

# Headlines



**Lili Baldazo –**  
Young Girl's Compassion  
Prompts Contra Costa County  
on Homelessness Recognition

**Get Ready  
for EHSB's  
Got Talent!**

**A Touching  
Adoption Story**



**Anicia Henry**  
Customer Service Champion

# EHSD Leads 2024 Combined Charities Campaign with Highest Donations



The Employment & Human Services Department (EHSD) has once again demonstrated its commitment to supporting the community, raising an impressive **\$24,132** during the 2024 Contra Costa County Combined Charities Campaign. Not only was this the highest contribution of any department, but it also surpassed EHSD's 2023 total by \$4,583.

Countywide, employees raised a remarkable **\$94,995** for various charities that serve local families and communities. Although slightly below the \$100,000 goal, the generosity displayed highlights the collective dedication of County staff.

Thank you to everyone who contributed—whether through one-time donations or ongoing payroll deductions for 2025. EHSD's leadership in this campaign underscores its deep commitment to making a difference in the lives of Contra Costa County residents. Way to go, EHSD!





## Lili's Sleeping Bag Drive Recognized by Contra Costa Council on Homelessness

By Alan Wang, Community Relations, Media Strategist

The sight of unhoused people on the streets motivated 10-year-old Lili Baldazo to launch a sleeping bag drive to help people stay warm. Her mother, **Larena Baldazo**, Web Producer at EHSD, used this as a teaching moment, introducing Lili to Volunteers and Emergency Services In Action (VESTIA). Larena explained to Lili how social workers can access VESTIA to provide resources like clothing and bedding for clients in need. Together, they organized the drive, and Lili spread the word to collect money for new sleeping bags.

“This was a project from the heart by Lili, I was just the comms manager. And it was blessed by those who were able to help donate to this effort,” says Larena.

She and her daughter began purchasing sleeping bags in August and put out a call for support to friends and family, then eventually EHSD colleagues in the following weeks.

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Lili and her Mom (**Larena Baldazo**) were recognized at the Contra Costa Council on Homelessness awards ceremony on November 12th.

## Lili's Sleeping Bag Drive Recognized by Contra Costa Council on Homelessness *Continued from previous page*

.....  
*When asked, why sleepings bags? In a shy and quiet voice, Lili responded, "because everyone deserves to be warm."*  
.....

By delivering more than 65 sleeping bags to VESTIA, Lili saw how her efforts could directly support vulnerable people, learning the importance of empathy and community service.

In honor of Homelessness Awareness Month, the Contra Costa Council on Homelessness hosted a reception on Tuesday, November 12, to recognize individuals or groups who have enriched the lives of people facing homelessness in Contra Costa County. Among the group of award recipients was Lili Baldazo for her successful sleeping bag drive. When asked, why sleepings bags? In a shy and quiet voice, Lili responded, "because everyone deserves to be warm."



Lili Baldazo collected more than 65 sleeping bags and brought them to **Cindy Smith** (VESTIA Coordinator). [Click on the play button to watch Lili's video story.](#)

*Building Brighter Futures Together*



# Season of Giving

## VESTIA Steps Up for EHSD Clients in Need

By Christine Anuszkiewicz, Community Relations

In Contra Costa County, families living below the poverty line grapple with hardships that make even basic needs – food, clothing and shelter – difficult to secure. Under these circumstances, celebrating with holiday gifts often feels out of reach. For nearly 40 years, VESTIA (Volunteer & Emergency Services Team in Action) has worked tirelessly to support and uplift EHSD’s clients as the department’s nonprofit partner.

VESTIA is a valuable safety net for thousands of families EHSD serves, providing supplemental support for our most vulnerable residents when no other resources exist. Working year-round they offer support through a variety of programs and resources including sleeping bags, shelter and food, backpacks, clothing, summer camp, and more.

This Season of Giving, VESTIA is rolling out two programs augmenting support for Contra Costa County residents during the Holidays.

VESTIA’s **Holiday Helpers Program** supports two community nonprofits: The Richmond Fire & Police Holiday Toy Program, providing food and toys to families in need, and the “Christmas for Everyone” volunteer organization, which hosts a free holiday event for those without family or funds to do so on their own. It provides a traditional Christmas meal of turkey, ham and all the sides, as well as gifts and entertainment for all ages. VESTIA’s fundraising goal of \$10,000 for these community programs aims to ensure a joyful holiday season for countless families and children in need. Please visit the [VESTIA’s Holiday Helpers page](#) to offer support.

Through its **Angel Tree Donation Campaign**, VESTIA provides essential items to children and youth in Contra Costa County’s foster care system, offering much needed comfort during a season that can be especially difficult for those separated from their homes and families.

To meet its \$10,000 fundraising goal, VESTIA is calling for donations of new pajama sets, fleece blankets, or warm socks. Supporters can also contribute by giving \$25 or \$50 gift cards from Target or Walmart. Please visit the [VESTIA’s Angel Tree Donor Page](#) if you’re interested to help.



# 2024 Counties Care Holiday Food Fight

By Christine Anuszkiewicz, Community Relations

The demand for nourishing meals among families in need is immense. With the holiday season upon us, we once again have an opportunity to unite as a community to support our neighbors and combat hunger.

The annual Counties Care Holiday Food Fight is a friendly competition between Contra Costa and Solano to raise funds for our Food Bank, which serves both counties. This campaign will continue until December 31st.

A countywide effort that involves individual county departments, this fundraising campaign has raised close to \$2.7 million since 2003. The county that raises the most funds per employee will be honored with the Big Apple trophy. While the trophy and bragging rights are exchanged annually, the true champions are the recipients of the funds you raise, those who need extra support to purchase nutritious food for their families.

The Food Bank is dedicated to meeting the increasing needs of our community members, many of whom are struggling financially due to underemployment, unemployment, and other hardships. Currently, the Food Bank serves approximately 65,000 households each month

and anticipates a potential 20% surge in demand, as seasonal expenses add pressure to those already facing financial difficulties.

Our financial contributions enable the Food Bank to maximize every dollar, allowing them to purchase fresh, nutritious fruits and vegetables. With every \$1 you donate, the Food Bank can provide enough food for two meals!

Donating online is quick and convenient through the [Employment & Human Services donations page](#). You can also contribute through cash or check, as well as coordinate/participate in other fundraising activities in your building.

Let's come together and make a difference! If you have questions or ideas about how EHSD can support the 2024 Holiday Food Fight, kindly email [eventscommittee@ehsd.cccounty.us](mailto:eventscommittee@ehsd.cccounty.us).



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY  
EMPLOYMENT & HUMAN SERVICES  
*Building Brighter Futures Together*





# A Rare Bond: Malakai's Story

By Alan Wang, Community Relations, Media Specialist

Malakai never imagined that life could be different. From the age of eight, foster care had been his reality, seemingly a revolving door of homes, rules, and faces. His parents' abuse and neglect had left scars far deeper than anyone could see, and trust was something he'd learned to live without.

But one constant in his life was Tandreya Jackson, his social worker. From their first meeting, she had a way of making Malakai feel seen. She never treated him like just another case number. Over the years, Tandreya became his anchor, someone who always showed up when others didn't. Whether it was a court date, a bad day at school, or just a tough conversation, she was there.

Still, Malakai never dared to believe she could become more than that. Social workers didn't adopt their clients, he thought. Especially not teenagers.

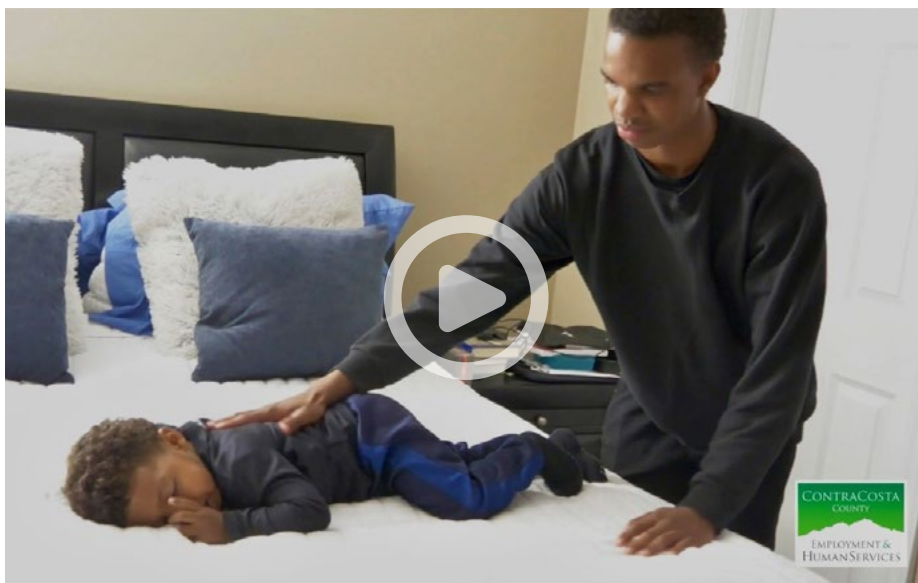
The months that followed were a whirlwind of emotions and legal processes. Tandreya had to navigate the complexities of her role and the system, but she was determined. She had watched Malakai grow from a quiet, wary child, into a resilient,

thoughtful young man. The bond they had formed wasn't just professional, it was familial.

When the adoption was finalized, Malakai couldn't believe it. It felt too good to be true. Their family grew again when Tandreya adopted 5-month old Micah, making Malakai an older brother. At first, the idea of caring for someone else felt foreign to Malakai. But as he held his baby brother, cuddling him and soothing his cries, something shifted. He began to understand what it meant to love someone unconditionally.

"I didn't know how to love before," Malakai admits. "But taking care of him taught me."

Now, Malakai describes his life as a dream come true. He went from feeling like a burden to being part of a family that chose him. He still has scars, but they don't define him anymore. With Tandreya's unwavering support and his little brother's giggles filling the house, Malakai knows he's exactly where he belongs.



In November, Malakai, Micah and his mother Tandreya Jackson were recognized during Adoption Awareness Month at the Board of Supervisor's meeting. **CLICK the play button to watch the video story.**



## Drop 'Em Off

The Contra Costa County Probation Department is teaming up with the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation to bring holiday cheer to children in need through its annual toy drive. For the third consecutive year, the department will host five public drop-off locations, encouraging community members to donate new, unwrapped toys for the cause.

“This toy drive is a great opportunity to connect with residents and bring joy to children while making a positive impact in the community we serve,” said Chief Probation Officer Esa Ehmen-Krause.

The department invites residents to contribute to the drive and help brighten the holidays for children in need.

### **Please bring donations of new, unwrapped toys to any of the following five locations:**

- ★ 4549 Delta Fair Blvd., Antioch
- ★ 50 Douglas Dr., Suite 200, Martinez
- ★ 202 Glacier Dr., Martinez
- ★ 3095 Richmond Pkwy., Suite 201, Richmond
- ★ 1026 Escobar St., Suite 3A, Martinez

These drop-off sites are located within the Probation Department’s offices and are available to accept public donations Monday through Friday, Nov. 18 through Dec. 10, from 8 a.m. through 5 p.m. The offices will be closed daily from noon to 1 p.m. and for all major holidays.





# Confronting Child Trafficking in Contra Costa

By Corinna Espino, MSW, CSEC Services Program Coordinator, Children and Family Services



Anti Human Trafficking Team (L-R): **Corinna Espino**, CSEC Services Program Coordinator, Children & Family Services, EHSD; Katrina Natale, Director of the Human Trafficking Task Force, Contra Costa District Attorney's Office; **Kimberly Baker**, CSEC Services Program Division Manager, Children & Family Services, EHSD; **Mélody Saint-Saëns**, Division Manager – Alliance to End Abuse, EHSD; **Roslyn Gentry**, Director of Children and Family Services, EHSD; **Marla Stuart**, Director, EHSD

2024 was a transformative year for the Children and Family Services (CFS) Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Services Program Team, marked by growth, innovation, and impactful community partnerships.

## Raising Awareness Through Storytelling

The year began with a powerful screening of *Still I Rise* during Human Trafficking Prevention Month. This documentary, featuring local activists Holly Joshi and Leah Albright-Byrd, highlighted the critical connections between racial equity and child trafficking prevention. Its success inspired a second screening in May, hosted in collaboration with the Family Justice Center, extending the conversation to broader audiences.

## Expanding Education and Training

The team forged a partnership with the Contra Costa County Office of Education, creating a training plan that sparked interest from more than 10 school districts and programs. This resulted in a significant expansion of CSEC 101 training for the 2024-2025 school year, equipping educators with tools to identify and support at-risk youth. Meanwhile, the biannual Return to Care training, developed with PACT in 2022, continued providing professionals with strategies to support children reentering care.

## Enhancing Services and Resources

Several key initiatives bolstered support for youth impacted by exploitation:

- **Revamped Emergency Backpacks:**

Updated with harm reduction tools, culturally responsive items, and SOGIE-affirming (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression) resources.

- **Case Specialist Expansion:** Each district office now has a dedicated specialist, and two Search and Recovery specialists were added through partnerships with Community Violence Solutions and Love Never Fails Us.

- **Bilingual Awareness Campaigns:** Materials were distributed to 15 new locations, reaching more families across the county.

## Leading Innovation and Policy Reform

In September, the team participated in the **PACT statewide convening** in Sacramento. Program

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## Confronting Child Trafficking in Contra Costa

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Coordinator, Corinna Espino, showcased Contra Costa County's groundbreaking prevention initiatives, earning recognition for their focus on equity-driven approaches.

In November, the year culminated with significant policy work:

- The team completed a comprehensive **CSEC Interagency Protocol review**, enhancing collaboration among agencies.
- They presented an **anti-human trafficking overview** to the Board of Supervisors, addressing racial disparities and identifying service gaps in trafficking prevention and response.

### Looking Ahead

With a strong foundation set in 2024, the CSEC Services Program Team remains committed to advancing equity, care, and prevention efforts in 2025. By prioritizing collaboration and innovative solutions, they continue to protect and empower the most vulnerable children and families in Contra Costa County.

Together, we can build a future where every child is safe, supported, and free.

The image shows a screenshot of a presentation slide and a video feed from a Board of Supervisors meeting. The slide on the left features a blue ribbon icon and the word "Need" in large blue letters. Below it, there are two bullet points: "EHS Direct Services & CSEC/Y 2023 Data" and "Contra Costa Human Trafficking Task Force 2023 Data". To the right, an agenda item is displayed: "AGENDA ITEM D.4. 24-3745 RECEIVE the Anti-Human Trafficking Update from the Employment and Human Services Department, in partnership with the Contra Costa District Attorney's Office and the Contra Costa Human Trafficking Task Force, regarding anti-human trafficking efforts in Contra Costa County, as recommended by the Family and Human Services Committee. (Melody Saint-Saens and Corinna Espino, Employment and Human Services Department; and Katrina Natale, Contra Costa Human Trafficking Taskforce)". Below the agenda item is a video feed labeled "CCC VoteCast" showing four women seated at a table in a meeting room. At the bottom of the screenshot, there is a banner for the "Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors" with contact information: "PUBLIC COMMENT: Agenda, Call in info and Zoom link can be found at WWW.CONTRACOSTA.CA.GOV by Phone: 888-278-0254, Access Code: 843298#. PRESS #2 TO SPEAK Via ZOOM- link : 873 4471 9204. RAISE HAND TO SPEAK". The Contra Costa County seal is on the left and the "cctv" logo is on the right.

Anti-Human Trafficking Presentation Team at the Board of Supervisors meeting on November 5th, 2024. Presenters spoke on the need and responses to human trafficking, which included local data, collaborations, and services offered in Contra Costa County.

*Building Brighter  
Futures Together*



# A Year in the Fight Against Human Trafficking

By Mélody Saint-Saëns, Alliance to End Abuse

Human trafficking survivors are beloved members of our community and so much more than their experience as victims of trafficking and exploitation. This was a reminder that Children and Family Services' (CFS) CSEC Services Program, the Alliance to End Abuse, and the Contra Costa District Attorney's Office (CCDAO) shared with the Board of Supervisors (BOS) as they provided a comprehensive update about anti-human trafficking efforts in Contra Costa County on Tuesday, November 5th.

The team shed light on the need for anti-human trafficking initiatives and gave an overview of EHSD and CCDAO roles, and collaboratives including the Contra Costa Human Trafficking Task Force (CCHTTF), the Contra Costa Human Trafficking Coalition (CCHTTC), the Human Trafficking Multi-Disciplinary Team (HT-MDT), and the CSEC/Y Interagency Streeting Committee. They also explained the models and best practices to prevent human trafficking and to address key trends and gaps.

You can view a [recording of the Anti-HT Presentation on the County website](#) starting at 5:29:24 and a [copy of the slides are available here](#).

## Summary of Presentation Highlights on Anti-Human Trafficking Efforts in Contra Costa County

In 2023, Contra Costa County made significant strides in combating human trafficking and supporting survivors:

- **Support Services:** 142 children and youth at risk of commercial sexual exploitation received assistance from CFS. Workforce Services provided \$580,374 in combined cash aid and CalFresh benefits to trafficking victims through the TCVAP program.
- **Investments:** The County allocated \$561,222.40 to prevention and intervention efforts, including programs by the Alliance to End Abuse and the CSEC Services Program. An additional \$1.47 million is budgeted for FY 2024-2025 to support service partners like Bay Area Legal Aid, Family Justice Center, and Community Violence Solutions.
- **Human Trafficking Task Force:** The CCHTTF identified 143 victims, initiated 62 investigations, and secured 30 prosecutions for trafficking-related crimes. CVS supported 185 survivors. Key initiatives include survivor leadership, criminal record vacatur, interpreter services, and developing case protocols.
- **Holistic Prevention:** The County employs multi-level strategies to address trafficking comprehensively, focusing on prevention before and after incidents.
- **Identified Challenges:** Gaps include youth targeting, under-identification of cases, limited legal services, unstable funding, inadequate housing, lack of specialized mental health resources, and the impact of AI on trafficking.
- **Racial Equity:** A four-part approach addresses inequities through research, culturally responsive practices, outreach, and partnerships to tackle root causes of vulnerability.

# Mission Possible III: Creating Community and Opportunity

By Oravanh Thammasen, Program/Projects Coordinator for the Alliance to End Abuse



On November 7, 2024, the Mission Possible III conference brought together 125 members of the community, nonprofit organizations, government departments and law enforcement agencies to discuss and focus on violence prevention efforts from a public health lens. This year's theme, "Creating Community and Opportunity" set the stage for conference participants to 1) build shared understanding of violence prevention through connection, healing and belonging, and 2) explore economic opportunities for the community.



Participants journeyed through a Contra Costa Museum of Violence Prevention set in the future to imagine a world without violence. They learned about the Socio-Ecological Model ([CDC violence prevention](#)) that identifies and explains the risk and protective factors for violence at the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels, and how solutions require actions at and across all levels to make lives, relationships, and communities healthier and safer for everyone. They also learned more about [Contra Costa's Call to Action Preventing Interpersonal Violence](#).



Activities throughout the day included mindfulness, community wellness and connectedness through art and movement therapy, learning about current protective community programming from the East Bay Center for the Performing Arts and listening to the Economic Opportunity Panel (Contra Costa Community College District, Los Medanos College, Rubicon Programs, Contra Costa County Office of Education Youth Workforce, and East Bay Leadership Council).

Japanese origami of cranes, a symbol of peace.

(L-R): Tamina Alon, Mélody Saint-Saëns, Aaron Jones, Susun Kim, Hisham Alibob, Natalie Oleas



*EHSD's Alliance to End Abuse, Contra Costa Family Justice Alliance, Contra Costa Health, Leshar Foundation, Child Abuse Prevention Council of Contra Costa, John Muir Health, and Contra Costa County Probation sponsored the Conference.*



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY LIBRARY LAUNCHES

# Self-Service Sundays

## Pilot at Concord Branch



Sign-ups are now open. For more information or to register, visit [ccclib.org/self-service-sundays](https://ccclib.org/self-service-sundays).

Starting December 1st, the Contra Costa County Library will pilot a program allowing patrons to access the Concord Library on Sundays, even when the branch is typically closed. Registered users can visit between 12 p.m. and 4 p.m. to browse, check out books, return items, pick up holds, connect to Wi-Fi, and use the space for studying or reading.

While staff will not be on-site, two security guards will ensure that only pre-approved patrons gain entry. To participate, patrons must have a library card in good standing, valid ID, complete an orientation, and sign a user agreement. Entry will be granted via library card scan and a unique PIN.

“We know our patrons would like the libraries to be open more, especially on Sundays,” said County Librarian Alison McKee. “This pilot offers an alternative solution that, if successful, could expand to other branches.”

The program will be assessed after six months for potential expansion. Services such as computers, restrooms, and community meeting rooms will not be available during this pilot.



**SELF-SERVICE SUNDAYS**  
Pilot Program

Coming December 1st  
Sign up in advance  
at [ccclib.org/self-service-sundays](https://ccclib.org/self-service-sundays)



COMING SOON...  
**EHSD'S GOT TALENT!**



 **DON'T MISS OUT!**

**CALLING ALL KARAKOKE  
CONTESTANTS AND FANS**

**\$500 in CASH PRIZES**

**STAY TUNED FOR MORE DETAILS!**

Retro Junkie, 2112 N. Main St, Walnut Creek



**OUTDOOR BEER GARDEN  
AND FOOD TRUCKS!**





# Thanksgiving in West County

The team at 1275 Hall Ave came together for a heartwarming “Thanks-for-Giving” Potluck on November 21st. Organized by the building’s Events Committee, led by Social Worker **Tammi Cason**, the potluck invited everyone to bring a dish to share. Staff gathered in the Staff Room to enjoy the delicious spread, fostering great conversations and plenty of smiles. The event was a resounding success, celebrating the spirit of gratitude and community.

## Other Celebrations at 1275 Hall Ave

The “Thanks-for-Giving” Potluck was just one of many vibrant events hosted at 1275 Hall Ave this year. The Events Committee also organized:

- A Trick-or-Treat route around the building for Halloween.
- A lively Fiesta in honor of Hispanic/Latino/Latinx Heritage Month.
- Wellness and kindness activities for Mental Health Awareness Month.
- A colorful Pride Potluck featuring dishes representing the rainbow.
- A tropical Luau Potluck for AANHPI Heritage Month.
- A meaningful Black History Celebration, which included poetry, trivia, music, and food.

A big thank-you goes out to the Hall Events Committee for their hard work in making these events so memorable!



(L-R): Vernita James, Michelle Wilson, Maritza Sanchez-Ware, Tonika Gillard



(L-R): Cheryl Orr, Cristina Montufar, Theresa Nash, Karla Kattengell, Keyerah Miller, Damien Williams, Tammy Hill, Ellen Wienecke, Virginia Paraizo, Marie Mosley



(L-R): Faye Herald, Nicole Koprek, Kristen Chipley, Cindy Vogl, Nidia De Leon, Porschea Brown, Heavenly Delgadillo



(L-R): Briana Wiggins, Pierre Allison, Hana Day, Hayley Augustine

# Baking Spirits Brighter

By Veronica Bercaives, Contracts Administrator, Information & Systems

On Saturday, November 2nd, **Tamina Alon**, Director of Administration, Information & Systems, hosted a Policy & Planning team baking event at her home, providing an opportunity for fun and learning – and delicious tastings!

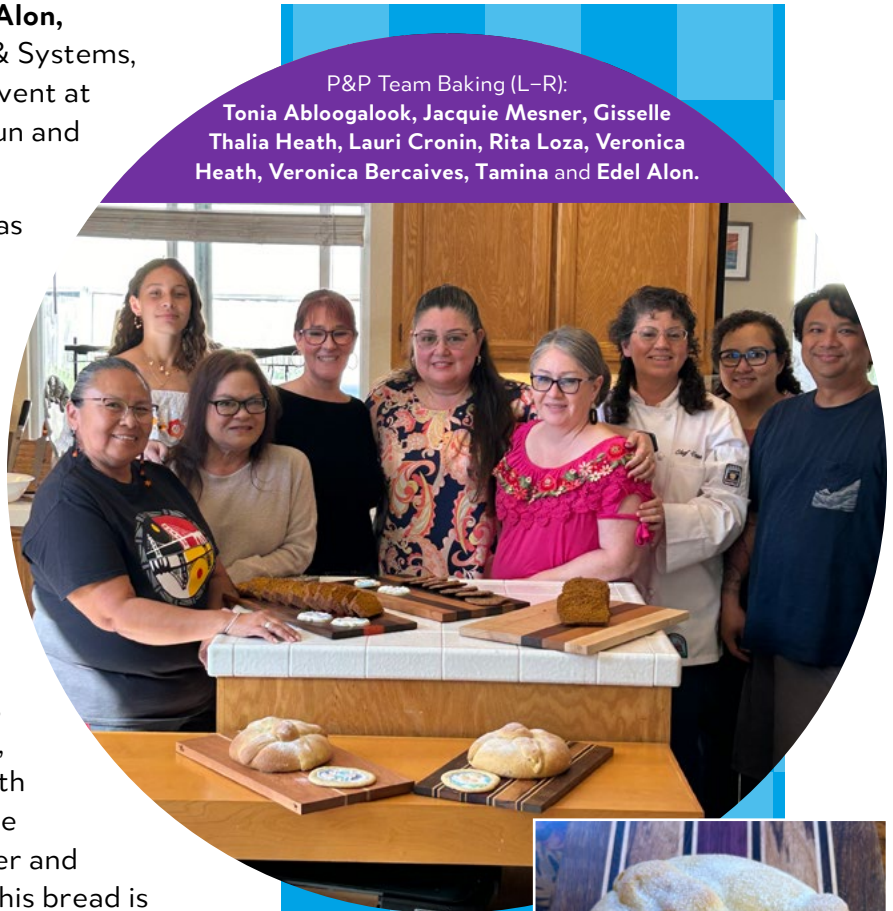
As the P&P resident baking expert, I was invited to demonstrate the process of baking bread and to share baking tips. Since the bake-off happened on Dia De Los Muertos, I decided to celebrate the day by baking the traditional Pan De Muerto which translates to “bread of the dead.” It is one of the many traditional foods that are placed on the ofrenda (altar) to honor deceased family members.

Pan De Muerto is an enriched bread equivalent to a brioche made with butter, eggs, yeast, bread flour, sugar, rosewater, anise seed, and orange zest. It's loaded with flavor and is moist and light in texture. The final product is brushed with melted butter and sprinkled with sugar. The challenge with this bread is the time required for the gluten to develop through the kneading process due to the amount of butter and eggs in the dough. The temperature of the eggs and butter is also a challenge because they should be at room temperature to incorporate seamlessly into the dough.

Once the fragrant bread was ready, our team couldn't stop eating it, so it turned out to be a hit! In addition, folks decorated skull cookies, and I demonstrated how to make pumpkin bread, a simple Fall season quick bread that would be easy for beginner bakers. I also baked my five-spice gingersnaps, another great seasonal treat.

This was a time to gather and socialize, and we plan to repeat a similar event in the future.

P&P Team Baking (L-R):  
Tonia Abloogalook, Jacquie Mesner, Gisselle Thalia Heath, Lauri Cronin, Rita Loza, Veronica Heath, Veronica Bercaives, Tamina and Edel Alon.





# Don't Miss the Next Episode of Government Speak

By Larena Baldazo, Web Producer, Community Relations



Juan De Dios Batiz, Kristi Jourdan, Sarah Reich, Ruth Hunter

Tune in to Contra Costa County's podcast, Government Speak, for an engaging conversation featuring EHSD's **Sarah Reich**, Interim Deputy Director of CSB, **Ruth Hunter**, Site Supervisor at the George Miller III Center, and Head Start parent and Policy Council member **Juan De Dios Batiz**.

In this episode, they dive into the County's involvement in Head Start, explore current job opportunities, and share valuable insights from a parent's perspective.

- Listen here starting Wed, 12/4: [Government Speak: A Contra Costa County Podcast | Contra Costa Television](#)

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DECEMBER 12, 2024

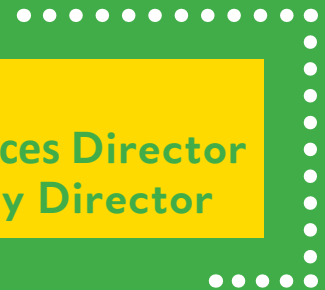
Our next EHSD Live! is on Thursday, December 12th. Everyone who watches has a chance to win a gas gift card in a LIVE drawing! So, you must be “present” on Zoom to win!

Mark your calendars to hear from your colleagues, get the latest departmental updates, have a little fun, and maybe win a prize!

Watch for the Zoom link in your email soon.

**EHSD Live! Guest Spotlights:**  
**Roslyn Gentry, New Children & Family Services Director**  
**Anissa Basoco-Villarreal, New Chief Deputy Director**

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CONTRACOSTA  
COUNTY

EMPLOYMENT &  
HUMAN SERVICES

## 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:** [We Care... You Care Guidelines](#)

**We Care nomination form:** [We Care... You Care Nomination Form](#)





## EHSD Navigators: Building Stronger Communities through Measure X and 4 Our Families

By Lloyd Amog, Workforce Services Specialist, & Drina Rowland, CalWORKs Program Division Manager

Since its launch in 2018, the *4 Our Families Navigators* program has provided vital support to over 16,000 Contra Costa families. From their rapid response during COVID-19 closures to fostering strong partnerships with community and faith-based organizations, these Navigators have been a consistent resource at events, fairs, and outreach programs, connecting residents with essential services.



L-R: Sandra Figueroa, Natalie Aguilar, Cecilia Felan, Susan Padan, Al Gibson, Casey Costa, Joanna Thieme, Maria R. Munoz, and Sandra Zepeda-Lopez (EHSD Navigators)

Antioch, and Brentwood. Their holistic approach—partnering with community, nonprofit, and faith-based organizations—ensures clients receive comprehensive care. For FY 24-25, the team aims to assist 1,500 households, further cementing their critical role in Contra Costa County.

### Meet the EHSD Navigators

- **Sandra Figueroa** (District 1, Supervisor John M. Gioia)

Based at Lavonya Dejean Middle School, Sandra provides outreach, referrals, and resources to students and families, making a meaningful impact on the West County community.

- **Natalie Aguilar** (District 2, Supervisor Candace Andersen)

Natalie recently participated in the Domestic Violence Awareness Walk in San Ramon and will soon be stationed at the South County Family Justice Center, continuing her work to connect families with critical services.

- **Casey Costa** (District 3, Supervisor Diane Burgis) Casey actively engages in community outreach at Brentwood and Antioch libraries, local schools, and senior living communities, focusing on expanding support within East County.

- **Al Gibson** (District 4, Supervisor Ken Carlson) Al has worked to improve access to

The *Measure X Navigators* program, established through funding from the County's Measure X sales tax, builds on this legacy by assigning Navigators to each Board of Supervisor (BOS) district. These Navigators focus on addressing district-specific needs by streamlining access to resources and providing tailored support. From removing barriers to connecting families with services, Measure X Navigators have become trusted allies, assisting over 665 households in FY 23-24 with an impressive 99% eligibility rate for referred services.

Together, *Measure X* and *4 Our Families Navigators* form the EHSD Navigator Team, a county-wide network of support based at 15 locations, including Family Justice Centers, district offices, and libraries in San Pablo, Concord,

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## EHSD Navigators: Building Stronger Communities through Measure X and 4 Our Families

*Continued from previous page*

transportation and physical activity for students at Oak Grove Middle School while addressing food and transportation insecurities for youth in the surrounding area.

- **Joanna Thieme** (District 5, Supervisor Federal D. Glover)

Joanna provides crisis support for families at Hillview Junior High School, assisting with food

resources, school supplies, utility applications, and job searches, helping families build a pathway to economic stability.

The EHSD Navigators exemplify the department's commitment to community-driven solutions, working tirelessly to uplift individuals and families across Contra Costa County.

## Outreach Roundup

**THU, NOV 7: "Veterans Resource Fair" at Contra Costa College in San Pablo**



Cecilia Felan and Sandra Zepeda-Lopez

AAS Soc Svc Program Assistant, **Cecilia Felan** and WFS Soc Svc Program Assistant, **Sandra Zepeda-Lopez**, attended this event supporting college students, veteran students and dependents seeking resources including VA enrollment certification, VA education benefits, VA work study opportunities and more. Cecilia and Sandra offered support and information to attendees regarding access to county benefits and services including the Contra Costa Crisis Center, A3 Contra Costa Health for mental and behavioral health support, and more.

**SAT, NOV 16: "Community Resource Fair" at George Miller Center**

Navigators **Cecilia Felan** and **Al Gibson** attended this event which brought local organizations and families together to share valuable resources



Cecilia Felan and Al Gibson

and services. Cecilia and Al provided attendees with information about critical County Benefits, including MediCal and General Assistance. They answered questions, distributed educational materials, and connected individuals to resources to enhance their access to essential support systems. Their efforts ensured that the attendees received practical support to navigate systems that can often feel overwhelming

The George Miller Center, a cornerstone of the community, offers programs for adults with

*Continued on next page*



## Outreach Roundup *Continued from previous page*

severe or multiple intellectual and developmental disabilities. The community resource fair event served as a vital bridge between service providers and families in need of assistance, empowering families and individuals with disabilities to navigate available benefits ensuring equitable access to care and support.

### TUE, NOV 19: “Resource Fair for Unhoused Individuals” at the Concord Library.

The event brought together organizations dedicated to supporting vulnerable populations by offering resources and guidance. Navigators **Al Gibson** and **Casey Costa** were in attendance to provide attendees with valuable information on services such as housing assistance, healthcare access, and benefits applications.

One attendee, a woman seeking help with filing for Social Security, expressed deep gratitude

for the navigators’ assistance. Casey and Al provided her with information on the application process, empowering her to take the next steps toward securing vital benefits. Their dedication to addressing the immediate needs of those they serve exemplifies the 4 Our Families program’s mission to uplift and support underserved communities.



Al Gibson and Casey Costa



Every sunrise is an invitation for us to arise and brighten someone’s day.

– RICHELLE E. GOODRICH

# EHSD SHOUTOUTS

Congratulations to this EHSD staff member for recently achieving a significant accomplishment!



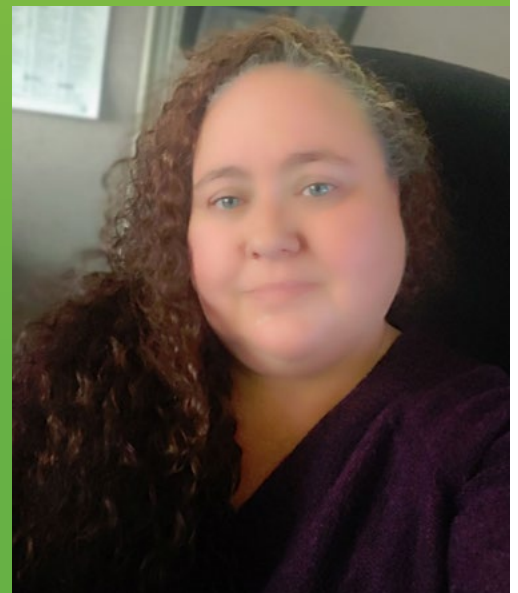
## EHSD Personnel Unit expresses appreciation for Shannon Sargent, ASA III in Fiscal

By Anna Adriano, HR Analyst & Shirly Naoom, HR Analyst

In our department, we handle numerous reports and data submissions that are essential for the EHSD Executive Team, Labor Groups, the County Administrator, Board of Supervisors, and various external governing bodies that provide funding for our EHSD programs. Furthermore, any position changes or employee transfers require close collaboration between Personnel and Fiscal, with **Shannon Sargent** serving as the primary expert in Position Control within Fiscal.

Shannon has been instrumental in providing support for Position Control over the past few months, resulting in more accurate and timely reporting. Her assistance has been particularly valuable during the recent position changes for the new fiscal year.

We recognize and appreciate Shannon's collaborative efforts and the significant contributions she makes to EHSD. Thank you, Shannon, for all that you do!



*Building Brighter  
Futures Together*

If you or a colleague have a work-related milestone or accomplishment, we want to hear about it. Email a 2-3 sentence description and photo to [EventsCommittee@ehsd.cccounty.us](mailto:EventsCommittee@ehsd.cccounty.us) and you may get a "shout out" in *Headlines* or on EHSD Live!



# EHSD Personnel Strengthens HR Expertise at CalPELRA Conference

By Amanda Cleveland, ASA III, Personnel Unit

Each year, public agency employees from across California gather at the California Public Employers Labor Relations Association (CalPELRA) conference to sharpen their human resources (HR) skills and strategies for organizational success.

This year, EHSD's Personnel team was proudly represented by HR Supervisor **Muriel Clemente**, HR Analysts **Jose Merlos** and **Shirly Naoom**, and Administrative Services Assistant III Amanda Cleveland. The team participated in workshops covering key topics, including employee and labor relations, engagement, workplace accommodations, leaves, performance management, and development.

While EHSD and County policies provide a solid foundation, the team recognizes the importance of continuous improvement to stay aligned with current legislative requirements and best practices in the industry.

Building on the recent evolution of EHSD Personnel highlighted in last month's *Headlines*, the knowledge gained at CalPELRA underscores our commitment to fostering growth and development for all EHSD employees.



(L-R): **Shirly Naoom**, HR Analyst; **Amanda Cleveland**, ASA III; **Muriel Clemente**, HR Supervisor; **Jose Merlos**, HR Analyst

# Using Magellan, Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Contributed by Personnel Services

HEY, EHSD!

We would like to remind everyone about the comprehensive benefits available to you through our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) with Magellan. As a valued employee of Contra Costa County, you have access to a range of resources at no cost.

Each month, we spotlight a webinar, a newsletter, and LifeMart, which offers valuable discounts as part of your EAP. While we often emphasize mental health and well-being—essential aspects of our lives—it is important to note that there are also resources available for various other topics, including:

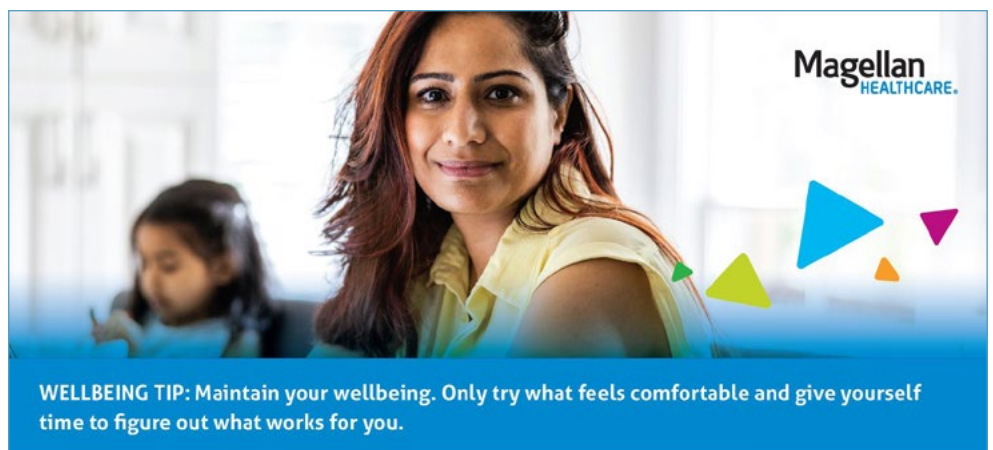
- Career Growth
- Parenting
- Relationships
- Debt Management
- Legal Matters
- Grief
- Depression
- Aging
- Fitness
- Sleep
- And much more!

These topics are addressed through webinars, informational sheets, and consultations with live experts. Engaging with an expert and exploring ongoing services is completely free of charge. If you are interested in resources for your team, please feel free to reach out to Personnel.

Your contributions to our department are invaluable. As **Marla Stuart**, EHSD Director stated in her November 6th email, “Our daily work is demanding, and it’s essential that we take time to recharge and nurture our own well-being so that we can continue to give our best to those who truly rely on our services for their own well-being.” Utilizing the EAP is one effective way to support your personal renewal and self-care.

*Please be assured that the County does not receive specific information about the services each employee utilizes or the reasons for accessing them; however, we do track the overall number of employees who participate in these services.*

*Building Brighter Futures Together*



Scan the QR code to visit your member website for helpful resources.





This individual is being recognized for going the extra mile by delivering excellent service to our customers. She went above and beyond in her willingness to help and demonstrated EHSD’s emphasis on providing exemplary customer service. Congratulations on a job well done!

*“Anicia is a pleasure to have on our team. Kudos to Anicia Henry!”*

– Dana Wargo.



## Anicia Henry Shines in Fast-Paced Call Center with Compassion and Expertise

By Dana Wargo, Workforce Services Specialist

Working in the high-pressure environment of a call center demands patience, skill, and composure—qualities that Anicia Henry, an Experienced Level Clerk at the 2600 Stanwell office in Concord, demonstrates daily.

Recently, Anicia’s exceptional professionalism was on full display when she assisted a distressed customer needing urgent Medi-Cal activation for immediate medical care. Despite the caller’s frustration after being redirected multiple times, Anicia remained calm and empathetic. She reassured the customer, swiftly collaborated with a worker, and ensured their Medi-Cal was activated without delay.

Anicia’s dedication to providing exceptional service and her ability to navigate challenging situations with empathy and resourcefulness make her an invaluable asset to the team.

“Anicia is a pleasure to have on our team. Kudos to Anicia Henry!” said Dana Wargo.

Thank you, Anicia, for your outstanding commitment to supporting our customers and making a meaningful difference every day!



YOU ARE INVITED TO A  
**COMMUNITY  
CELEBRATION!**



## OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE



WE WILL SHARE UPDATES FROM YEAR ONE AND INVITE YOUR FEEDBACK!

**Wed, December 04, 2024  
5:30 PM - 8:00 PM**

**Los Medanos College  
Pittsburg, CA**



**Click the QR Code  
to Register Today!**



## Schedule an Exit Interview

As you prepare to leave EHSD, we encourage you to take part in an exit interview. This is a valuable opportunity to share your feedback about your experience with the Employment & Human Services Department. Rest assured, these interviews are confidential and will be reviewed directly by EHSD Director **Marla Stuart**.

You can schedule one by contacting **Julie Peck**, EHSD Ombudsperson at [jpeck@ehsd.cccounty.us](mailto:jpeck@ehsd.cccounty.us) or (925) 788-1722.



## SERVICE AWARDS | NEW EMPLOYEES | RETIREES

### SERVICE AWARDS

#### 30 YEARS

Patricia Viveros, CalWIN Help Desk Specialist, Admin Information & Systems

#### 25 YEARS

Charlene Thomas, Social Worker III, AAS  
Yolanda Williams, Teacher-Project, CSB

#### 20 YEARS

Jocelyn Briggs, Social Worker III, AAS  
John Gavieres, Eligibility Work Supervisor, AAS

#### 10 YEARS

Mark Bishop, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS  
Tanya Frank, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS  
Roosevelt Gipson, Clerk-Experienced Level, WFS  
Kalimah Larry, Clerk-Experienced Level, CFS  
Russell Ralls, Clerk-Experienced Level, WFS  
Evette N Thomas, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS  
Rose M Vargas Corella, Soc Svc Program Assistant  
Sherry Wattley, Clerk-Senior Level, WFS  
Claudia Yarber, Clerk-Senior Level, CFS

### NEW EMPLOYEES

Doha H Alazzeh, Soc Svc Program Assistant, AAS  
Anissa Basoco-Villarreal, Chief Deputy Director, Admin  
Carol Butler, Personnel Technician, Internal Operations  
Lizabeth Cano, Student Intern II, CSB  
Tameka L Lee, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS  
Melissa McCarthy, Social Worker III, CFS  
Faith Montemayor, Student Intern Level III, Information & Systems

Rachael Moy, Clerk-Experience Level, Internal Operations  
Marco Patitucci, ASA II, WDB  
Cynthia Ramirez, Intermediate Clerk, CSB  
Anisa Smith, Bus Svcs Rep, WDB  
Michael Steyer, Soc Svc Sr Welf Fraud Fld Invs, Internal Operations  
Erica Thomas, Clerk-Experienced Level, Internal Operations

### RETIREES

Maria Costa, Clerk-Experienced Level, WFS  
Esther Dominguez, Social Worker, WFS may rescind  
Edyth Williams, Social Worker III, CFS

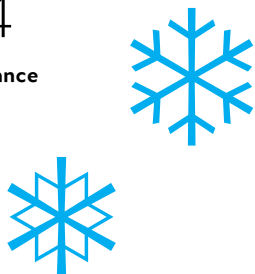
*Building Brighter  
Futures Together*

Are you planning a retirement celebration for a staff member and would like to present them with a retirement certificate? **If so, please contact Deb Johnson at [djohnson@ehsd.cccounty.us](mailto:djohnson@ehsd.cccounty.us) or (925) 608-4904.**

# SPREAD THE WORD

## December 2024

- DECEMBER 7 – Pearl Harbor Remembrance
- DECEMBER 21 – Winter Solstice
- DECEMBER 25 – Hanukkah Begins
- DECEMBER 25 – Christmas Day
- DECEMBER 26 – Kwanzaa Begins
- DECEMBER 31 – New Year’s Eve



### 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 19 • 4 to 6 p.m.  
 January 2 or 16 • 4 to 6 p.m.  
 February 6 or 20 • 4 to 6 p.m.



For more information about becoming a Resource Parent visit us at [www.ehds.org](http://www.ehds.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)

## January 2025

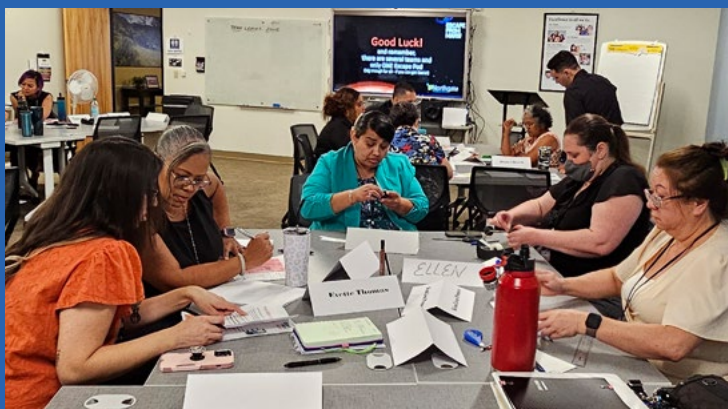
- HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS MONTH
- ELIGIBILITY WORKERS MONTH
- NATIONAL STALKING AWARENESS MONTH
- JANUARY 1 – New Year’s Day (Holiday)
- JANUARY 20 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Holiday)
- JANUARY 20 – Inauguration Day
- JANUARY 21 – CCC Board of Supervisors’ 47th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ceremony
- JANUARY 29 – Lunar New Year



**We Care... You Care**  
 CLICK HERE to learn more about nominating a coworker and see page 18

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

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



**January 2025 issue – submissions due Tuesday, December 17, 2024**  
 We appreciate you closely following our [Submission Guidelines](#) to ensure that your news and photos appear in *Headlines*.