



# Pajaro Community Grants Program

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A summary of project and community impact goals from grant recipients funded by the Pajaro Community Grants Program



# Welcome Message

In December 2024, the Community Foundation for Monterey County created the Pajaro Community Grants Program. Grants were made possible by California Storm Relief Funds (Assembly Bill 102) allocated by the County of Monterey.

We established a volunteer grant committee comprised of a Pajaro business representative, a County of Monterey representative, County Supervisor Glenn Church, and three community residents, including a youth resident, to review applications and provide recommendations.

This program awarded grants to 22 organizations to increase the ability of the community to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and natural disasters. The Pajaro Community Grants Program awarded more than \$1.8 million.

The following is a list of organizations and the work they will be doing in Pajaro.

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***“Pajaro is a resilient and vibrant community. We’re honored to be a trusted partner along with local residents to award these funds where they will be most effective.”***

**- CFMC President/CEO Dan Baldwin**

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# Project Information

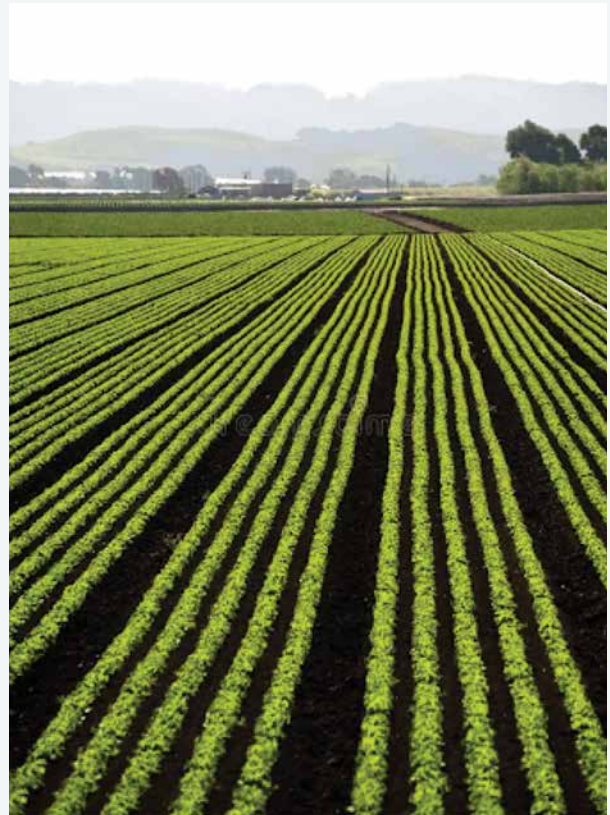
## **Catholic Charities Diocese of Monterey - Pajaro Resilience and Beautification Initiative**

The Pajaro Resilience and Beautification Initiative will benefit the Pajaro community. Through this initiative, Catholic Charities will provide bilingual and culturally appropriate emergency preparedness and resilience workshops open to all Pajaro residents. The beautification component which includes home gardens and education will support the emotional healing of 100 Pajaro households.

The disaster-related workshop topics we selected are common knowledge gaps identified in our Pajaro caseload. These topics include creating an evacuation/emergency plan, mold remediation and awareness, home and renter's insurance, and dealing with debt.

Additionally, Catholic Charities will garner community resiliency through this initiative by providing tools and training on home gardening and nutrition education. Catholic Charities will convene 100 Pajaro households and gardening experts to create a supportive space to learn about planting vegetables and fruit trees, share experiences, and foster community. Catholic Charities will lean on community experts and the internal nutrition team to provide gardening and nutrition educational workshops.

**Program Contact:** Aretha Rodriguez  
arodriguez@catholiccharitiesdom.org  
831.233.3306



## **Center for Community Advocacy (CCA) - Tenants' Rights Advocacy and Education**

CCA helps farmworker and low-income families organize housing-site committees for the purpose of improving substandard conditions in the housing units that they occupy. CCA also helps families to mobilize members from the various housing committees to advocate for the construction of new, quality, affordable housing for farmworkers and other low-income working families.

**Program Contact:** Jesus Estrada  
jestrada@cca-viva.org 831.594.5818



# Project Information

## **Centro Binacional Para El Desarrollo Indigena Oaxaqueno (CBDIO) - Building Indigenous Farmworker Resilience in Pajaro**

Centro Binacional Para El Desarrollo Indigena Oaxaqueno (CBDIO) will be doing outreach and providing direct services in English, Spanish, and Mixteco. The main focus will be on workers' rights, language access rights with healthcare and social services programs, and navigation assistance with eligibility and enrollment for public programs. CBDIO's team hopes to share vital information so that families can not only be more prepared for potential disasters but also attain more security as they continue to recover from past crises.

**Program Contact:** Yesica Guzman  
yesica@centrobinacional.org  
831.272.4260

## **Community Bridges - Pajaro Rising**

To address these needs of the community, the Pajaro Rising program proposes a comprehensive suite of support services that will be a catalyst for community healing and resilience. This program will directly benefit the entire Pajaro community by addressing a wide range of compelling needs with a deep-rooted impact on the community.

**Program Contact:** Michael McMurtry  
michaelm@cbbridges.org  
831.688.8840 x277

## **Community Agroecology Network (CAN) - Community Food Sovereignty: Food Aggregation and Distribution through Community Garden Renovation and Reconnection**

The Community Agroecology Network, in partnership with Tierras Milperas, will work to renovate and upgrade the garden infrastructure of Pajaro Community Garden, impacted by the 2023 flooding. The revitalization of garden infrastructure will be coupled with the piloting of a food aggregation and distribution system based on agroecological climate-resilient farming practices by and for farmworker families. The project will be accompanied with a workshop series focused on food processing and storage, and will address food insecurity during the winter months when there is little work in the agricultural fields and less available garden produce.

**Program Contact:** Rose Cohen  
operations@canunite.org  
831.459.3619



# Project Information

## **Hijos del Sol Arts - Art for Pajaro: Creating Connections Through Community Mural & Workshops**

This grant will benefit the Pajaro community by offering bi-weekly art workshops and creating a community mural designed to foster creative engagement, community enrichment, and resilience-building.

**Program Contact:** Christian Mendelsohn  
executive-director@hijosdelsol.org  
831.383.0412



## **Loaves, Fishes & Computers (LFC) - Digital Equity for Resiliency for Pajaro's Business Owners & Seniors**

LFC will provide computers for small business owners and offer them basic and intermediate digital literacy classes, which includes how to use business-oriented software for finances, sales, marketing, and communications. Business owners will be able to log on to federal, state and local resources regarding disaster relief and economic opportunities. They will learn how to create marketing materials, invoices and contracts, operate their businesses online, and communicate with employees, customers and colleagues.

LFC will provide Pajaro's seniors with Chromebooks, tablets or iPads, and will help them master usage with their devices in individualized and small group classes. Everyone will learn how to protect themselves online with LFC's Internet and Social Media Safety guidelines. LFC offers tools, resources, and experiential opportunities to support Pajaro's residents so that they may effectively, safely and successfully navigate the expanding digital landscape.

**Program Contact:** Jacqueline Leon  
jacqueline@lfc.tech.org  
831.393.9260

# Project Information

## **Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) - Pajaro Business Group Incorporation and Resiliency Project**

The funding associated with this grant request has two objectives: 1) To hire a project management consultant that will support the Pajaro Business Group's organizational development and incorporation and 2) To develop and offer a coordinated schedule of practical business development training opportunities to strengthen resiliency, especially in addressing disasters while also increasing engagement in participation. The goal is to establish a permanent business group that can serve as a support system for the business community and the community at large.

**Program Contact:** Lorena Murillo  
Weldon lorenacall-lorena.com  
831.539.6704

## **Pajaro Rescue Mission - Pajaro Rescue Mission Program**

Our goal is to provide food, hygiene, clothing and overnight shelter for those less fortunate. Our facility is also home to Teen Challenge Monterey Bay, which is a 13-month minimum residential Christian Discipleship Program (Faith Based Recovery) for men with life controlling issues.

**Program Contact:** Andrew Santillo  
andrews@teenchallengemb.org  
831.726.6474



## **Mujeres en Accion - Pajaro Community Resources, Economic Development, and Language Access Program**

Our project expands economic opportunities and support services for the Pajaro community, especially underserved Mixteco speakers. Through our existing partnership with El Pajaro CDC, we are growing in-home childcare as a business opportunity and affordable option, while collaborating with COPA to develop workforce programs for job training, career support, and business resources for undocumented and monolingual residents. Economic equity efforts focus on expanding healthcare, language services, and a Mixteco support group for 25 women in Pajaro and Watsonville to foster leadership and self-sufficiency. Additionally, disaster preparedness training and ongoing support from bilingual Community Health Workers will strengthen community resilience.

**Program Contact:** Anayeli Rodriguez  
anayeli@actioncouncil.org  
831.512.1492

# Project Information

## **Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance - Juntos Sanado Comunidad 1 and 2**

Juntos Sanado will create opportunities, activities, and resources to promote the importance of mental health. The program will have a dedicated mental health counselor that will support with the development of a mental health campaign as well as providing mental health services for the whole family.

**Program Contact:** Sister Rosa  
sccasa@yahoo.com  
831.206.1886

## **Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD) - Revitalizing Health: Reopening PVUSD's Healthy Start Center for a Resilient Pajaro**

In collaboration with partners Salud Para La Gente (SPLG) and Second Harvest Food Bank (SHFB), PVUSD is opening a reimagined and combined Resource Center on the Pajaro Middle School campus to provide direct access to healthcare and social services. At this location, PVUSD will provide Healthy Start Services for students and families that include school supplies and referrals to community resources – from parent education programming to behavioral health referrals. SPLG will provide health services in a clinic setting. And SHFB will operate a food pantry and offer nutrition education.

**Program Contact:** Ben Snyder  
benjamin\_slyder@pvusd.net  
831.786.2390



## **Pajaro Disaster Long Term Recovery Alliance - Enhancing Casa de Cultura Center for Pajaro**

Casa de la Cultura is a hub for Pajaro residents offering services and enrichment programs to the community. The Casa is also home to the Pajaro Disaster Long Term Recovery Alliance, providing critical meeting space for the residents and business groups, as well as the Land Use Subcommittee. This grant will provide funding to enhance the interior and exterior of the Casa, creating a space that reflects the culture of local residents. Families from Pajaro and surrounding areas will benefit from an enhanced Casa de la Cultura Center in Pajaro as it becomes a community center that they can be proud of.

**Program Contact:**  
Sr. Rosa Dolores Rodriguez, SND  
sccasa@yahoo.com  
831.206.1886



# Project Information

## **Salud Para La Gente - Expanding Access to Care in Pajaro**

To address social and health inequities and foster healthy child development, life-long wellbeing, and resilience for Pajaro community residents, Salud is partnering with PVUSD to remodel and reopen a health clinic on the grounds of Pajaro Middle School. Salud previously ran a pediatric clinic at the site, which closed due to severe flood damage. In reopening the facility, the clinic is being physically expanded and improved and will feature enhanced services for the entire Pajaro community, not just pediatric patients. The clinic will house two complementary programs that address the needs of the vibrant but hard hit Pajaro community: PVUSD's Healthy Start program and Salud's comprehensive health services. Please note: This clinic is anticipated to open in September 2025.

**Program Contact:** Salud Para La Gente  
Appointment Line 831.728.0222

## **Watsonville Law Center - Legal Services**

Watsonville Law Center (WLC) is providing free legal services improving access to health, housing, employment, immigration justice, and economic stability.

**Program Contact:** 831.707.2308

## **Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County - Food for Resilient Children and Families in Pajaro**

This grant project will play a crucial role in supporting the Pajaro community by addressing one of its most fundamental needs: access to food. We will open a Food Market Pantry, designed as a store where community members can "shop" around and take what they need. The Food Market Pantry will be open twice a week, with hours centered around high-traffic peak times, so most community members can benefit from the market. Through a long-established partnership with PVUSD, we aim to ensure that both students and families of Pajaro have sufficient food at home, enabling them to focus on learning and fully engage in school activities.

**Program Contact:** Adriana Mata  
adriana.mata@thefoodbank.org  
831.232.8314





# Project Information

## **The Salvation Army Watsonville Corps - Support for Pajaro's unhoused & low- income population**

This grant opportunity will enable us to provide vital supplies to low-income families and the unhoused community in Pajaro, particularly those affected by the recent flood. These individuals continue to need essential items, and with the support of this funding, we can offer some assistance for what they require.

**Program Contact:** Lt. Nayeli Mercado  
nayeli.mercado@usw.salvationarmy.org  
831.724.3922

## **United Way Monterey County -Pajaro childcare capacity and family asset building program**

Pajaro families will receive free tax preparation assistance through tax season. They will receive regular financial literacy education workshops. Parents and childcare providers will receive workshops to provide quality early childhood education and child safety planning.

**Program Contact:** Josh Madfis  
Josh.madfis@unitedwaymcca.org  
831.318.1996

## **Teeth For Life Scholarships - Teeth Scholarships**

Teeth for Life Scholarships helps patients achieve dental care in the underserved agricultural region of Pajaro Valley, Santa Cruz County, California. We restore health, dignity, and opportunity, one patient at a time, ensuring no one suffers from preventable dental pain or disease. Our mission is to help every patient achieve lasting oral health for a lifetime of well-being.

**Program Contact:** Julie Schnell  
info@teethscholarships.org  
831.722.8469



# Project Information

## Ventures - Familias Con Mas

Familias con Más (FcM) is a community-driven program dedicated to helping working-class families build financial stability. Through hands-on financial education workshops, personalized coaching, and six months of guaranteed income for selected families, FcM provides practical tools to navigate economic challenges. Participants learn essential skills such as budgeting, saving, managing credit, and exploring business development opportunities. By offering structured guidance and direct financial support, FcM helps families create stronger financial foundations and prepare for future uncertainties.

**Program Contact:** Lizbeth Silva  
lizbeth@sccvonline.org  
831.245.3233

## Watsonville Wetlands Watch - A Climate Resilient Pajaro Middle School Campus

This project will implement new landscaping, tree planting, and other environmental amenities on the Pajaro Middle School (PMS) campus in order to make the campus environment more climate-resilient and beautiful. Project benefits will include integration of cooling in instructional areas, provision of shaded play and rest areas, reduced energy consumption, capture of stormwater, improvement of air quality, carbon sequestration, reduced urban heat island effects, and improved student experience, health, and learning outcomes, such as through expanded garden-based learning opportunities.

**Program Contact:** Brooke Sampson  
brooke@watsonvillewetlandswatch.org  
831.728.1156



# Thank You

The Community Foundation for Monterey County takes great pride in the trust instilled in us to facilitate the Pajaro Community Grants Program, done in partnership with the County of Monterey's Department of Emergency Management, and you - the community of Pajaro.

The Pajaro Community Grants Program funds were divided between a variety of wide-ranging community projects, which work towards increasing the ability of the whole community to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and natural disasters. Additionally, the program aims to ensure the funding is used in a way that maximizes community impact, while eliminating unnecessary duplication of efforts.

This summary of the Pajaro Community Grant Program funding serves to offer transparency to the community, as well as offer contact information for organizations implementing new projects in the area.

If you have any questions or concerns about the Pajaro Community Grants Program, please reach out to Michael Castro, Director of Community Initiatives and Partnerships, Community Foundation for Monterey County at [michaelc@cfmco.org](mailto:michaelc@cfmco.org) or (831) 375-9712 x127.

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***“Rebuilding isn’t just about infrastructure.  
It’s about restoring hope. These grants  
help us do both.”***

**- Supervisor Glenn Church  
Monterey County, District 2**

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The Pajaro Community Grants Program is supported by a new initiative of the Community Foundation, the Monterey County COAD (Community Organizations Active in Disaster).

The Monterey County COAD is a consortium of non-governmental organizations set up to foster more effective service to those imperiled, impaired, or impacted by disaster through cooperation. The COAD's goal is to eliminate unnecessary duplication of effort in all phases of disaster/emergency management: Preparedness, Response, Recovery and Mitigation.

The mission of the Monterey County COAD is to bring together organizations active throughout the disaster cycle to foster more effective disaster resilience and readiness in the community. The Monterey County COAD will support its mission by bringing together organizations active in the disaster cycle to foster a more effective response to people in times of need by utilizing effective cooperation, coordination, communication, collaboration.



Learn more at  
[cfmco.org/COAD](http://cfmco.org/COAD)

