

# Headlines

Issue 79 • December 2023  
ehsd.org

## Ana Bagtas and Mom Receive Eye-opening Customer Service

Gap in Ethnic  
Hair Care Addressed

**EHSD TALENT GEARS UP  
FOR HOLIDAY CONTEST**

**Join the Holiday Fight  
Against Hunger**





# Impressive Results for 2023 Combined Charities



## EHSD Leads All County Departments in Raising Funds

Contributed by Ronda Boler, Combined Charities Coordinator/Treasurer-Tax Collector's Office

**Thank you all who have donated to the  
2023 Combined Charity Campaign  
between October 9–November 15, 2023.**

The County's goal was to raise \$100,000 through monthly payroll pledges beginning in 2024 or by a one-time credit card/debit card donation to support countless charities that rely on our generous donations annually.

# \$93,432.16

**RAISED BY CONTRA COSTA EMPLOYEES**

This year Contra Costa County employees raised \$93,432.16. We came so close to meeting this year's goal – just \$6,600 shy of reaching \$100K. Nevertheless, we raised a substantial amount of money for various charities that speak to our hearts or charities that meet the need of individuals in our families and/or communities.

Together, Contra Costa County employees raised an impressive amount of money. These nonprofits depend on our donations to support their causes. *You may use your contribution for individual income tax purposes.*

Thank you to all County departments and special kudos to the **Top 5 departments: Employment & Human Services, Health Services, Public Works, County Counsel, and Conservation & Development.** You all ROCK for Charities!

### FUNDS RAISED BY DEPARTMENT

Department	Total Funds Raised
Employment & Human Services	\$ 19,549.41
Health Services	\$ 17,702.14
Public Works	\$ 12,697.11
County Counsel	\$ 7,118.95
Conservation & Development	\$ 6,667.37
Sheriff	\$ 4,879.72
Contra Costa Fire District	\$ 3,195.52
Auditor-Controller	\$ 2,400.00
Human Resources	\$ 2,311.19
Child Support Services	\$ 2,167.47
Dept. of Information Technology	\$ 1,918.26
Agriculture	\$ 1,790.00
Risk Management	\$ 1,660.00
CAO - Budget/Finance	\$ 1,301.45
BOS, District I	\$ 1,200.00
Treasurer-Tax Collector	\$ 944.64
Assessor	\$ 824.64
CAO - Communication & Media	\$ 824.64
Public Defender	\$ 823.97
Library	\$ 776.64
CAO - Labor Relations	\$ 704.94
Clerk Recorder	\$ 600.00
BOS, District II	\$ 480.00
CAO - Clerk of the Board	\$ 284.94
BOS, District III	\$ 261.15
Assessor	\$ 228.00
CAO - Law & Justice Sys. Support	\$ 60.01
Animal Services	\$ 60.00



*YOU Make a Difference*  
**CONTRA COSTA COUNTY**

*"We can't help everyone...But everyone can help someone." –Dr. Loretta Scott*

## Noticing a Gap and Closing It

By Iliana Choate, DEI Team member



The **Hair Care Drive for Children and Youth of Color in Foster Care** put together by the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) team coordinators **Mari Solis, Nannette Dupree** and DEI volunteers was a success. Thank you to everyone who donated

a variety of hair products to help African American and other ethnic foster youth in Contra Costa County. We received 45 boxes of donations as of November 8th from across 19 offices that encompassed East, Central and West locations, and all bureaus. It was exciting to see all the hair products that were donated to help foster youth.

**Total donations from EHSD staff: 2,098 hair related products and 68 hygiene products.**

This drive would not have been possible had Social Worker **Elizabeth Chambers** not identified that there was a gap in providing hair products for African American children and those of other ethnic background.

“The DEI Hair Care Drive was successful, in Hercules, because of our newest volunteer **Kimberley Williams**,” said **Craig Roney**, Eligibility Work Supervisor. “Thank you, Kimberley.”

Elizabeth states, “Many times when taking youth to the Receiving Center, they are going there with absolutely nothing,” explains Elizabeth. “The Receiving Center has backpacks for them that include basic hygiene products. However, I did

notice that the African American youths/children did not get appropriate hair care products for their hair, including shampoo, conditioner, grease, gel, bonnets, etc. It would leave them self-conscious with unmanageable hair and the only option to pull it back in a ponytail or live with

outgrown/unmanageable braids, just waiting for help. This is a difficult thing for them to deal with in an already traumatizing situation. There was a time when my supervisor, **Tamesha Shaw** went with myself and a youth and purchased products for her and I believe it made a world of difference for her and her self-esteem.”



The DEI members & volunteers (back row L-R): **Kimberly Vega, Terrie Adams, Denicia Watley, Shannon Currie, Nannette Dupree.** (Front row L-R), **Cynthia Mallory, Mari Solis, Deborah Drake, Iliana Choate, Mercedes Ibarra.**



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## Noticing a Gap and Closing It

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It only takes one person to bring attention to things that aren't equitable, diverse or inclusive for change to happen. Let's all join to make change.

Reach out to your Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team. We would love to hear your thoughts, ideas and concerns. Email us at [equityandinclusion@ehsd.cccounty.us](mailto:equityandinclusion@ehsd.cccounty.us).

Check out our DEI webpage located under "My Links" on the EHSD intranet page.

**Special thank you to our DEI volunteers who made this drive possible: Jocelyn Garcia, Ann Butler, Ayanna Cooper, Craig Roney, Danielle Moya, Debbie Penovich, Deborah Drake, Fran Carlson, Iliana Choate, Ivory Ellerby, Jacqueline Lopez, Lorena Martinez Castillo, Kimberly Baker, Kimberly Vega, Leslie Ann Hendrick, Mercedes Ibarra, Milena Sam, Nicole Hefner, Rene Tucker, Rodney Dixon, Shannon Currie, Stacy Legras, Stephen Quesada, Terrie Adams, Uche Uzegbu-McGhee, Vee Clapp, Arielle Cole and Jacque Parrish.**

*Building Brighter Futures Together*

1. (L-R): Fran Carlson, Stacy Legras
2. (L-R): Donations
3. Denicia Watley
4. Danielle Moya
5. Uche McGhee
6. (L-R): Terrie Adams, Cynthia Mallory

## Learning CONTINUES



# CalSAWS Experts Customize Instructions for You

By Eileen Olson, Lead Division Manager (CalSAWS/CalWIN/Compass Pilot)

In the months prior to CalSAWS Go-Live (February 2023), the CalSAWS team and volunteer staff members worked to create instructions to incorporate CalSAWS functionality into our county business processes. While we have numerous CalSAWS documentation and training materials, staff members needed more detailed instructions.

In recent months, we've reached out and asked for volunteers to help create County instructions. This is an ongoing effort, and we want to take the opportunity to give special thanks to those who have recently volunteered to assist the CalSAWS team with testing functionality and writing instructions.

Thank you to these EHSD workers who have helped develop the new set of instructions being published:

- **Joyce Eileen Lepas – Children and Family Services**
- **Kimberly Simmons – Workforce Services**
- **Brittany Melendez – Workforce Services**
- **Sandra Orellana – Workforce Services**
- **Amber Sandoval-Sullivan – Workforce Services**

Thank you for your willingness to help by sharing your knowledge and expertise!



*Building Brighter  
Futures Together*



YOU ARE INVITED TO THE

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

EMPLOYMENT & HUMAN SERVICES

*Building Brighter Futures Together*

# KARAOKE

## HOLIDAY PARTY & CONTEST



\$5 PER TICKET - VENMO @ALAN-WANG-82  
(INCLUDE NAME AND # OF TICKETS)  
OR  
\$10 (CASH ONLY) PER TICKET AT THE DOOR

6TH DEC. 5:30-9:00 PM  
RETRO JUNKIE  
2112 N.MAIN ST. WALNUT CREEK

*Get your tickets to  
cheer on your  
favorite singers.*

# EHSD's Got Talent!



On-site food truck.

No-host bar.

If under 21, please  
note in Venmo when  
you send payment.



The need for nutritious food for many families is overwhelming and, once again, we all have a chance to join the fight against hunger.

The annual **Counties Care Holiday Food Fight** is our friendly competition between Contra Costa and Solano to raise money for our Food Bank that serves both counties, and the campaign runs through December 31<sup>st</sup>.

We can help Contra Costa win the Big Apple trophy but, more importantly, our monetary donations will help thousands of families who struggle to put healthy food on their tables.

Even though some receive CalFresh, purchasing nutritious, fresh food is often a challenge for many of our residents.

The Food Bank continues to respond to the growing demand from our community members, many who are working through the financial challenges of being underemployed, jobless, and facing other adversities. This year, the Food Bank reports seeing a lot of “new faces” – community members who never had to tap them for help in the past. The Food Bank is also seeing higher levels of need than at the height of the pandemic,

particularly following the end of the Public Health Emergency (PHE).

Our monetary donations help the Food Bank stretch every dollar so it can purchase fresh, nutritious vegetables and fruits. *If you donate just \$1, you can help the Food Bank buy two meals.*



Making an online contribution is quick and easy at <https://www.foodbankccs.org/events-promotions/holidayfoodfight/>.

Click on the **Employment & Human Services** link under Contra Costa County Teams to donate on our department’s page.

You can also toss your spare change in a collection can, or coordinate/participate in other fundraising activities in your building.

If you have questions or ideas about how EHSD can support the 2023 Holiday Food Fight, email [EventsCommittee@ehsd.cccounty.us](mailto:EventsCommittee@ehsd.cccounty.us).





# Happy Holidays!



Best wishes for joy, peace, and good cheer during this winter season, on any holidays you and your family celebrate.



## We Care...You Care

**We Care...You Care** is how we recognize our peers, emphasizing internal customer service. **We Care...You Care** nominations tie directly to one or more of our six Core Values. The program gives you the opportunity to show your coworkers how much you appreciate them. If you work with someone who deserves special recognition for internal customer service, check out the We Care...You Care link to the guidelines, then fill out a nomination form and submit it to the supervisor of the person you are nominating.

**We Care Guidelines:** [click here](#)

**We Care Nomination Form:** [click here](#)





# Caring for Mom

## Aging and Adult Expert Discovers Theory and Practice are Two Different Things.

By Alan Wang, Community Relations, Media Specialist

As the Program Manager for the Area Agency on Aging for Aging and Adult Services (AAS), **Ana Bagtas** knows exactly how the programs are supposed to work. She oversees the services for older adults which includes programs like home-delivered meals, nutrition education, Information & Assistance (I&A), Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP), even respite care for caregivers.

“I know what caregiving means theoretically, academically, and professionally. But nothing prepared me for what caregiving really entails until I got into it,” says Ana.

When her 78-year-old mother fell ill, Ana and her siblings were cast into the role of caregiver. Aside from the time-consuming task of caring for her mother, Ana found out what it's like to be a customer seeking services in a neighboring county outside of Contra Costa. “I know the system well because I'm in the field. I know what services are available. But when it came to applying for services it was not easy.”

Ana says there's a mound of paperwork, and the forms can be difficult to understand and fill out. What made it worse, she says, was the

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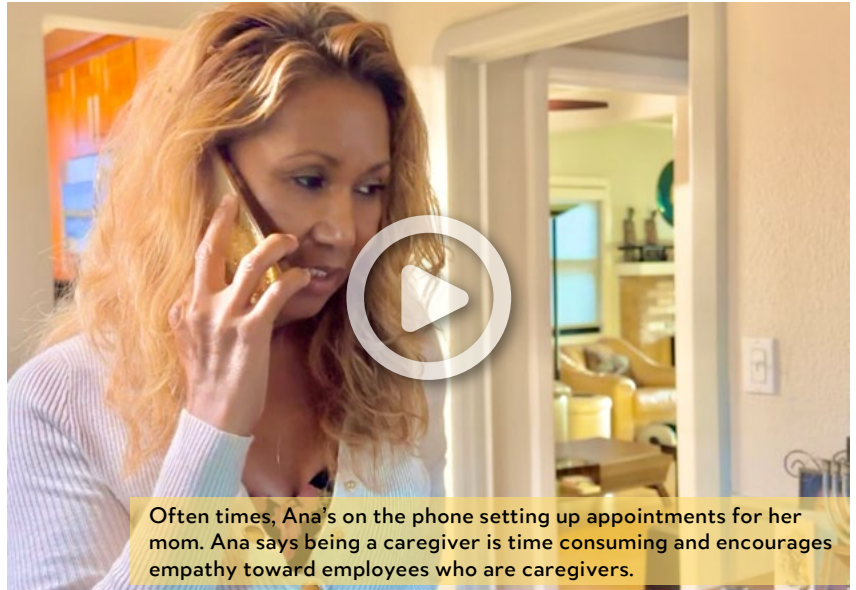


# Caring for Mom

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impatience and lack of respect she felt she received during the call. “Eventually I had to tell the social worker that I’m a professional with the Area Agency on Aging, and she should explain things better because it was not understandable to me. Imagine if the client is a limited-English speaker and completely unaware of how to navigate the system,” says Ana.

While her experiences were in another county, Ana says the Contra Costa County Area Agency on Aging conducted 13 focus group surveys in the past two months. The top complaints from 186 responders were “hardship navigating the application process” and “frustrations with staff.”



Often times, Ana’s on the phone setting up appointments for her mom. Ana says being a caregiver is time consuming and encourages empathy toward employees who are caregivers.

Ana understands the entire process can be exasperating for both customer and social worker, which is why her eye-opening experience led her to write down a few tips to help social workers:

1. Do not assume the customer understands the program or the system. Be attentive when the client is feeling lost and reframe instructions and statements to make it more understandable.
2. Respect the client with patience and politeness.
3. Slowly explain how to fill out forms in detail (especially for non-English speakers).
4. Listen actively and assess the whole person and whole family’s needs (including respite care for the caregiver).
5. Take the time to suggest other services that will help your customer and refer to them as needed.
6. When in doubt, suggest that the customer call the Area Agency on Aging’s Information and Assistance line at (800) 510-2020 or (925) 229-8434 to find out about the array of services available.



Ana’s mother, Jovita Baniqued, was a professional caregiver. Together they found out how hard it is to navigate the system as customers searching for services.



## Outreach Roundup

### Rossmoor Health Fair

About 250-300 senior community members showed up at the Rossmoor Health Fair on Thursday, November 2nd, where Senior Staff Assistant **Daisy Gallegos**, of Adult Protective Services, was on hand to provide information and resources. Rossmoor Counseling Services hosted the event with more than 40 vendors who educated and raised awareness about Contra Costa County's health and community resources.



Daisy Gallegos

Center to gather information and resources about senior services and enjoy raffle prizes and light refreshments.



Daisy Gallegos

### Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, San Ramon

Aging & Adult Social Workers **Maria Sepulveda** of Advocacy Services, and **Kea Chhay** of Information & Assistance helped provide information about EHSD programs to the community at Watermark Senior Living in San Ramon on November 7<sup>th</sup>. California Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan showcased County services during this special afternoon public event at the facility. It offered an opportunity for community members to get assistance with questions or concerns from various public agencies and services.



Social Workers **Kea Chhay** and **Maria Sepulveda** provided Information & Assistance resources and Advocacy Services information in San Ramon.

### El Cerrito Senior Resource Fair

In West County on November 3rd, Senior Staff Assistant **Daisy Gallegos** of Adult Protective Services, Social Worker **Teresa Gonzalez** of AAS' Information & Assistance, and Navigator **Susan Padan** of 4 Our Families helped senior community members at the 2023 Senior Resource Fair in El Cerrito. More than 150 people attended the event at the El Cerrito Community



Teresa Gonzalez, Susan Padan

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## Outreach Roundup

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### Unhoused Resources Fair, Concord

People experiencing homelessness and needing information about available resources and services attended the first Unhoused Resource Fair at the Concord Library on Wednesday, November 15th.

4 Our Families Navigators **Al Gibson** and **Maria Muñoz** represented EHSD among several local organizations that focus on unhoused resources in the areas of health/medical, food, clothing, housing, crisis, mental health, legal aid, pet care, shelter information, and more.

The City of Concord, Contra Costa Health, Health, Housing & Homeless, & CORE Homeless Outreach, along with the County Connection partnered to host the fair.



Maria Muñoz and Al Gibson

*Building Brighter  
Futures Together*

*“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is:  
What are you doing for others?”*

– Martin Luther King, Jr.



## Library Access Made Easier Contra Costa Library Debuts Rolling Reader

An all-electric, early literacy van is wheeling around Contra Costa County after making its first visit to the Monument Crisis Center, in Concord, on November 15th. The library's brand new Rolling Reader debuted with Spanish/English bilingual story time, free books, crafts and kids' activities, plus a chance to meet van mascot, Roxy the fox.

The Rolling Reader will visit underserved communities across the county. Library staff on board will present story times, hand out free books and crafts, and provide activities focused on early literacy, small motor skills, and STEM.

The Contra Costa County Library has 26 branches across the county, yet many residents still are not able to easily access a library. Some may live too far from a branch, or don't have access to reliable transportation, or work during the library's open hours.

The Rolling Reader will allow the library to prioritize providing literacy services to children 0-5 years old in vulnerable communities impacted by poverty. Research shows that early and positive experiences with books set the stage for a child's success in learning to read. Additionally, literacy skills are a strong predictor of health, employment status, and overall success in life. Providing story times and crafts for young children will encourage regular exposure to reading and books, thus



CLICK on the play button to see the Rolling Reader in action.

improving the potential for life success for many children and families.

"We recognized that to reach all our communities, we needed to get out of our buildings and take our services to the residents who need them most,"

said County Librarian Alison McKee. "The goal of the Rolling Reader is to instill a lifelong habit of reading and love for libraries."

Funding for the outreach van was provided by the Bella Vista Foundation and MCE. Staffing for the outreach van is provided by Measure X. Measure X is a half-cent sales tax passed by voters in 2020.

"Early childhood services are one of our County's top priorities," said Supervisor John Gioia, Chair of the Board of Supervisors. "The new library outreach van and early literacy program will improve the lives of many children by making these opportunities easily accessible."



Visit [cclib.org](https://cclib.org) to sign up for a library card and get connected to books and resources. For questions about Library services and programming or account information, contact the Library via online [Chat](#), email [ask@library.cccounty.us](mailto:ask@library.cccounty.us) or text questions to (925) 290-7627.



## SERVICE AWARDS | RETIREES

### SERVICE AWARDS

#### 35 YEARS

Nannette Dupree, Social Work Supervisor II, CFS  
Mercedes Jaime, Social Service Program Assistant, AAS

#### 25 YEARS

Celeste Dubay, Automated Call Dis Coord II, Admin  
Beatrice Edwards, Social Service Program Assistant, WFS  
Yesenia Heredia, Eligibility Work Supervisor  
Kasandra Knox, Social Service Employment Place Counselor, WDB  
Rumita Raj, Social Service Program Assistant, Admin  
Jay Rivera Jr., Comprehensive Services Assist. Manager-Project, CSB

#### 20 YEARS

David Gomez, Clerical Supervisor, WFS

#### 15 YEARS

Nicole Boston, Infant Toddler Teacher-Project, CSB  
Carmen Encarnacion, Associate Teacher-Project, CSB  
Inderjeet Kaur, Infant Toddler Teacher-Project, CSB  
Erika Leyva, Infant Toddler Teacher-Project, CSB  
Patricia Moreno, Infant Toddler Teacher-Project, CSB

#### 10 YEARS

Ebubechukwu Uzoukwu, Clerk-Senior Level, WFS



Are you planning a retirement celebration for a staff member and would like to present them with a retirement certificate? **If so, please contact Tish Gallegos at [tgalligos@ehsd.ccounty.us](mailto:tgalligos@ehsd.ccounty.us) or (925) 608-4808.**





## SPREAD THE WORD

### December 2023

**DECEMBER 7** – Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day  
**DECEMBER 7** – Hanukkah Begins at Sundown  
**DECEMBER 21** – Winter Solstice (shortest day of the year)  
**DECEMBER 23** – Festivus  
**DECEMBER 25** – Christmas Day (Holiday Observed)  
**DECEMBER 26** – Kwanzaa Begins  
**DECEMBER 31** – New Year's Eve



### January 2024

Human Trafficking Awareness Month  
Eligibility Workers Month

**JANUARY 1** – New Year's Day (Holiday Observed)  
**JANUARY 15** – Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Holiday Observed)



### We Care... You Care

CLICK here to learn more about nominating a coworker.  
Updated We Care...You Care nomination form: click here  
and see page 8

### Is there room in your home for one more?

Make a change in a child's life and become a Resource Parent/ Family for a foster child. Contra Costa County needs your support to provide care for children 0–18 years of age. Please join us for a virtual orientation and learn more about becoming a caregiver.



### FREE VIRTUAL ORIENTATIONS

December 7 or 21 • 4 to 6 p.m.

January 4 or 18 • 4 to 6 p.m.

February 1 or 15 • 4 to 6 p.m.



For more information about becoming a Resource Parent visit us at [www.ehdsd.org](http://www.ehdsd.org). If you belong to an organization or community group interested in learning more about Resource Family Approval/ foster parenting, we can schedule an individual session for your group, in English or Spanish.

To register for a class, please call (925) 655-4230 or email [ResourceFamilies@ehsd.cccounty.us](mailto:ResourceFamilies@ehsd.cccounty.us)

### Want to know what else we're doing at EHSD?

Facebook and X @ContraCostaEHSD  
Instagram @HumanaCosta  
Like us on Facebook



The next Issue of Headlines will publish in early December. Email EHSD Headlines at [Headlines@ehsd.cccounty.us](mailto:Headlines@ehsd.cccounty.us), by **December 19th** if you have an upcoming event, article, or idea you would like to submit.