	Santa Cruz	\$931,328	Area Plan
Comm. Bridges/Meals on Wheels	State Nutrition Modernization Funding - HDM only	Santa Cruz	\$166,884	Older CA Act
Community Bridges/Lift Line	Transportation to Contracted Meal Sites (IIIB)	Santa Cruz	\$20,000	Area Plan
Family Service Agency	Peer Counseling and Visiting (IIIB)	Santa Cruz	\$15,000	Area Plan
Senior Network Services	Info and Assistance, Case Mgmt, In Home Visits (IIIB)	Santa Cruz	\$104,750	Area Plan
Volunteer Center	Helping Hands - Home Safety/Minor Repairs (IIIB)	Santa Cruz	\$25,000	Area Plan
SAN BENITO COUNTY ONLY				
Martha's Kitchen	Home-Delivered and Congregate Meals (IIIC)	San Benito	\$327,736	Area Plan
Martha's Kitchen	State Nutrition Modernization (NM) Funding - HDM	San Benito	\$74,710	Older CA Act
San Benito County ADRC	CDA ADRC Funding	San Benito	\$199,008	ADRC
San Benito County ADRC	Information & Assistance, Case Management (IIIB)	San Benito	\$38,457	Area Plan
AREA AGENCY ON AGING AREA PLAN DIRECT SERVICES				
Coordination (IIIB)	Approved Coordination Objectives in Area Plan	Santa Cruz & San Benito	\$4,300	Area Plan
Direct Service Nutrition (IIIC)	Provider RD and Nutrition Education Services	Santa Cruz & San Benito	\$13,000	Area Plan
Outreach (IIIB)	Senior Farmers Market Voucher Distributions	Santa Cruz & San Benito	\$2,000	Area Plan
Personal Affairs Assistance (IIIB)	Project SCOUT Tax Assistance	Santa Cruz	\$17,700	Area Plan
Area Plan Funding: IIIB=Supportive Services, IIIC=Nutrition Services, IID=Health Promotion, IIIE=Family Caregiver Support Older Californians Act: NM=Nutrition Modernization (Additional Funding for Meals), OM Supportive Services (Volunteerism) MIPPA: Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act ADRC=Aging and Disability Resource Connection, HDM: Home delivered meals				

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT

Jason Hoppin, 831-454-3401

Jason.Hoppin@santacruzcounty.us



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
Housing for Health
PARTNERSHIP

County Releases 2026 Point-in-Time Count

*Continued Housing Challenges and Growing Need for
Homelessness Prevention Services Highlighted*

The 2026 Santa Cruz County Point-in-Time (PIT) Count identified 1,648 people experiencing homelessness, a 12 percent increase from 2025. While this year's total is up primarily due to improved methodology, it remains below historic levels including the 2022 peak of 2,299.

Overall, more local residents are falling into homelessness for the first time, while those who become chronically homeless continue to face significant barriers to finding permanent housing. And more than ever, homelessness is impacting people with deep ties to Santa Cruz County:

- 50 percent of respondents reported experiencing homelessness for the first time, up from 40 percent in 2025;
- 93 percent said they were living in Santa Cruz County when they lost their housing, up from 78 percent;
- 70 percent had lived in Santa Cruz County for 10 years or more.

Conducted on January 29, the Point-in-Time Count is a federally required census of people experiencing homelessness on a single day. More than 200 volunteers, outreach workers, service providers, and people with lived experience came together to canvas neighborhoods throughout Santa Cruz County, with follow-up surveys providing additional insight.

Additional key findings from the report include:

- 78 percent of people experiencing homelessness were living unsheltered;
- The top self-reported causes of homelessness were substance use disorder (25 percent), followed by job loss (15 percent);
- 71 percent reported at least one disabling condition that interfered with their ability to work or secure housing.

"The federally mandated PIT Count provides one measure of our efforts to reduce the impacts of homelessness on individuals and the community," said Dr. Robert Ratner,

Director of the Santa Cruz County Housing for Health Division. “This year's findings show that more local residents are experiencing homelessness for the first time, and nearly all were living in Santa Cruz County when they lost housing. These results reinforce the need to invest in integrated health and housing services, as well as low-income housing including for seniors and people with disabilities. We also need to redouble our homelessness prevention and housing retention efforts.”

The PIT Count is a snapshot of homelessness at a specific point in time and does not reflect the full breadth of community homelessness over the course of a year. The findings reflect the growing pressures facing many households, including high housing costs, economic uncertainty, and health challenges.

The most reported barriers to obtaining permanent housing were “can’t afford the rent” at 76 percent, “no job/not enough income” at 70 percent, and “no money for moving costs” at 42 percent. These findings reflect the significant challenges many residents face in securing and maintaining housing in the nation’s most expensive housing market.

Communities across the country are facing potential reductions in funding for programs that help prevent and reduce homelessness. Locally, changes to programs such as Emergency Housing Vouchers, permanent supportive housing, and broader safety-net programs could make it more difficult for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness to access housing, health care, and other essential supports.

The increase in the 2026 PIT Count can primarily be attributed to changes in the County’s methodology. For the first time, the 2026 PIT Count included people participating in safe parking and safe sleeping programs throughout the county who had not been included in previous counts. These programs accounted for an additional 126 people in the overall count.

The County also conducted a more robust outreach to identify transition-age youth experiencing homelessness. The number of transition-age youth counted increased from 24 in 2025 to 86 in 2026, an increase of 62 people.

Santa Cruz County remains committed to preventing homelessness, expanding access to affordable housing and supportive services, and strengthening partnerships across the community. Housing projects opening in 2026 and 2027, which include Bridge House, Live Oak Landing, Hope Village, Harvey West, Casa Sankofa, and Veterans Village, will add much needed housing and supportive services for people experiencing homelessness.

The 2026 PIT Count findings will help inform policy decisions, funding priorities, outreach efforts, and service planning throughout Santa Cruz County as local leaders and community partners continue working toward long-term solutions to homelessness.

The full 2026 Santa Cruz County PIT Count and Survey Report is available on the [Housing for Health Partnership website](#).

Zachary Johnson

From: CCoA <agewatch@ccoa.ca.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, August 4, 2026 1:01 PM
To: Zachary Johnson
Subject: August Age Watch: A Senate Win, a New Commissioner, a Warning Sign

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Categories: PACKET MATERIALS

[View this email in your browser](#)

California Commission on Aging, August 2026



Meet Commissioner Wayne Norton



Wayne Norton brings more than two decades of hands-on advocacy for older adults to his new role as Commissioner, with a career that spans journalism, education, and long-term care ombudsman work before landing in aging policy. Commissioner Norton was appointed to the Commission by Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas on July 7, 2026.

Commissioner Norton served as a Staff Ombudsman with PSA 13, covering the two-county area of Santa Cruz and San Benito, and later as Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program Coordinator. This work gave him a close-up view of the challenges rural

communities face in accessing resources. After retiring, he joined the PSA 13 Area Agency on Aging Board, where he has served as both President and Vice President. He has also served on the Board of the California Long-Term Care Ombudsman Association and the San Benito County Aging and Long-Term Care Commission.

Beyond aging services, Commissioner Norton is an elected Director of the Aromas Water District and co-founded the Aromas-San Juan Broadband Access Project, which helped secure a \$29.4 million grant to expand internet access across San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey counties. A U.S. Army veteran who served in Vietnam, he was named San Benito County Veteran of the Year in 2020 and holds a master's degree in education and a bachelor's degree in journalism from San José State University.

Commissioner Norton's earlier career — first as a newspaper editor covering local politics and government, then in education managing non-instructional support staff — kept him close to civic life long before he entered aging services. Community engagement was a constant throughout — from driving voters to the polls to volunteering on campaigns — reflecting his belief that we all have an obligation to help our communities through civic life.

Commissioner Norton is eager to engage with the Commission's priorities, with particular interest in helping California's Master Plan for Aging (MPA) take hold at the local level. He also sees the state's change in leadership as an important moment to advocate for advancing the MPA's goals.

For Commissioner Norton, service has been the throughline of his life — from the Army to his years as an ombudsman, to his current role on the Commission. He views

his new appointment to the Commission as an honor and sees it as one more way to fulfill an obligation we owe each other: building a more just and equitable society.

AB 2207 Implemented

CCoA is pleased to announce that full implementation of AB 2207 (Reyes) State Boards and Commissions — a CCoA-sponsored bill — has been achieved.

AB 2207 expanded three state bodies to include CCoA representation. This ensures older adults' interests are represented on the committees and boards that shape the policies affecting them. Commissioners have now been appointed to all three:

- Commissioner Janet Frank was appointed to the **California Behavioral Health Planning Council** in January 2026.
- Commissioner Lindsey Yourman was appointed to the **Alzheimer's Disease and Related Conditions Advisory Committee** in June 2026 by CalHHS Secretary Kim Johnson, replacing former Commissioner Faisal Qazi.
- Commissioner Brendalynn Goodall was appointed to the **California Workforce Development Board** by Governor Newsom in July 2026.

Reauthorize the Older Americans Act

On July 14, 2026, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed [S.2120](#), the bipartisan Older Americans Act (OAA) Reauthorization Act of 2025 — a four-year renewal reauthorizing OAA programs through fiscal year 2030.



Santa Cruz Sentinel
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Young at Heart In Santa Cruz County

July 2026 Edition

Foster Grandparents Program benefits seniors and kids

By Tara Fatemi Walker

This month, we're exploring the Seniors Council's Foster Grandparent Program, which connects senior volunteers with students at local schools who are facing academic and/or social challenges. Funded through AmeriCorps Seniors, the program welcomes individuals 55 and older who can mentor and tutor for at least 15 hours per week. There are volunteers in Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, and Santa Clara Counties. **Foster Grandparents Have Impact**

Senior volunteers' lives are enriched due to the fact they are more active when they are volunteering. Foster grandparents also tend to experience a decrease in loneliness and/or depression and improved health and quality of life.

As far as the students who are served by foster grandparents, there are a variety of demonstrated benefits. These include academic performance, social and emotional de-

velopment, logic and math, language arts and literacy, and small and large motor skills.

I recently interviewed Cristina Danuelos. She has been with the Foster Grandparent Program for 13 years, starting as the Program Coordinator for San Benito and Monterey County volunteers. Four years ago, she became the Program Director for both the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs; the latter is another program run through the Seniors Council and AmeriCorps.

Cristina consistently hears stories from volunteers who share how they help children enjoy going to school because of the relationships they build.

"Throughout these years I have seen how much this program has impacted the lives of both the volunteers and the children that they serve," she says. "The volunteers and coordinators inspire me every day to keep this amazing program succeeding for them either by advocating or writing



A foster grandparent at work in a classroom, photo courtesy of Seniors Council

grants to keep it funded." 70-year-old Jasjit Balani is soon starting her third school year participating as a foster grandparent. She volunteers at Green Acres in the Live Oak area of Santa Cruz. "I work with first graders;

the teacher I work with is Mrs. Rispaud," says Jasjit, who is known as "Grandma Peachy" in school. "Mrs. Rispaud has been a wonderful person to work with. I help with a few of the children who need a little extra help,

and I also generally help in the class." Volunteering has been very rewarding for Jasjit on a personal level. "When I joined the program, I was undergoing a lot of issues in my life and this program literally saved my life," says Jasjit.

"It is such a pleasure to work with small children and a great opportunity to do volunteer work."

Kathi Lancaster, 69, has been a foster grandparent for two years at Gault Elementary, working with

Continued on page 2

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Foster...continued from page 1

pre-K students. "I assist the teachers with groups and I also mentor two or three students, one on one, with learning, language, and social skills," she says. "These students are academically and/or emotionally challenged." Katia highly recommends becoming a foster grandparent. "The joy it gives me is indescribable. Like when I see their excitement when they complete a project and get a sticker. Or when they get what's called the golden lunchbox, full of treats, rewarded weekly to a class for good behavior at lunchtime." Katia looks forward to starting her third school year as a volunteer next month.

Cristina is proud of the fact that even though Foster Grandparents are volunteers, "we are able to pay them a stipend and reimburse them for their mileage/transportation. This way, nothing will come out of their pockets to do their service. Our volunteers can use this as extra income for their medicine, food, and other living expenses. Knowing how much this additional income helps them every month motivates me every day."

In addition to the aforementioned stipends and mileage reimbursements, Foster Grandparents have access to other resources and benefits including monthly training sessions with lunch provided and a meal each day at their specific volunteer site for a cash subsidy. "There is also an annual recognition lunch where we celebrate our volunteers for all that they do," says Cristina.

"We acknowledge the years they serve with certificates, pins and gifts of appreciation." There are different events for each of the different counties, so the volunteers can all receive more attention. Overcoming Obstacles. When asked about challenges she has faced, Cristina replies, "Our biggest challenge has been funding. Our main funding grant is from AmeriCorps Seniors, a federal grant where I have to meet a 10% match. In the past two years we have been told we might be completely or partially defunded." On top of that, nonprofits every where are being cut, which means the grant application process is more competitive.

The program was in dire jeopardy during the last couple years when the Trump administration attempted to disavow AmeriCorps, which as a federal agency supports volunteer and service efforts not only in California but also across the country. Monica Alvarez, Program Coordinator for Santa Cruz County's Foster Grandparents, says "We even asked our volunteers to call and write into the government to save the program. We still have our volunteers' letters. They wrote and called our California representatives to ask to save our program. We were so proud of them!" In 2025, a federal judge ruled that the Trump administration must restore funding to AmeriCorps in California. This happened after Governor Newsom, Attorney General Rob Bonta and a coalition of states sued the Trump administration over its efforts to take apart AmeriCorps.



Thank you note from Ann Solito Elementary student to foster grandparent Roberto Robledo



Thank you note to foster grandparent Roberto Robledo from teacher at Ann Solito Elementary

There were multiple benefits to Foster Grandparents reaching out to government leaders. "Before the funding issues of the program, some of the volunteers did not feel comfortable contacting a Senator, Governor or State Representative for issues that matter to them," says Cristina. "There were also those volunteers that had no idea that their opinion could be expressed to those that represent them. We gave them the contact information; we guided them in how to either write a letter or have a script ready to advocate for themselves. Our volunteers found the power of their voting voice and that was amazing to see as they not only advocated for their programs but also their own personal needs when it comes to housing, health and food." Staying Young at Heart. Paula Yarr is entering into her 14th year as a foster grandparent. All of her volunteering has been in the same fifth grade classroom at Soquel Elementary School.

She is assigned specific kids each school year, usually two or three, and focuses on these individuals. "They tend to be the underserved children in the class," says Paula. "But I also tend to help almost every body in the class at one time or another during the school year, whether with their assignments or with emotional support." In fifth grade there is a lot of need for this, for example, they're starting to go through hormonal changes. "I'm the 'emotional support animal' of the fifth grade," she says, laughing. She loves working with fifth graders and finds it re-

warding to be a volunteer. She sometimes sees people going through the motions, doing the same thing day after day. "That might be fine for them, but I need a lot more stimulation and I get that through the class curriculum and through volunteering." Paula appreciates the fifth-grade curriculum because it's all about American history. "I have a deep affection for Native American history, and I collect Native American baskets, and I get to bring these into class to share them." She also has taught kids how to make baskets and gets very excited about that. "One time we were having an adventure—the school is on the Soquel Creek—and we were cleaning the ivy. The students wanted to know what they could do with all the ivy. I said that you can weave it into a basket, and then I started showing them how to do that. Next thing you know both boys and girls are weaving baskets out of ivy!"

Paula appreciates getting to share some of her skills and says volunteering is also keeping her young. "People ask me how old I am, they can't believe I'm 78 years old and I personally don't feel 78. So, being a foster grandparent has been very good for my health."

Roberto Robledo, 74, is about to start his fifth year of volunteering at Ann Solito Elementary. He works with kids in first through fifth grades; most foster grandparents only work with one grade.

Roberto shares more about his role. "The whole purpose of foster grandparents in the classroom is to provide a two-prong

approach. You're there for tutoring and helping out with kids who need extra help in academics and also, for nurturing. You're there as a grandpa or a grandma, to provide them some comfort. You could be helping with spelling, math, science or another subject—but also just for kids to have a shoulder to lean on if they need one. I'm finding that that's a big part of being a foster grandparent."

Roberto retired 10 years ago. "About five years ago I was looking for some creative outlets, local and community minded and found a few of them; one was the foster grandparent program. It keeps me busy, involved, and relevant—which is really nice and important."

"Many kids at the school look at foster grandparents as 'superstars.' People want to be with Grandpa Benz (that's what they call me) whether they need extra help or they're at the top of the class. Being an immigrant community, Watsonville gets a lot of newcomers, particularly kids who sometimes enter school in the middle of the year and they have a lot of catching up to do. So, it's nice to have somebody who can help them through that."

Roberto enjoys the monthly meetings where other foster grandparents, from schools across the county, come together. "I'm just really impressed to see so many people feeling the way I do about being in the classroom and being a foster grandparent."

Spreading the Word. During the pandemic, the program had to pause for a couple years. Since it came back, "it has been a struggle to re-introduce the

program into the community, despite being here for the past 32 years," says Cristina. "We have a large network of volunteers, but we still bear the occasional, 'I didn't know your program existed.' We find this a little disheartening, but it motivates us to get the word out that we are here to help."

There are currently 71 Foster Grandparents in Santa Cruz County who range in age from their 60s to their 80s. "Our volunteers stay with us for years, as many say that this program has given them a purpose during a time when they needed it," says Cristina. "Our plan is to keep on growing and have more people that are 55 years and older out there helping their communities and enjoying life."

Interested in signing up to become a foster grandparent? Contact Monica Alvarez at (831) 688-0400 x117 or monica@seniorscouncil.org. Last month, Monica became Program Coordinator for Santa Cruz County. Before that, she worked in roles including Program Coordinator in Monterey and San Benito Counties. She first joined as the Program Specialist in 2022 after the pandemic and became a Program Coordinator in 2023.

Learn more about the Foster Grandparents Program at seniorscouncil.org/foster-grandparents-program-1697. Seniors Council/AmeriCorps Seniors. Foster Grandparent Program for Santa Cruz County is located at 175 Westridge Dr. in Watsonville. Note: this is also the address for the Council's Senior Companion Program.



Foster grandparent Jose Alvarez, photo courtesy of Seniors Council



Foster grandparents Susanna Espinoza and Jasjit Bhatti at the April 2026 volunteer recognition lunch

EDUCATION / SCHOOLS

San Juan seniors document skills, concerns in internet use survey

BenitoLink survey taken as part of a 'TekConnect' grant from Spectrum

by **Robert Eliason**
July 28, 2026



Zoom tutorial at the Mary Velasco Sellen Senior Center with BenitoLink's Robert Eliason, second from left. Photo by Leslie David.

Lea este artículo en español [aquí](#).

In advance of planned Zoom training sessions sponsored through a “TekConnect” grant from Spectrum, BenitoLink distributed a survey to guests attending the Mary Velasco Sellen Senior Center lunch at San Juan Bautista’s Casa Maria in early spring.

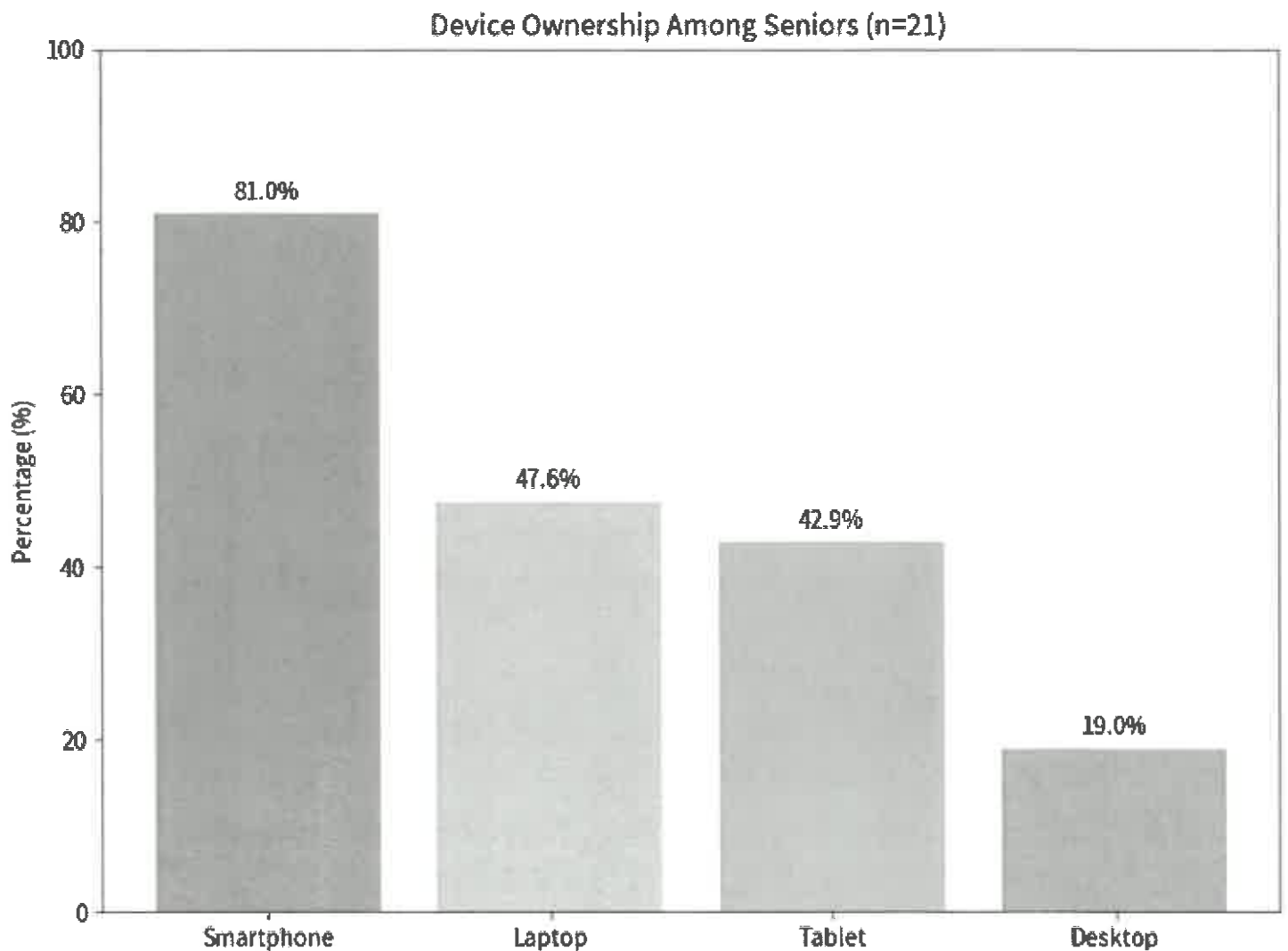
The questions were intended to gauge the group’s level of internet access and computer experience. While only 28 of the approximately 60 people at the lunch responded, it was enough to gain insight into the group, much of which seemed to align with national trends.

According to a 2022 Pew Research [study](#), there has been a steady and dramatic increase in tech usage by people 65 years and older over the past two decades.

Smartphone ownership in that age group, for example, grew from 13% in 2012 to 61% in 2021. Social media use also increased, but at a slower pace, from 11% in 2010 to 45% in 2021. Tablet ownership in 2010 was almost nonexistent at 4%, rising to 44% in 2021.

Seniors, however, have significantly lagged behind younger people in the use of electronic technology. In 2012, smartphone ownership by those aged 18-29, was already higher than current senior use at 66%. And by 2021, adoption by the 18-29 group had grown to 96%. The next age group, 30-49, was at 95%.

The numbers have grown since then. A 2025 Pew [study](#) on broadband usage placed smartphone ownership by adults under 50 at 97%, with those over 65 rising to 78%.



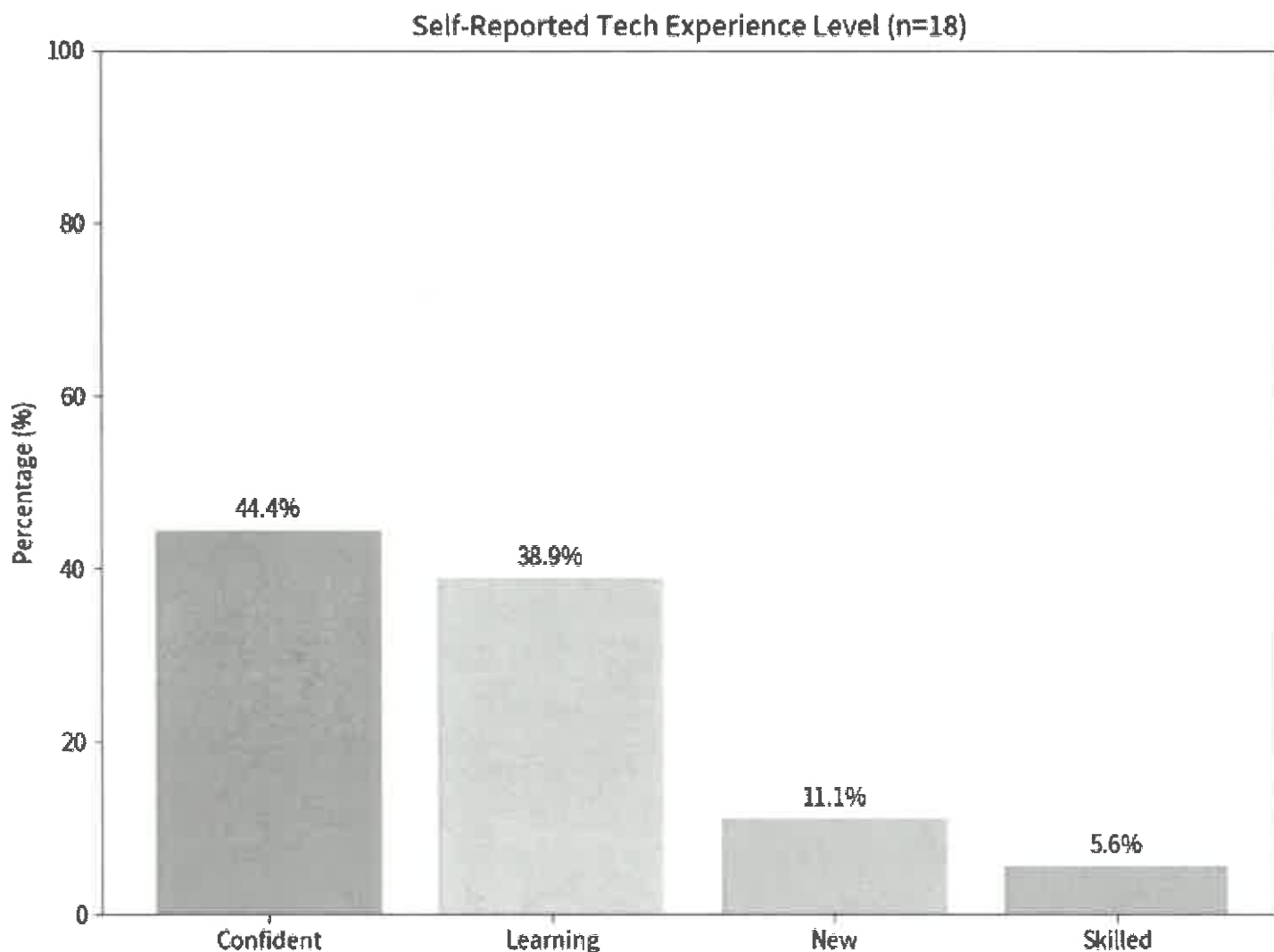
Among the seniors in Spectrum-BenitoLink's survey, 21 of the 28 respondents (75%) were using some device to connect to the internet, but only 17 (61%) said they own a smartphone. Four connected to the internet using only a laptop, with one also using a tablet. Seven people, or 25%, did not indicate that they own an electronic device of any kind.

Of the 21 people who owned at least one device, 17 respondents (81%) owned smartphones, 10 (48%) owned a laptop, 9 (43%) owned a tablet, and four (19%) owned a desktop.

Of the people who regularly used a device to access the internet, 18 assessed their own skill level running from "skilled" (one, or 5.6%), "confident" (eight, or 44%), "learning" (seven, or 39%) or "new" (two, or 11%).

Our intention was to offer instruction on using Zoom, and, perhaps surprisingly, 14 (67%) said they had some experience with the application, with half rating themselves as "confident or skilled and the rest as "learning."

The daily use of the internet by this group, whether beginners or experienced, is largely linked to reliance on the internet for news and information. Of the 17 who responded to a question about where they got their news, only three did not include an internet source.



Many could not specify what source they used, making only indistinct references to browser searches. Others listed BenitoLink, Apple News, San Jose Mercury, National Public Radio and Facebook, among others, as information sources.

Coupled with this was one of the main issues expressed by the respondents: which online sources can be trusted? Nine of the 14 people who answered this question cited false information, scams, internet safety and identity loss as concerns.

According to a 2025 [study](#) by the American Association of Retired Persons, one-third of seniors have similar concerns about the internet, and with good reason.

9.4-4

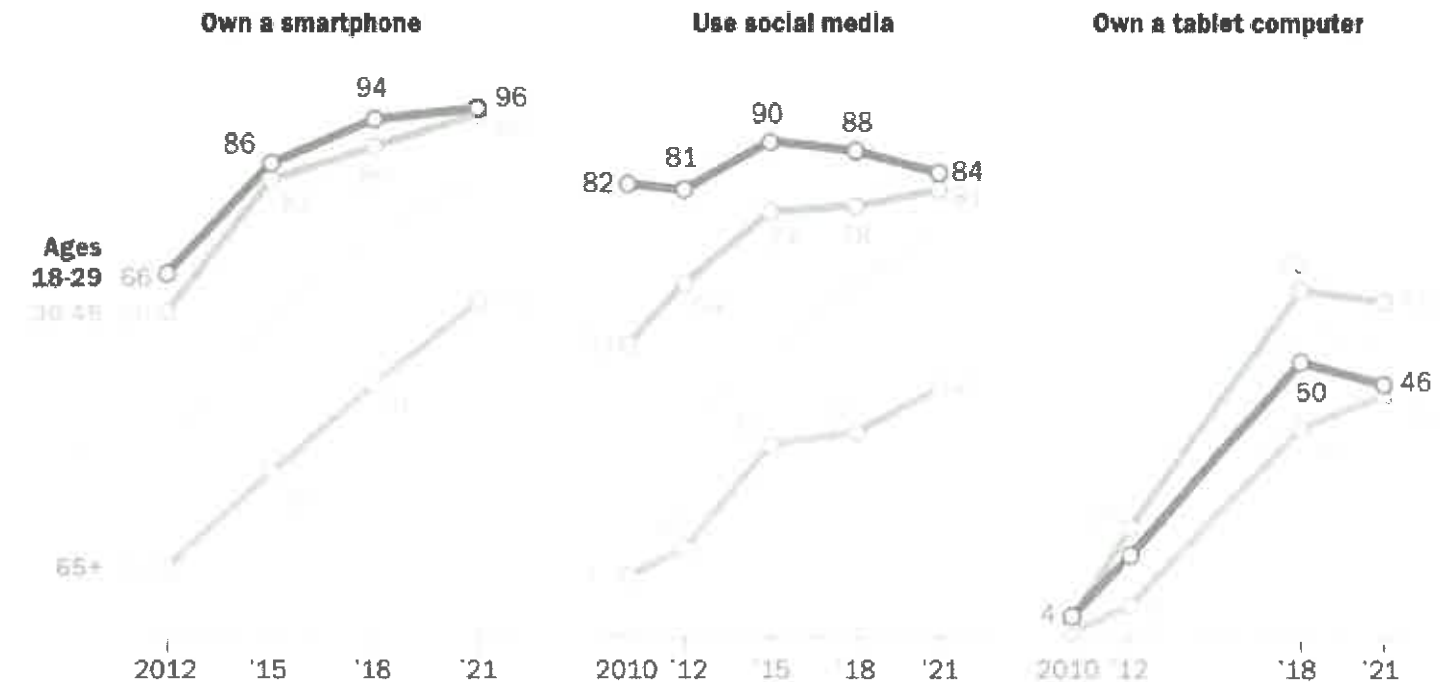
A 2025 FBI report cited those over 60 as being the major targets of online fraud, accounting for \$7.749 billion—34%—of the \$20.9 billion lost in 2025. This is an increase of 26% over 2024.

Admittedly, ours was a small, localized sample, but it shows that there is a need for the kind of assistance that the TekConnect grant is designed to provide.

In the coming months, BenitoLink will also be working with the Hollister senior community to assess its skill levels and concerns.

Smartphone ownership and social media use among older adults continue to grow

% of U.S. adults who say they ...



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 25-Feb. 8, 2021.

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9.4-5