

Headlines

Issue 115 • November 2025
ehsd.org

Paws + Claws Costume Contest Winners

The Government
Shutdown – Times
of Uncertainty

Celebrating EHSD Vets

WDB's Big Event



CONTRACOSTA
COUNTY

EMPLOYMENT &
HUMAN SERVICES

*Building Brighter
Futures Together*

Board Declares CalFresh Emergency

By Tish Gallegos, Community Relations/Media Manager



In an unprecedented action, Board of Supervisors proclaimed a local emergency due to the federal government shutdown disrupting CalFresh funding which threatens the food security of 107,020 individuals in Contra Costa County. More than half of the County's CalFresh recipients (58,861) are children and older adults. CalFresh, known federally as the Supplemental Nutrition Food Assistance Program (SNAP), provides critical food assistance to households and County residents.

"We recognize the hardship this creates for many in our community," said Candace Andersen, Board Chair. "The lapse in government funding for SNAP benefits not only impacts vulnerable residents who depend on food assistance but also threatens the stability of local grocers and the capacity of the Contra Costa County Food Collaborative to meet increasing demand."



Public interest was high as the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved EHSD's recommendation about filling the federal government's lapse in funding CalFresh.

The Board unanimously approved to allocate up to \$21,000,000 from the General Fund to purchase debit cards for distribution to CalFresh November eligible households, and authorize EHSD to 1) execute a contract amendment to purchase and distribute the debit cards so CalFresh-eligible households can purchase food, and 2) activate and deploy its staff as disaster workers to support the distribution at the department's busiest locations.

Under the plan, CalFresh participants can pick up debit cards loaded with two weeks of approved benefit amounts starting on Monday, Nov. 10th at our EHSD offices in Richmond, Hercules, Pleasant Hill, and Antioch.

Anyone who needs to find food resources during the disruption can search by city or zip code to locate food distribution sites on the Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano's [Find Food in My City page](#). They can also call (855) 309-FOOD (3663).

CalFresh updates related to the federal government shutdown are also available on ehsd.org

The debit cards may be loaded with additional amounts depending on when the federal government reaches a funding solution.

For especially vulnerable populations, such as older adults who are homebound and former foster youth participating in the EHSD Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP), EHSD may identify a different distribution process.

EHSD plans to report to the Board of Supervisors within 60 days about the need to continue the local emergency.

Shutdown Prompts Congressman's Visit

On Monday, October 27, Congressman Mark DeSaulnier visited 400 Ellinwood to gain a firsthand understanding of the impacts of the federal government shutdown on CalFresh recipients in Contra Costa County. During the visit, DeSaulnier and his team toured the Ellinwood lobby, guided by **Rosalie Uy**, the Human Services

Division Manager. The visit underscored the critical challenges local residents face as the shutdown has created uncertainty for those relying on programs such as CalFresh. The collaboration between EHSD and DeSaulnier's team highlights the importance of continued support for vulnerable communities during times of fiscal uncertainty.





Marla Stuart, MSW PhD,
EHSD Director

Message from Marla

Below is a reprint of EHSD Director Marla Stuart's staff message about potential impacts of the federal government shutdown on our department's programs.

October 24, 2025

As you know, given that the Federal Fiscal Year 25/26 federal budget has not been approved by the Senate and transmitted to the President for approval, we now have a government shutdown. One result is that many federal programs do not have an approved budget or access to funding beginning October 1, 2025. Our budget is 51% federally funded.

Our first program to be impacted is SNAP. SNAP benefits are 100% funded by the federal budget. Funding for SNAP benefits is not available to recipients as of November 1st. This means that SNAP (CalFresh) benefits **is not** loaded to EBT cards for November.

In Contra Costa County, our monthly CalFresh benefits total about \$20 million. The loss of this \$20 million in November will create significant hardships for our 66,000 CalFresh households, our local grocery stores, and our food banks.

The impact for EHSD is that we are receiving, many calls from our recipients, and are planning for an increase in our call and lobby traffic. And beginning November 1, we are expecting and planning for an increase in our call and lobby traffic. Here's a link to an [FAQ](#) published by the California Department of Social Services. If you are fielding community questions, this is a good resource for you. Please route additional questions to your supervisor who can route up through a manager. Bureaus will be providing staff more guidance as this continues to unfold.

Many of our other services are federally funded and the state has notified counties that they will cover the cost of federal funding in the short term. This is what we know so far:

1. **Adoption Assistance** – services and admin funded through December 2025
2. **IV-E Foster Care** – services and admin funded through January 2026
3. **IHSS** – services and admin funded through January 2026
4. **Childcare development** services and admin funded through March 2026
5. **Area Agencies on Aging** – services and admin funded through December 2025
6. **CalWORKs** – admin funded through December 2025



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Message from Marla



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This is a very uncertain and unprecedented time. We continue to monitor the federal government shutdown. Since 1980, there have been 11 government shutdowns ranging from 1 day (in the 1980s) to 35 days in 2018-2019. We are now beyond that. Typically, when the shutdown ends and the budget is approved, it is approved for our programs retroactive to the beginning of the federal fiscal year (October 1).

Our most important role right now in EHSD is to continue serving our community with **exceptional customer service** and in collaboration with each other and our community partners. More than ever, our community is relying on us for access to information and resources. At the same time, we acknowledge that in times of stress, our own self-care is critical to our ability to care for others. I encourage you to review our [Employee Assistance Program](#) which includes a variety of support modalities.

In this moment we are the face of a compassionate government. We are still **building brighter futures together** through our services. I admire and thank you for your ongoing commitment to public service and our community.

With deep gratitude,

Marla Stuart, MSW PhD
Director

Combined Charities Campaign EXTENDED through Friday, November 7th

Due to a slight glitch with the donation platform last week, the County's Combined Charities Campaign is extended through midnight, November 7th, 2025.

Every donation – big or small – matters, especially at a time when we see family and individual needs growing. Your generosity can help support organizations that provide food resources, health and wellness services, reduce homelessness, offer services for older adults, Veterans, children, youth, and families, as well as prevent violence, conduct research to cure diseases, save wildlife, and protect the environment.

Help strengthen our community's resilience with your **secure online donation** at https://give.chcimpact.org/p/contra_costa_county. Make it a one-time donation or a monthly payroll deduction starting in January 2026.

Pledge \$1, \$3, \$5, \$10, \$25, \$50, or more per month and split your giving up between one or more charities. Your donations may be tax deductible.

And if your donation puts the County over the \$100,000 mark, you'll receive a gift of thanks!

Stand Down on the Delta 2025

By Lori Juarez, Workforce Services Specialist, WFS

EHSD Participates in Stand Down on the Delta 2025

Delta Veterans Group hosted its biennial Stand Down on the Delta September 12–15, 2025, at the Contra Costa County Fairgrounds in Antioch. EHSD staff participated in this multi-day event that is dedicated to serving homeless and at-risk Veterans, providing them with comprehensive wrap-around services such as medical, dental, and optometry care; benefits enrollment; emergency and long-term housing support; mental health and spiritual services; veterinary care; and a wide range of critical resources.

Veterans also received community support and meaningful connections with other Veterans who have similar lived experiences.



L-R: Ana Lopez, Chenyi Yuan, Lori Juarez, Tamika Powell

In addition to Contra Costa Veterans, Stand Down on the Delta also welcomed Veterans who rode buses from nearby areas such as Sacramento and San Francisco counties. On Saturday, September 13th the event was opened to include all members of the community in need of support services, further broadening the event's impact.



L-R: Cecilia Felan, Kylie Bigornia, Lori Juarez, Joanna Thieme

Our EHSD team assisted attendees by helping them apply for services through BenefitsCal, answering both general and case-specific program questions, distributing additional resources to those in need, and most importantly, lending a listening ear and a warm smile.

We were honored to represent EHSD and participate in this powerful event, standing alongside our community partners to honor and assist our Veterans.

This experience served as a potent reminder of why we chose this profession and helped to reaffirm our shared commitment to service and compassion.

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Stand Down on the Delta 2025

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A special thank you to EHSD team members **Tamika Powell, Ana Lopez, Chenyi Yuan, Joanna Thieme, Kylie Bigornia, Cecilia Felan, Casey Costa, Gerilyn Molina, and Sandra Figueroa** who shared their knowledge and enthusiasm to create a welcoming and supportive experience for all who visited our table. A huge shout out to **Wilfredo Aldana** and our IT Team who ensured we had the proper equipment and tech support to stay connected all weekend.

We are grateful to Delta Veterans Group and all the organizations and volunteers who made Stand Down on Delta 2025 a success. Together, we continue to support and honor our Veterans as we thank them for their service to our country.



L-R: Sandra Figueroa, Gerilyn Molina, Lori Juarez, Casey Costa

Joanna Thieme helps a veteran apply for benefits



Kylie Bigornia and Cecilia Felan help a veteran apply for benefits



Gerilyn Molina answers questions from one of the many veterans we met

Building Brighter Futures Together

THANK YOU VETERANS

Honoring all who served

EHSD Salutes Our Veterans: Honoring Service, Sacrifice, and Community Commitment

EHSD values the dedication and skills our veterans bring to public service. Many have joined our team over the years, excelling in diverse roles. We honor and thank them for their military service and their continued commitment to serving Contra Costa County's most vulnerable. On November 4th, the Board of Supervisors recognized our veterans for their service.

This Veterans Day, we proudly recognize and celebrate our EHSD employees who have served in the armed forces. Their courage, leadership, and sense of duty continue to inspire us all. As we observe this day, we extend our deepest gratitude to our veterans for their sacrifices and ongoing service to our community.

Mariano Vazquez

USMC (United States Marine Corps) 2004-2008
Served in Ramadi Iraq 2007-2008
Social Worker, AAS



Michael Glass

US Navy Machinist's Mate 2nd Class. Served 1985-1993, during Desert Storm. Software Engineer (ISPA4), Admin.



Michael A Roark

LTC, US Army, Logistics/Simulations Officer(90A/57A) Information Systems Manager I – Operations



Edward Morris

HM3–Fleet Marine Force (FMF) Warfare Specialist Qualified; Hospital Corpsman, Third Class Petty Officer
US Navy deployed with US Marine Corps.; In Kuwait, not far from the Iraqi border, the day before the invasion. Administrative Svcs Asst III, Information & Systems



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EHSD Salutes Our Veterans: Honoring Service, Sacrifice, and Community Commitment *Continued from previous page*

Tonya W. Spencer

U.S. Army, Administrative Supervisor, 91st Division at Presidio S.F.
Social Work Supervisor, WFS



Dave Bothwell

US Air Force, Security Social Worker III, CFS



Doris J. Edlund

U.S. Army, Communications Experienced Level Clerk, WFS



Joel Walkup

Lieutenant Colonel in the Marine Corps Reserve and currently the commanding officer of 3d Battalion, 23d Marine Regiment.

"I was commissioned in 2007 and became an infantry officer the following year. I've

deployed 4 different times to Iraq, Afghanistan, Italy, and Bahrain."

Division Manager of Administration, Internal Operations



Jose A. Merlos

United States Navy, Petty Officer First Class (PO1), Intelligence Specialist
United States Army, Sergeant (SGT), Human Resource Specialist (42A), and Watercraft Operator (88K)
Departmental Human Resources Supervisor, Admin



Ritche Martija

U.S. Army, Information Systems Operator
Sr. Business Systems Analyst, Information and Systems Bureau



Michelle Johanns Phillips (Greeson)

Army, Personnel Administration Specialist
Eligibility Worker II, WFS



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EHSD Salutes Our Veterans: Honoring Service, Sacrifice, and Community Commitment *Continued from previous page*

Roy Dela Vega

US Army 1970 – 1973,
Combat Medic, Vietnam
Veteran
Senior Social Service
Information Systems
Analyst
Information and Systems
Bureau



Jason Mayers

US Army, 1989-1992, Fire
Direction Specialist
Gulf War Veteran
Clerk-Senior Level, WFS



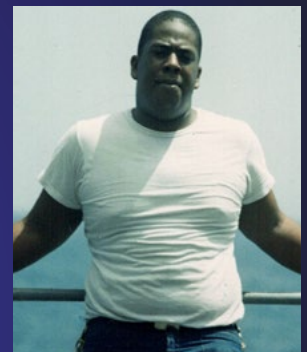
Darryl Davis

US Airforce, Sergeant,
Electronics
ASA III, CSB



Billy Crawford

US Navy, Machinist Mate
Petty Officer 3rd Class
Social Worker III, AAS



Marco Ruiz Madrigal
US Navy, Petty Officer
Third Class / Machinist
Mate, 2001 – 2004
Eligibility Work
Supervisor, WFS



David Griglock

US Air Force, Information
Management Craftsman
SR Soc Svc Info Systems
Analyst, CalSAWS, I&S
Bureau



With gratitude for how you've
continued to serve your
community after the military.

Show Your EHSD Pride!

EHSD's online apparel shop is now open to *all* employees who want to look great and feel connected to our incredible team—people who work every day to support and uplift the most vulnerable members of our community.

Find Your Style

Browse a wide variety of polo shirts, jackets, and more, and customize your gear with our

EHSD *Building Brighter Futures Together* logo for that extra touch of EHSD pride.

Get Started

- **Scan the QR code** that will guide you to a page where you can open your account and access the EHSD apparel shop.
- **Add the logo** to the upper left chest area of your garment.
- **Save on shipping** by teaming up with colleagues and ordering together.
- **Show your EHSD spirit!** Snap a photo of yourself—or with your coworkers—and send it to headlines@ehsd.cccounty.us. Your photo could be featured in the next issue of *Headlines*!

With the holiday season right around the corner, it's also the perfect time to pick up something special for a colleague, friend, or family member.

Let's wear our pride and keep building brighter futures together!



Growing with Us How Roseetha and Manickalakshmi Turned Opportunity into Achievement

By Stephanie Booth, Planner/Evaluator A, Information & Systems Bureau

We're proud to celebrate a major career milestone for two of our colleagues, **Manickalakshmi Chithraputhra Pillai** and **Roseetha Albert**. Both began their county journeys as temporary employees in Policy & Planning and have successfully transitioned into permanent roles, an achievement that highlights their dedication and reminds us there are many paths to long-term growth within EHSD.



Manickalakshmi Chithraputhra Pillai and Roseetha Albert.

They quickly bonded over their life experiences, including growing up in the same region of India, and progressed to sharing lunches and daily walks. Their friendship translated into seamless teamwork and strong communication.

During their temporary roles, they achieved key milestones that led to their permanent positions, reflecting their dedication and perseverance. For Division Manager **Erick Untal**, building a team filled not only with talent and experience, but also kindness and friendship, is a source of pride.

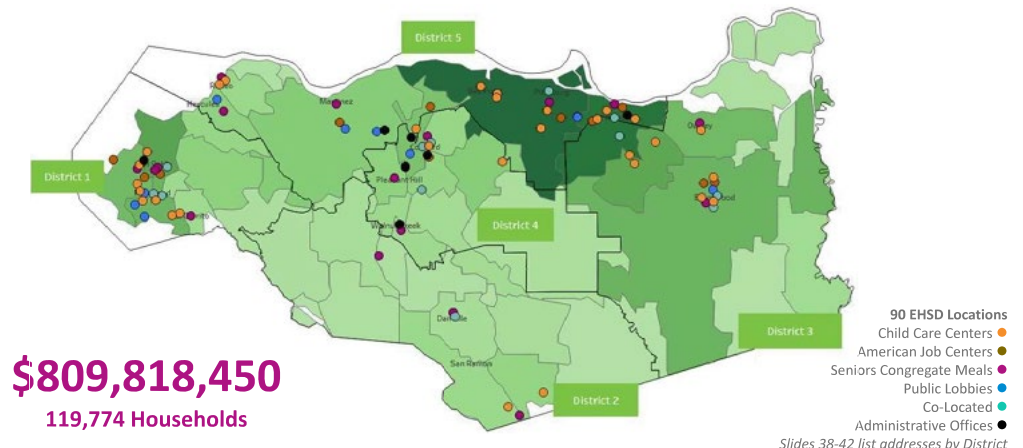
"While we've already made significant strides in solidifying our data capabilities, Manicka and Roseetha's arrival has really elevated everything for us," says Erick. "Their expertise enables us to take on complex requests and deliver accurate, high-quality results. We're so lucky to have them."

Please join Policy & Planning in welcoming Manicka and Roseetha to their permanent roles within EHSD!

Manicka and Roseetha joined Policy and Planning with a collective 25 years of experience in data analysis, integration, and visualization. Their skills were immediately put to use on projects such as creating a countywide map showing annual client issuances – a project requiring mastering multiple data sources, extensive validation, and precise mapping.

Their ability to take on complex projects was only part of their strength.

2024 Cash Issuances



Manickalakshmi and Roseetha, ISPA II, created maps for the 2025 EHSD Budget Presentation to the Board of Supervisors

Disaster Preparedness: Ready to Respond

By Tracey Lee, Staff Development, Division Manager

On October 15, 2025, I participated in a **Mass Care & Shelter Training Exercise** in the City of Oakley, a vital step in preparing for potential disasters. This comprehensive drill brought together an impressive network of agencies, including **EHSD**, the **American Red Cross**, the **Sheriff's Department**, **Office of Emergency Services (OES)**, **medical personnel**, **Joybound Animal Shelter**, and others committed to community resilience.

The training focused on the fundamental components of operating an emergency shelter from registration and dormitory setup to food preparation and medical support coordination. We engaged in a series of realistic, hands-on scenarios designed to challenge and prepare us for a wide range of situations.

Throughout the day, role players simulated real-life challenges, so we could practice resolving issues such as:

- Reuniting family members
- De-escalating conflicts between shelter residents
- Responding to on-site medical emergencies
- Supporting individuals dealing with traumatic loss
- Managing pet placement for evacuees
- Registering clients who were hesitant to share personal information
- Handling well-meaning community members dropping off unsolicited donations

Each situation tested our ability to think on our feet, adapt to evolving conditions, and respond with empathy, professionalism, and calm under pressure. It was a powerful reminder that disaster response is as much about logistics as it is about human connection.

During the final debrief, **Joel Walkup**, EHSD Division Manager and one of the lead coordinators of the exercise, posed the powerful question: "How confident are you to do this for real?"

My answer? Very confident. Thanks to this experience, I now feel fully prepared to step in and support a shelter operation. I encourage my co-workers to participate the next time we have a drill. You will walk away with new skills, inspired and confident in your ability to help in a disaster.

Above right: CFS Clerk-Senior Level **Linsay Etienne** was the designated supervisor in charge of overseeing the entire deployment of shelter services during the emergency exercise.



Left: Fiscal Officer **Shailesh Regmi** learns how to assemble one of hundreds of cots that could be used in an actual deployment.

Right: Secretary-Advanced Level **Julie Rafighi** and Staff Development Specialist **Jay David** learn how to maintain food quality when serving large populations.



Left: Alliance to End Abuse Projects Coordinator, **Oravanh Thammasen**, Policy and Planning ASA III, **Luz Raygoza-Gonzalez** learn how to register evacuees during a simulated exercise.



Key Takeaways from CWDA 2025

By Tish Gallegos, Community Relations/Media Manager



“Putting Families & Communities First” is something EHSD staff practices every day. It was also the theme for the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) annual conference October 8th through 10th in Santa Clara. Read on for some impressions and learnings from staff who attended.

One of my key takeaways: the critical importance of cross-agency collaboration in driving meaningful outcomes for our communities. I was especially inspired by the innovative approaches presented to advance equity...as we continue exploring how to more deeply embed equitable practices into our own work.

I was particularly moved by Dr. Nadine Burke Harris’s groundbreaking work on

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Victor Rivas Rivers’ compelling story as a survivor of domestic abuse, and Kevin Fagan’s eye-opening discussion on the homelessness crisis. Each of these perspectives was not only thought-provoking but also deeply motivating.

– **Bhupinder Singh**, EHSD Navigators/Measure X Supervisor

CWDA 2025 was nothing short of INSPIRATIONAL and a great reminder “to not get weary in well doing.

– **Kimberly Baker**, MSW, Human Services Manager- FS Quality Assurance Division

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Key Takeaways from CWDA 2025

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Ready to hear from Keisha Lance Bottoms, former mayor of Atlanta (2018-2022) and director of the White House Office of Public Engagement (2022-23), for the general session on the second day. (Front, L-R): **Patty Perez, Erick Untal, Marla Stuart, Tamina Alon, and Annie Barrett** (Back, L-R): **Diane Ridgley and Tracey Lee**

The CWDA conference instilled hope, emphasizing the power of unity and confirming California's commitment to prioritizing families and communities during challenging times.

– **Iliana Choate**, Programs/Project Coordinator, DEIA, Information & Systems Bureau

I was really impressed with the speakers, especially Dr. Nadine Burke Harris and Victor Rivas Rivers!

– **Vickie Kaplan Wetzel**, Contracts Administrator, Information & Systems Bureau

COMMUNITY! Everything that happens in the work that we do takes community and collaboration. From Keisha Lance Bottoms (former Mayor of Atlanta): assessing whether or not I'm being strong vs powerful...taking a side step or a step back is not a failure.

– **Roslyn Gentry**, LCSW, Director, Children & Family Services



April Bolin with Victor Rivas Rivers, author of *A Private Family Matter*. Rivas Rivers delivered a compelling keynote presentation about domestic violence as everyone's issue. April connected with him about growing up in neighboring communities in Los Angeles.

Victor Rivas Rivers and Keisha Lance Bottoms were both standout highlights for me. I found them incredibly inspiring...each reminded us that we are here to do great things—and that overcoming life's challenges can fuel our purpose to serve in ways that uplift humanity.

– **April Bolin**, SW Supervisor II, CFS

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Key Takeaways from CWDA 2025

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I got to meet so many interesting and passionate people with the same goals and values as myself. The speakers were inspirational and motivating. Most importantly, I got to bond with my Navigator Team.

– **Sandra Figueroa**, Measure X, District 1 Navigator, WFS

What stood out the most to me was the way we are pulling together as a state to continue to serve as many people as possible during these unprecedented and uncertain times... It's clear that our primary purpose is to serve the community at large by doing as much as we can for as long as we can.

– **Diane J Ridgley**, Eligibility Work Supervisor, Work Force Services

It was inspiring to see leaders from across the state learning together and from one another to improve the lives of children and families.

– **Ana Kaye**, MSW, Social Services Program Analyst - FFPSA



EHSD Welcomes Our Newest Team Members!

By Leilani Lunch, Staff Development Supervisor, Administrative Bureau



L-R: Evelyn Kondo-Cohen, Shantal Green, Mohammad Baqir Yosofy, Sophia Vazquez, Elizabeth Morales, Jennifer Guerrero, Preetkanwar Sandhu

The EHSD team is proud to congratulate our hardworking and dedicated Eligibility Worker I's, who recently completed the Eligibility Training Unit (ETU). Since beginning training on February 18, 2025, these individuals have successfully trained in the CalWORKs Program under the instruction of **Laura Burris, Shana Griffin, Karen Labaniego, and Antoinette Garcia.**

They also completed an intensive three-month on-the-job training (OJT) with the invaluable guidance of Lead Workers **Adriana Martinez** and **Katsiaryna Sheludziayeva**, who was promoted to

Eligibility Work Supervisor during the training period.

This group graduated on September 4th, and has since been assigned to their new units at 1305 MacDonald Avenue in Richmond and 4545 Delta Fair Boulevard in Antioch.

Please join us in giving a warm welcome to the newest members of our EHSD team. We wish you all the best!

*Building Brighter
Futures Together*

Strengthening Local Business Connections

By Patricia Conley, WFS Specialist WDB



Left: Federal Glover Conference Room ribbon cutting ceremony. CLICK on the play button to see who else was at the big event.



Tamia Brown Executive Director WDBCCC, Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston, Concord Mayor Carlyn Obringer

The Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County (WDBCCC) welcomed more than 80 business and workforce leaders to its *Workforce and Business Connections Open House* on September 26, 2025, held in celebration of Workforce Development Month.

The event took place at the newly opened WDBCCC suite inside the America's Job Center of California in Concord, located at 4071 Port Chicago Highway. A ribbon-cutting ceremony marked the dedication of the new **Federal Glover Conference Room**, honoring the late Contra Costa County Supervisor's commitment to workforce and community development.

Among the distinguished guests were County Supervisors Shanelle Scales-Preston and Ken Carlson, Carol Mascali representing the Office of

Supervisor Candace Andersen, Concord Mayor Carlyn Obringer, and WDBCCC Board Members Leslay Choy, Richard Johnson, and Douglas Lezameta.

The open house provided an opportunity for attendees to network, share ideas, and explore new ways to strengthen partnerships that drive local job growth and economic resilience.

"Together, we're creating pathways to opportunity and building a more inclusive, thriving economy for Contra Costa County," said WDBCCC leadership.

To stay informed about ongoing workforce initiatives and economic development news, visit wdbccc.com and subscribe to the WDBCCC monthly newsletter.

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Strengthening Local Business Connections

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Workforce Development Board staff with Supervisors Scales-Preston & Carlson

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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](#)

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

EMPLOYMENT & HUMAN SERVICES
Building Brighter Futures Together

Thank You!

Your Work Matters | A Letter from Your Client

I am writing this letter to express my deepest and most sincere gratitude for all the work that the Employment & Human Services Department did to help my boys and me over the past two years while I was attending the Dental Hygienist Program at Diablo Valley College.

Before receiving Government support through Welfare to Work, CalWORKS, Medical, and CalFresh, I felt overwhelmed and lost, wondering how I would provide for my kids, Liam (10) and Ethan (8), while also going back to school full-time. Being eligible for those programs was a huge help and didn't just solve a problem; it gave me back my peace of mind.

As a single mother, navigating the complexities of the welfare system was challenging. Still, thanks to **Joyce Arguelles** (Eligibility Worker III) and **Erik Tunaes** (EW II - CalWORKS, Medical, and CalFresh), the process became manageable. I particularly appreciate their diligence in promptly returning my calls, clearly explaining the necessary paperwork, and advocating for my case. I hope they know that the tireless effort that they put into their job truly changes lives.

The support from the programs offered by the Employment & Human Services Department that I qualified for has had a direct and positive impact on my family's stability and future. I graduated with distinction from the Dental Hygiene Program and passed the Dental Hygiene National Board and California Law and Ethics Exam on my first try. Also, as soon as I got my Registered Dental Hygienist license, I was hired for a full-time position in this career I had worked hard to achieve.

Thank you again for the unwavering support, and I wish that the Employment & Human Services Department continues to provide these exceptional services to the people in need in our community.

Respectfully,

Bianca Faria

*Building Brighter
Futures Together*



Joyce Arguelles



Erik Tunaes

Oh, What a Night! CFS' ILSP Educational/Vocational Resource Night

By Kristin Olsen, ILSP Specialist, Children & Family Services

Connecting transition-age foster youth to opportunities in higher education and vocational training, EHSD Children & Family Services' Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP), in partnership with the Contra Costa County Office of Education, hosted its third annual Educational/Vocational Resource Night on September 23rd.



Representatives from the County Community Colleges, UC Berkeley, and Cal State East Bay promoted on-campus support programs designed to help foster youth pursue academic and career goals. They learned about benefits like priority registration for classes, financial support, and specialty academic counseling services. Alumni provided information about Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Vocational Programs including Job Corps, Richmond Builds, IBEW, John Muir Land Trust's Family Harvest Farm (an employment program

and working farm in Pittsburg for current and former foster youth), and Workforce Development Services/WIOA programs offered information for youth interested in pursuing vocational pathways.

Programs such as the Child Abuse Prevention Council's CFS Youth Partners, the Child Advocates of Contra Costa County (also known as CASA), and Assistance League of Diablo Valley (ALDV) shared information about how to access their resources. Meanwhile, ILSP's superstar volunteers from the Methodist Church of Walnut Creek handed out backpacks filled with school supplies and handmade blankets.

Youth earned a raffle ticket after visiting all the resource tables and all 24 of them won a raffle prize. ALDV members donated prizes to the raffle as did Family Harvest Farm. One lucky youth won the grand prize of a laptop.

Foster Youth attendees left the event filled with food provided by Sunrise Bistro and bursting with inspiring opportunities available for them to create a positive path for themselves.



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

EMPLOYMENT & HUMAN SERVICES
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**EHSD
NAVIGATORS**
NAVIGATING TOWARD A
BETTER, BRIGHTER TODAY

Navigator Insights:

Guidance and Connection Helps Single Mom

By Joanna Thieme, Eligibility Worker III, WFS

This month, I had the privilege of helping a single mother who walked into the Brentwood EHSD office the very morning she had lost her job after more than 10 years of employment. She was devastated and uncertain about how she would provide for her children.

As her Navigator, I immediately assisted her with applications for CalWORKs, CalFresh, and Medi-Cal to ensure she and her children had vital support as quickly as possible. I also helped her submit an application for EDD unemployment benefits, giving her a pathway toward financial stability.

While she awaited approval, I connected her with local food resources to help meet her family's immediate needs. Additionally, I coordinated with Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Brentwood, where she was able to receive rental assistance and further support during this critical transition.

The relief she expressed was heartfelt—she was extremely grateful to have someone guide her through these difficult first steps. By connecting her to resources, benefits, and community support, she left with hope, stability, and the reassurance that she was not alone in this journey.

This story is a reminder of the power of compassionate navigation and how EHSD's services, paired with community partnerships, can provide a lifeline to families in crisis.



Joanna Thieme is a Workforce Services Eligibility Worker III at the 4545 Delta Fair Blvd office in Antioch

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Tools for Change

Bringing Community Data to Life

By Stephanie Booth, Planner/Evaluator A, Policy & Planning

EHSD took an exciting step toward expanding the real-world impact of its long-standing Public Information Sharing Tools social services data platform with the launch of a new community data workshop, Tools for Change, held October 3rd at the Walnut Creek Library.

The pilot event—facilitated by the Policy and Planning Data Unit—brought together more than 40 participants from local foundations and community-based organizations, including the Leshner Foundation, Zellerbach, Strong Foundation, Share Community, Richmond Connects, and Meals on Wheels Contra Costa.

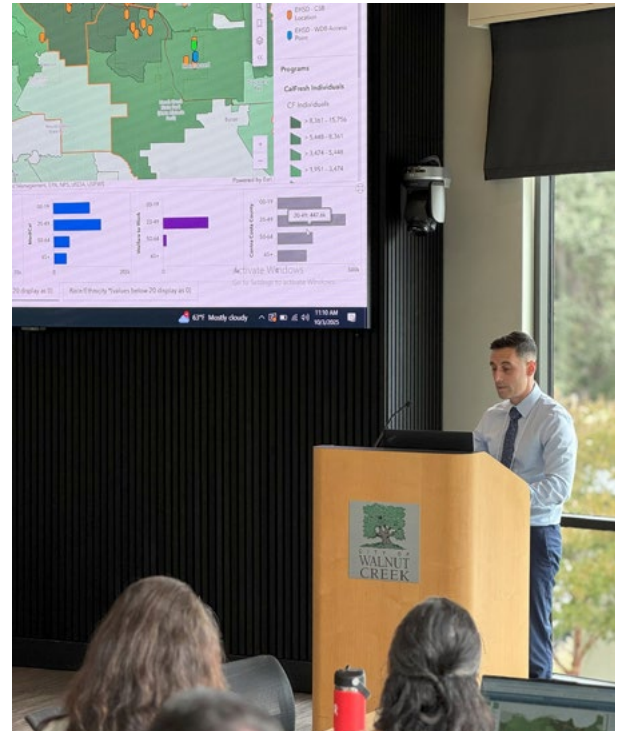
During the session, participants explored EHSD's interactive mapping tool, which offers public access to data on safety net services across Contra Costa County. The workshop blended live demonstrations, teaching, and hands-on practice, helping attendees learn how to locate, interpret, and visualize social services data.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive. Many reported feeling new confidence navigating the tools and appreciated the opportunity to work through real examples in small groups while building relationships.

One attendee shared “As you can imagine, data and demonstrating community need are critical components of our grant applications. I truly appreciated your insights and learned so much from the session.”

The event represents an important milestone in EHSD's ongoing effort to make its data resources more accessible, useful, and impactful for the community. By equipping partners with tools to better understand local needs and resources, EHSD is helping to strengthen collaboration and support data-informed decision making across the County.

We encourage you to explore [EHSD Public Information Sharing Tools | EHSD](#) and see firsthand how data can be used to tell stories, inform planning, and drive positive change for residents of Contra Costa County.



Daniel Busch answering questions at the data workshop Tools for Change



Erick Untal speaks about interactive presentation style

Happy 60th Birthday Head Start

By Sheila Walsh, Administrative Services Assistant III, CSB



On Tuesday, October 21, the Board of Supervisors proclaimed October 2025 to be Head Start Awareness Month.

Community Services Bureau (CSB) staff recognized Head Start's 60th birthday in October, Head Start Awareness Month, at the October 21st Board of Supervisors meeting. Head Start launched nationally in 1965, serving children from birth to age five, including infants, toddlers, and expectant parents whose families face economic and social hardships. Head Start is a trusted, whole-child, whole-family model that supports early learning, childcare, health, nutrition, wellness, and strong family partnerships.

Head Start began in Contra Costa County in 1966 and has served children and families continuously ever since as part of our early childhood education program. In Fiscal Year 2024-25, CSB's Head Start program served 1,706 children and expectant parents through its 12 directly operated and 14 partner early childhood education centers. The program supported 796 families of enrolled children through education about preventative medical and oral health, supported 200 families with financial services, educated 169

families about nutrition, and educated 114 families about post-partum care.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who makes this work possible – our staff, families, partners, and community members. We are honored to have our own 60-year history as a Head Start program and to be part of changing lives – one child, one family, one community at a time.



CLICK on the play button and watch how Head Start students thrive.

Paws + Claws

The annual EHSD Paws + Claws Halloween Pet Parade was another spook-tacular, fur-tastic event! This year, we had 28 contestants, including dogs, cats, and one bird. Co-hosts **Larena Baldazo** and **Tish Gallegos**, and commentator **Alan “Josh the Eligibility Worker” Wang** were impressed and amazed with the dedicated pet parents who masterfully dressed their big and small creatures in an array of costumes – and somehow convinced them to pose for the camera. Miracles of patience and maybe a little pet bribery!

The big winner – for the second consecutive year – is gracing the cover of *Headlines*. None other than **Bailey and Dory dressed as Dumbo & Timothy Mouse**. **Toni Thomas**, Eligibility Worker III from Workforce Services, made pet costumes by hand for her sweet, lovable six-year-old Labrador Bailey (Dumbo) and her feisty, devoted eight-year-old Chihuahua Dory (Timothy Mouse).



Second place went to **Wednesday**; the pug dressed as the little sister from the Adams family who bears the same name. Wednesday is CFS Social Work Supervisor II **Renee Resendez**'s dog.



Third place went to **Stella the Bee**, WDB Workforce Services Specialist **Noramah Burch**'s Shih tzu-Poodle-Lhasa Apso-Mutt mix breed.



Fourth place honors went to **Angel in a Granny costume**.

Angel is an American Pit Bull-

German Sheppard-Siberian Huskey-American

Staffordshire mix who is 2-1/2 years old. This sunbathing-loving pup belongs to **Kevin Balderston**, Information Systems Specialist III in the I&S Bureau.

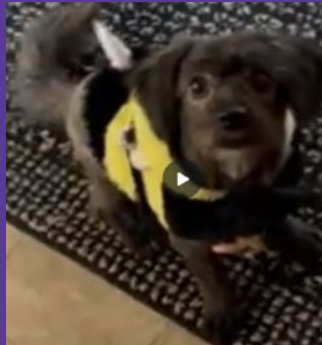
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Paws + Claws

Congratulations to all our pets on parade and thank you to their owners who made their pets' paws, claws, and feathers shine!



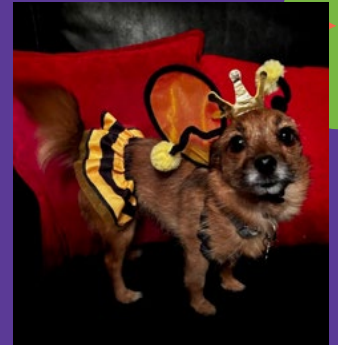
Bandit – Owner: **Annie Gant**, Secretary, Journey Level, AAS



Cici – Owner: **Michaela Reuben**, Senior Level Clerk, CFS



Blueberry – Owner: **Shandy Willie**, Eligibility Worker III, AAS



June – Owner: **Iriz Sims**, Clerk-Experienced Level, CFS



Chapo the Champ – Owner: **Lori Juarez**, Workforce Services Specialist, WFS



Biscuit – Owner: **Monica L. Russo-Olson**, Clerk Specialist, WFS



Storm – Owner: **Kevin Balderston**, Information Systems Specialist III, Admin



Judah – Owner: **Lijia Lumsden**, Administrative Aide, WDB



Lenny – Owner: **Dena Holland-Wilson**, Workforce Services Specialist, Internal Operations



Isla – Owner: **Talenda Todd**, Staff Development Specialist, Internal Operations Bureau

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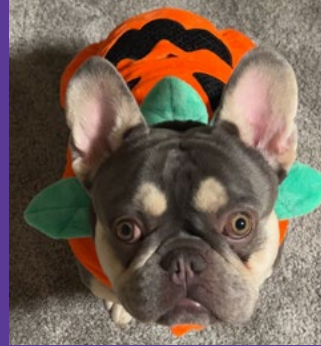
Paws + Claws



Mikey Barber – Owner: **Christina L. Castle-Barber**, Division Manager, CSB



Cyrus – Owner: **Anna Jauregui**, Social Worker III, CFS



BozKo "B" – Owner: **Joshua Jackson**, Site Supervisor II – Project, CSB



Schatzi – Owner: **Pamela Gernan**, Senior Clerk, Adult Protective Services



Remi – Owner: **Regina Posey**, Social Worker II, CFS



Rose – Owner: **Tammy Gochenouer**, Eligibility Work Supervisor I, WFS



Skyler – Owner: **Kea Chhay**, Social Worker, I&A



Luna – Owner: **Iriz Sims**, Clerk-Experienced Level, CFS



Squiggy – Owner: **Carol Butler**, Personnel Technician, Admin



Porter – Owner: **Martin Lara**, Automated Call Distribution Administrator, Information & Systems

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Paws + Claws



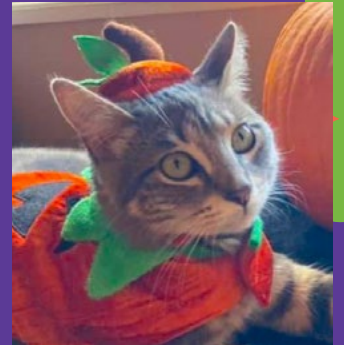
Buck-Lee – Owner:
Ingret Bruns, Eligibility
Worker I, WFS



Houlihan – Owner:
Elisa L. Spooner, SSPA,
WFS



Eli – Owner: **Lorraine
Lindell**, Eligibility
Worker II, WFS



Winnie – Owner: **Anna
Weatherby**, Infant
Toddler Teacher-
Project, CSB



CLICK on the play button and watch Paws + Claws video.

The Paws n Claws Costume Contest Production Crew. (L-R): **Oravanh Thammasen**, **Larena Baldazo**, **Gian Guttierrez**, **Alan Wang**, **Dexter Valencia**, **Tish Gallegos** and **Mike Manes**.

*Until next year, enjoy every moment with your furry
(or feathered) friends!*

Spooktacular Staff!

HALLOWEEN 2025



Insane Contracts
Clown Posse, 40
Douglas: (L-R): **Eddy
Morris, Courtney
Murphy, Laura
Pacheco, Tom
Bienkowski, Bobby
Stange, Nancy
Hager**



40 Douglas:
Marla Stuart with
Gian Gutierrez,
Secretary-Journey
Level, Admin as
Marla



WFS MCSC FTG Unit (L-R): **Winslow
Clepper EW II, LeShawn Le Blanc EW
II, Dominyque Gibson EW II, Tammy
Gochenouer EW Supervisor I, Brooke
Cordero EW II, Gina Brindley EW II, and
Maria Herrera EW II**



Continued on next page

Spooktacular Staff!

East County, 4549 Delta Fair, Antioch

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East County and our costume contest. **Debbie Bidwell** presented for Most Creative the winner was **Marichel Garcia** with the 80's Neon Dancer, Best Overall winner was **Renee Resendez** with **Beach Bucket** and for the **Not Spookiest**, but Awesome the winner was me, **Elizabeth Chambers** as the Statue of Liberty. We received certificates and a lotto scratcher, Marichel even won \$20 from her scratcher.

The whole office had a lot of fun that included some sweet treats.

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Spooktacular Staff!

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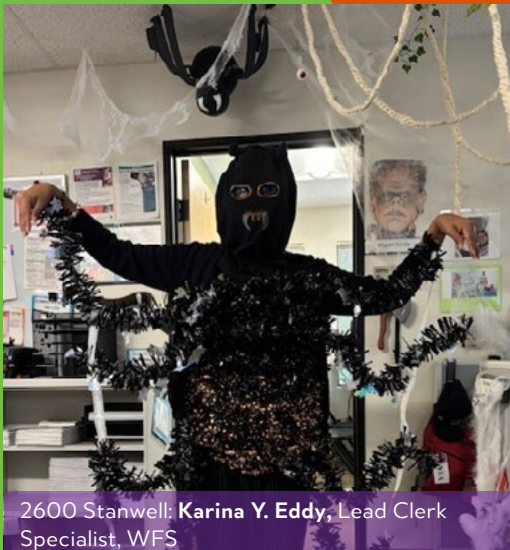


CFS Staff Development New Worker Training Unit. Staff Development Specialists **Pat Ensley** and **Mari Solis** are riders on a roller coaster. Staff Development Supervisor **April Bolin** is a Star Trek Vulcan. New CFS Social Workers **Lenesha Anderson**, **Venise Boykin**, **Alexandar Stephans**, and **Breia Moore** are just enjoying the fun.

CLICK on the play button and roller coaster in action.



Community Relations, **Deb Johnson**, Senior Clerk at 40 Douglas



2600 Stanwell: **Karina Y. Eddy**, Lead Clerk Specialist, WFS



4545 DeltaFair: **Soheap Vuong**



4545 DeltaFair: **Niketa Lee-Simonson**

Continued on next page

Spooktacular Staff!

Continued from previous page



4545 Delta Fair: Welfare to Work C4M Unit



4545 Delta Fair: (L-R): Monica Montano, Brenda Cholico, Rebecca Hagen and Florita Lopez

Mercedes Ibara, Comprehensive Svcs Asst Mgr-Pr, CSB. While at Crossroads High School/ Olympic for our EHS children trick or treating.



4545 Delta Fair: **Matthew Nelson**



4545 DeltaFair (L-R): Rebecca Hagen, Gay Montgomery and Jovana Lara



40 Douglas, Admin Suite (L-R): Kristina Stortz, Angelique Thomas, and Patty Lund

Continued on next page

Spooktacular Staff!

Continued from previous page



Crew from 40 Douglas



Wonderful Reception Team at 1305 Macdonald Ave in Richmond!
Sherry Wattley, Ashley Dixon, Tanya Perez, Kaneshia Sommons, Karina Escobar-Herriquez, Gabby Menjivar Castellanos and Esperanza Valencia

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Spooktacular Staff!

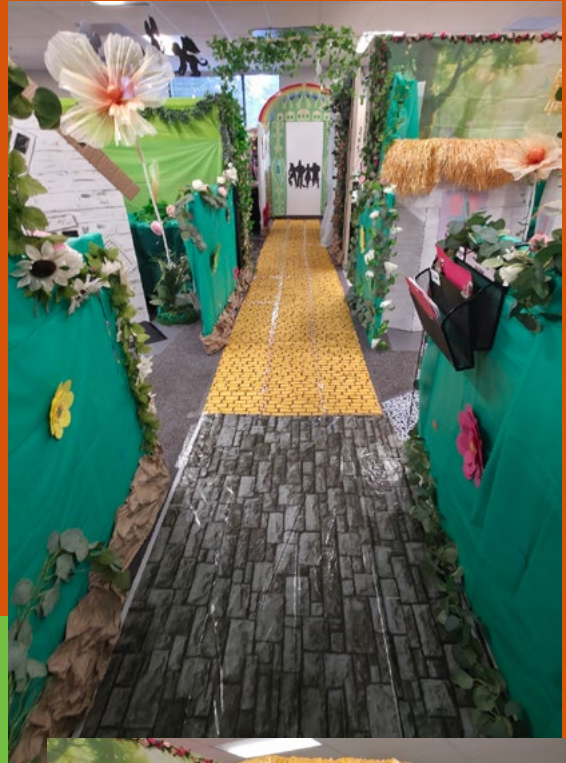
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E4B WTW Unit – 151 Linus Pauling, Hercules (above, L-R): **Jernice Duncan, Melanie Chao, Kristie King, Joyce Arguelles, Lito Co** (back): **Leeland McMasters**

(Above right): 151 Linus Pauling, Munchkin Land

(Right): 151 Linus Pauling, On to the Emerald City



Government Speak Highlights an Aging Contra Costa

By Larena Baldazo, Web Producer, Community Relations/Media

In the latest episode of Government Speak, Office of Communications & Media Director, Kristi Jourdan, explores what it means to age in Contra Costa County, which will air sometime in November.

On Monday, October 27, Aging & Adult Services Director, **Tracy Murray**, and Area Agency on Aging Division Manager **Alicia Espinoza** discussed the County's rapidly aging population and the support EHSD offers. The group talks housing for older adults, challenges, and the recently launched campaign – *Celebrating All Ages*.

“A common misconception is that aging services are only for people who are frail or in crisis. But in reality, they're for *all older adults* – and even for people planning ahead for healthy, connected aging, which often intersects with caregiving and disability.

So, to shatter misconceptions around aging we are offering images and messaging of what it looks like to age with dignity in diverse capacities – whether that's being retired at home with grandchildren, or being a CEO of a company, doing volunteer work, or traveling the world. Aging is Diverse,” says Alicia.

While an exact air date hasn't been confirmed just yet, listeners can catch it [here](#) sometime in November, as well as any other platform that streams your favorite podcasts.



Special Recognition for Family Caregivers

By Cristina Ugaitafa, Senior Staff Assistant, AAS Area Agency on Aging

According to the National Council on Aging, families are often the primary source of support for older adults and people with disabilities. In the U.S., more than 53 million family caregivers provide unpaid care, with an economic value totaling more than \$470 billion.

(FCSP) services (Alzheimer's Association, Choice in Aging, Family Caregiver Alliance, Jewish Family and Community Services, and Meals on Wheels Diablo Region) and one provider for the Older Relative Caregiver Program (Pacific Clinics).



Caregiver Retreat at Casita House in Moraga. The Family Caregiver Alliance offered A Day of Recovery featuring Wendy Figone, Certified Forest Therapy Guide, Myofascial Release Therapist and Stanford Compassion Ambassador.

National Family Caregivers Month is celebrated every November. While family caregivers should be celebrated every day, this is a time to recognize and honor caregivers nationally, raise awareness around caregiving issues, educate communities, and work to increase support for caregivers.

Through the Older Americans Act (OAA) and Measure X, the Area Agency on Aging funds five providers for Family Caregiver Support Program

FCSP addresses the unique needs of family members who provide care for a relative. Program qualifications are:

- Adult family members or other informal caregivers age 18 or older providing care to individuals age 60 or older
- Adult family members or other informal caregivers age 18 or older providing care to individuals of any age with Alzheimer's disease or related disorder with neurologic and organic brain dysfunction
- Relatives, not parents, age 55 or older providing care to children under the age of 18
- Relatives, including parents, age 55 or older providing care to individuals of any age with a disability

Go to [Area Agency on Aging | EHSD](#) to the "Caring for Seniors" section to find the Family Caregiver Programs, as well as other OAA programs that help community-dwelling older adults live safely and independently. Visit [Information & Assistance | EHSD](#) to learn more about resources in Contra Costa County.

Outreach Roundup

It was a busy October for our EHSD Navigator team. Thank you to all our EHSD staff involved in outreach activities in our community.

Saturday, October 4: Bethel Island Health & Safety Fair

Navigators **Joanna Thieme** and **Casey Costa** represented EHSD at Bethel Island is the most densely populated island on the Delta. About 150 attended this Senior fair. Most people shared they already had benefits or had previously applied. There were other partners' tabling which allowed for some great networking opportunities.

Saturday, October 4: Breast Cancer Awareness Sister Stroll

Navigators **Sandra Figueroa** and **Jetzabel Diaz** were honored to have taken part in the Sister Stroll event in Pinole. Sandra and Jetzabel from the navigator team attended the event representing EHSD with pride during



this wonderful celebration. With a resource table ready to take on any questions or concerns and provide assistance.

The event took place at Fernandez Park. Around 200 people attended individuals, friends, supporters, community members and community representatives all show out to represent with strength and resilience.

Cancer survivors and their families took full advantage of the Sunny day and made it a day full of music, fun and activities for the entire community.

Friday, October 10: Contra Costa County Provider Fair

Navigator **Cecelia Felan** represented EHSD at the Concord Plaza Hotel in Concord. The event brought together Contra Costa Health Plan (CCHP) and Kaiser Permanente (KP) Enhanced Care Management (ECM), Community Health Worker (CHW), and Community Support providers to share about their organizations and service offerings.

Saturday, October 18: 39th Annual Harmony Walk in the Park

EHSD Navigators **Al Gibson** and **Jetzabel Diaz** proudly represented the department at this year's GRIP Harmony Walk – a beautiful day of community, connection, and celebration at Nicholl Park in Richmond.

The annual event brought together families, community partners, and organizations from all over Contra Costa County. With around 500 people in attendance, the park was full of energy, music, laughter, and the spirit of working together to support local families.

Al and Jetzabel spent the day connecting with families and local vendors, sharing information

Continued on next page



Outreach Roundup

Continued from previous page

about EHSD's Navigator Program and helping people find resources for employment, health, and family support.



ABC7 Investigative Reporter Dan Noyes emceed the event.

"It was inspiring to see so many people come



The littles enjoyed a train ride at the GRIP Harmony Walk.

together to support one another," said Al. "Events like this show just how strong and caring our community really is."

Jetzabel added, "I loved meeting families and seeing the excitement on their faces when they learned about all the services available to them. It was a great reminder of why we do what we do!"

The GRIP Harmony Walk was truly a day to remember—filled with smiles, togetherness, and hope for a stronger, more connected Contra Costa County.

Tuesday, October 21: Los Medanos College Job Fair

Navigators **Jet Diaz** and **Al Gibson** represented EHSD with pride, presenting the range of services offered by the department and our dedicated Navigators. The college thoughtfully structured the event to allow full participation, with faculty coordinating schedules so that entire classes could attend during the three-hour program.

This inclusive event served a diverse student population and specifically targeted transfer students and job seekers. EHSD Navigators came prepared with updated job listings and a wide array of agency resources, ensuring students, faculty, and staff had direct access to valuable tools and connections.



Navigators **Jet Diaz** and **Al Gibson**.

Beyond direct support, Navigators engaged with other attending agencies to build partnerships and gather information that will enhance future service delivery and collaborative efforts.

The event fostered meaningful engagement, expanded awareness of available community resources, and strengthened EHSD's commitment to serving students as they transition into the workforce or higher education.

Continued on next page

Outreach Roundup

Continued from previous page

Thursday, October 23: City of San Pablo's City Hall-O-Ween Event

On Thursday, October 23, 2025, **Jetzabel Diaz** and **Sandra Figueroa**, Navigators for the Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD), had the honor of participating in the City of San Pablo's Hall-O-Ween event. The event brought together families from across the community for a fun-filled evening that included trick-or-treating, games, valuable resources, and more.

Dressed as black kitties, the EHSD Navigators joined forces with our local San Pablo Library team, who were dressed as friendly witches, to distribute helpful information to families in attendance. The event was a celebration of Halloween spirit, with parents, children, vendors, and community partners coming together to create a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere.



The event showcased strong community collaboration, with organizations such as the City of San Pablo Police Department, Contra Costa Health Services, West County Health Center, and the San Pablo Library in attendance. Together, we served over 900 people, ensuring that everyone



had access to vital resources in addition to enjoying the festivities.

One of the highlights of the event was the "Trunk or Treat," which proved to be a tremendous success. The evening was filled with joy and excitement as

families celebrated Halloween, connected with community resources, and participated in activities that strengthened our local bonds. It was truly a spooktacular time for all involved!

This event was a testament to the power of community partnerships and the positive impact of bringing valuable resources and services directly to families. Thank you to all those who participated in making this a memorable and impactful event!

Saturday, October 25: 14th Annual Dreamer's Conference

Navigators **Jetzabel Diaz** and **Sandra Figueroa** represented EHSD at this Los Medanos College gathering that included resources for undocumented and mixed-status families interested in higher education.

Wednesday, October 29: 2nd Annual Senior Wellness Clinic & Nutrition Workshop

Navigators **Jetzabel Diaz** and **Natalie Aguilar** staffed this Richmond event focused on Diabetic Health and Nutritional Support for Seniors. It highlighted diabetic nutrition and nutritional support services for older adults.

Continued on next page

Outreach Roundup

Continued from previous page

Wednesday, October 29: Ready Kids East County Big Table Event

Navigators **Casey Costa** and **Jetzabel Diaz** represented EHSD at this event focused on *Centering Black Parents and Caregivers*. Community partners, East County Black and African American parents and caregivers explored

principles of equitable and culturally-centered family engagement, practical strategies to improve relationships with families from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and tools to reflect on current practices and identify actionable next steps to strengthen equity and inclusion.

Malakai's Wish Makes Waves at CAPIO Awards

Early October, EHSD's Community Relations team set sail for Long Beach to attend the California Association of Public Information Officials (CAPIO) STAR Awards Luncheon aboard the historic Queen Mary. The event brought together communications professionals from across the state to celebrate excellence in public sector storytelling.

Community Relations placed second in the Human Interest category for the heartwarming video story, *Malakai's Wish*, produced by **Alan Wang**.



CLICK to watch

This touching piece highlights the incredible journey of a foster youth and his social worker who ultimately became family through adoption. Beyond earning recognition from CAPIO, *Malakai's Wish* resonated deeply with our community – it was EHSD's top-performing organic Instagram post last year during Adoption Awareness Month and led many viewers to our "Become a Foster Parent" page on [EHSD.org](https://www.ehdsd.org).

This was Community Relations' first-ever CAPIO submission and being recognized among so many talented peers was truly an honor.



Larena Baldazo, Web Producer, **Tish Gallegos**, Community Relations Manager and **Alan Wang**, Media Specialist, enjoy good spirits and even better stories at the CAPIO STAR Awards Luncheon October 2, 2025.

Great Shakeout

By Tish Gallegos, Community Relations/Media Manager

EHSD participated in the Great ShakeOut earthquake drill, minutes after a real quake.

An actual tremor hit about 9:23 a.m., a little less than an hour before the scheduled drill at 10:16 a.m. The magnitude 3.0 quake was reported to have occurred about a mile east of Berkeley, with the epicenter at the University of California campus.

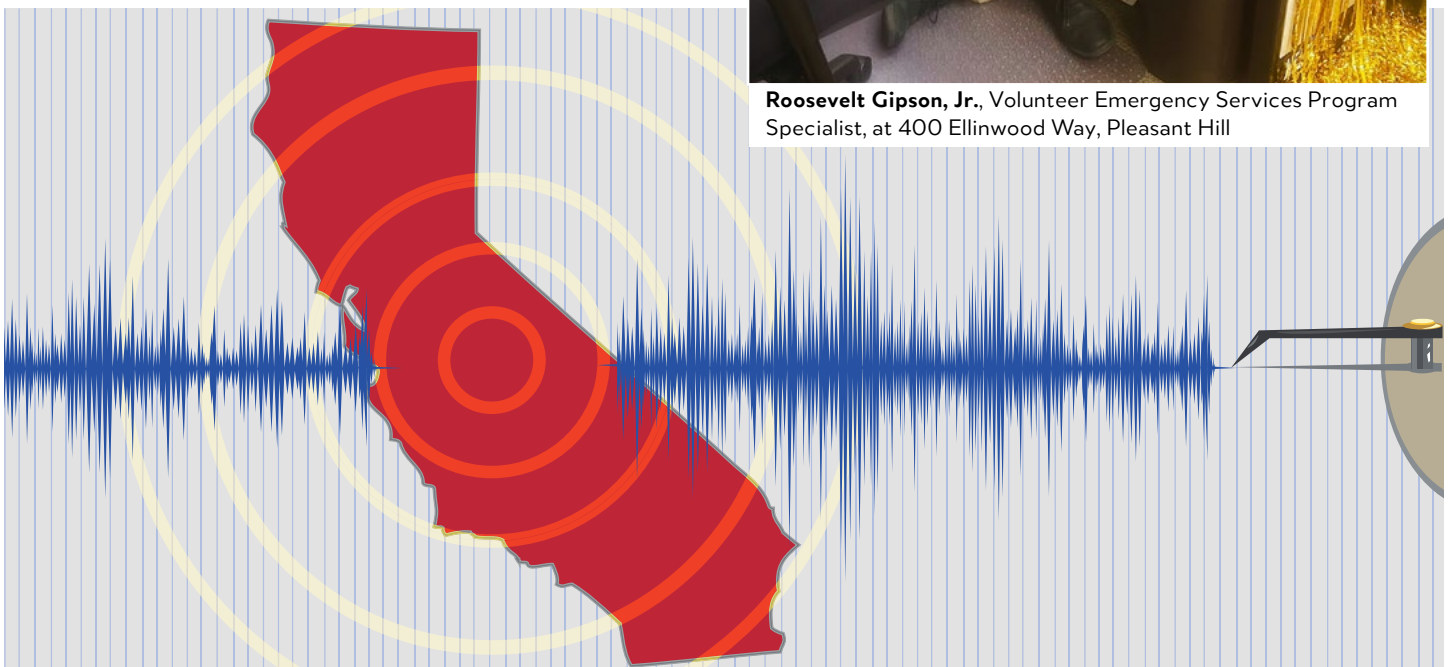
Following that shake felt in surrounding cities, EHSD staff joined millions of people worldwide to practice what to do when you feel shaking or get an earthquake alert. To learn more about ["Drop! Cover! Hold On!" earthquake safety](#), check out the Great Shake Out website at usgs.gov.



Denicia Watley and Shawn DeLaTorre, Clerk Specialists in the Personnel Unit, participated in the Great ShakeOut at 40 Douglas.



Roosevelt Gipson, Jr., Volunteer Emergency Services Program Specialist, at 400 Ellinwood Way, Pleasant Hill



EHSD SHOUTOUTS

Congratulations to these EHSD staff members for recently achieving a significant accomplishment!



Hail to Gail Decatur, Eligibility Work Supervisor, WFS

By Theresa Ramos, Clerical Contract Temp, WFS

In East County at 4545 Delta Fair, two Workforce Services Units C4B & C4M are celebrating and honoring their supervisor extraordinaire, Gail Decatur. They love how compassionate she is in serving our community and they appreciate how Gail leads by example. They described her as awesome, knowledgeable, patient, hardworking, understanding, nurturing, and kind-hearted.



1st Row (Front, L-R): Gail Decatur, Theresa Ramos
2nd Row (Seated, L-R): Claudia Balladares, Sopheap Vuong, Maira Jauregui, Monica Montano, Kathleen Walsh
3rd Row (Standing, L-R): Evelin Canales, Florita Lopez, Asha Bland, Aldine Woodman, Xavier Campos, Chaytan Sexton, Matthew Nelson
4th Row (Standing, L-R): Aja Odumbo, Rebecca Hagen, Tonia Quinones

Shoutout to Debbie Penovich, Clerical Supervisor, CFS

By Nicole Banks, Senior Level Clerk, CFS

Throughout my participation in the EHSD Mentoring Program, my Supervisor **Debbie Penovich** has been an extraordinary source of guidance and support. From the very beginning, she has always been approachable, patient, and willing to provide advice whenever I needed it. Debbie consistently goes above and beyond to ensure that I feel confident in my shadowing and training, taking the time to approve my work and provide constructive feedback that has helped me grow.



Beyond practical guidance, she has been a constant source of encouragement, motivating me to strive for excellence and reminding me of my potential during moments of self-doubt. Her belief in my abilities has given me the confidence to challenge myself and embrace opportunities to learn and develop new skills.

I deeply appreciate her dedication, patience, and unwavering support. I am truly grateful for everything she has done, and I believe she is more than deserving of recognition.

Shoutouts continue on next page

EHSD SHOUTOUTS

Continued from previous page



Shoutout to Evette Thomas, Eligibility Work Supervisor, WFS

By Nicole Banks, Clerk-Senior Level, CFS

I would like to give a heartfelt shoutout to my mentor for the incredible support and encouragement she has shown me throughout the EHSD Mentoring Program. From the very beginning, she has been excited about my growth and has made it a priority to give me opportunities that will help me succeed.

One of the things I appreciate most is how she encouraged me to shadow SSPA's, social workers and clerical staff. This has given me the chance to see different perspectives, gain valuable experience, and better understand the work we do. She has also challenged me to take on activities that push me outside of my comfort zone, which has helped me build confidence and develop new skills.



Her positive energy and enthusiasm are contagious, and she has truly been a motivating force in my journey. She continues to remind me that growth comes from stretching myself and trying new things, and because of her encouragement, I've been able to take steps I might not have taken on my own.

I am very grateful for her guidance, her positivity, and the belief she has in me. She has been more than a mentor, she has been an inspiration and a role model, and I deeply appreciate everything she has done to support me.

Happy belated birthday and congratulations on her new position as Eligibility Work Supervisor. Go, Evette!

*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 and you may get a "shout out" in *Headlines* or on EHSD Live!

SERVICE AWARDS | NEW EMPLOYEES | RETIREES

SERVICE AWARDS

35 YEARS

Rosalyn Guillory, Workforce Svcs Specialist, WFS
Kam Phoummatp, Eligibility Work Supervisor, WFSS

30 YEARS

Lora Duncan, Eligibility Work Supervisor, WFS
Al Gibson, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Janeen Lawson, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Magdalena Perez, Soc Svc Program Assistant, AAS
Scott Sanders, Social Worker, AAS

25 YEARS

Marcy Hara, Human Services Division Mgr, CFS
Edith Ortega, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS

20 YEARS

Emilio Alvarez, Workforce Svcs Specialist, WFS
Christine Borrego, Social Worker, WFS
Michelle Calabio, Social Worker III, AAS

Rebecca Darnell, EHS Deputy Bureau Director, WFS
Judy Flores, Social Worker III, CFS
Marichel Garcia, Social Casework Assistant, CFS
Juanita Harden-Lee, Social Worker, AAS
Maria Mariscal, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Aileen Palompo, Calvin Help Desk Specialist, Information and Systems
Nanci Powers, Workforce Svcs Specialist, WFS
Margaret Smith, Eligibility Work Supervisor, CFS
Angela Verarde, Soc Svc Program Analyst, WFS

15 YEARS

Anna Jackson, Clerk-Specialist Level, CFS
Monica Russo-Olson, Clerk-Specialist Level, WFS

10 YEARS

Xavier Campos, Soc Svc Program Assistant, WFS
Julie Evans, Soc Svc Program Assistant, AAS
Tasy Larry, Clerk-Specialist Level, Information and Systems
Lisa Matsubara, Info Sys Specialist III, Information and Systems
Lizzette Romero, Senior Clerk-Project, CSB

NEW EMPLOYEES

Lenesha Anderson, Social Worker II, CFS
Venise Boykin, Social Worker II, CFS
Tamara Cummings, Personnel Tech, Admin
Roy Dela Vega, Sr Soc Svc Info Sys Analyst, Information and Systems
Curt Dodson, Sr Soc Svc Info Sys Analyst, Information & Systems

Angelina Domondon, Account Clerk-Adv Level, Admin
Aisling Dwiggin, Social Casework Assistant, CFS
Brenna Hills-Wilson, Social Casework Assistant, CFS
Amber Mathews, Clerk-Experienced Level, WFS
Amen Mushtaq, Social Casework Assistant, CFS
Vania Nguyen, Social Work Sup II, CFS
Martha Suarez, Social Work Supervisor II, CFS

RETIREES

Evangeline Bondoc, Clerk-Specialist 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 Deb Johnson at djohnson@ehsd.cccounty.us or (925) 608-4904.**



SPREAD THE WORD

November

- **ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH**
- **NOVEMBER 2** – Daylight Saving Time Ends
- **NOVEMBER 4** – Election Day
- **NOVEMBER 5** – Mission Possible Conference (violence prevention)
- **NOVEMBER 11** – Veterans Day (Holiday)
- **NOVEMBER 17** – Holiday Food Fight Kick off (through 12/31)
- **NOVEMBER 22** – National Adoption Day
- **NOVEMBER 27** – Thanksgiving Day (Holiday)
- **NOVEMBER 28** – Day after Thanksgiving (Holiday)



December

- **COUNTIES CARE HOLIDAY FOOD FIGHT**
- **DECEMBER 4** – EHSD Live!
- **DECEMBER 7** – Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
- **DECEMBER 15** – Hanukkah (begins at sundown)
- **DECEMBER 21** – Winter Solstice (shortest day of the year)
- **DECEMBER 23** – Festivus
- **DECEMBER 25** – Christmas Day (Holiday)
- **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

October 2 or 16 • 4 to 6 p.m.

November 6 or 20 • 4 to 6 p.m.

December 4 or 18 • 4 to 6 p.m.



For more information about becoming a Resource Parent visit us at www.ehsd.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

We Care... You Care

[CLICK HERE](#) to learn more about nominating a coworker and see page 19

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

Facebook and X @ContraCostaEHSD
Instagram @HumanaCosta



We appreciate you closely following our **Submission Guidelines** to ensure that your news and photos appear in *Headlines*.

December 2025 issue – submissions due Tuesday, November 18, 2025