



Rooted in this place we call home

2024 | REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

S COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY



Our
MISSION

We bring together people, ideas, and resources to inspire philanthropy and accomplish great things.

Our
VISION

To make Santa Cruz County thrive for all who call it home, now and in the future.

Caring for the Place We Call Home

This past year was the first year since 2020 that Santa Cruz County didn't experience a federally declared disaster. Still, in the final week of 2024 we were called to support suddenly unemployed wharf employees and displaced residents of the harbor after an enormous storm surge. While we do extraordinary work in times of crisis, we were grateful to have the added time throughout 2024 to listen to donors, nonprofit leaders, and others who care deeply about this special place. We confirmed the community has great ambitions and innovative solutions to make Santa Cruz County a place where everyone can thrive.



We also learned people see the Community Foundation as the place for meaningful change to take root, to learn together, deepen connections, and build joyful and effective collaborations. And we're grateful that our donors and their advisors come to us to structure planned gifts that can leave a legacy for their favorite charities and also provide benefits to the donor during their lifetime. We are honored to have the trust of our community to rally timely effective resources for today's needs and to meet our collective ambitions for the county with resources we are building for future generations.

Thank you for partnering with us to care for the place we all call home. Together, we are nurturing our resilient community. For good. Forever. Always.

Jim Weisenstein, President

Susan True, CEO

Board Leadership 2024

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Trevor Strudley, CFP, Vice President
Kirk Schmidt, Esq., Treasurer

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In memoriam

Community Foundation Honorary Trustee

Mary Hammer

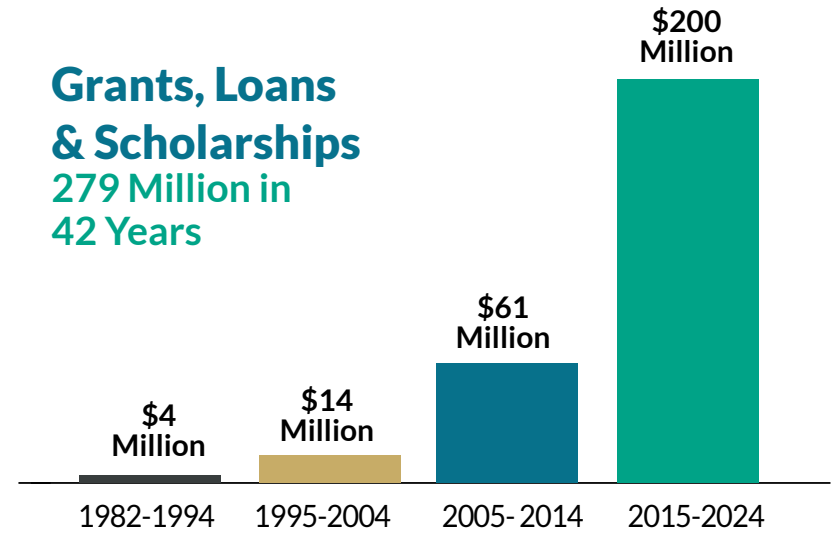
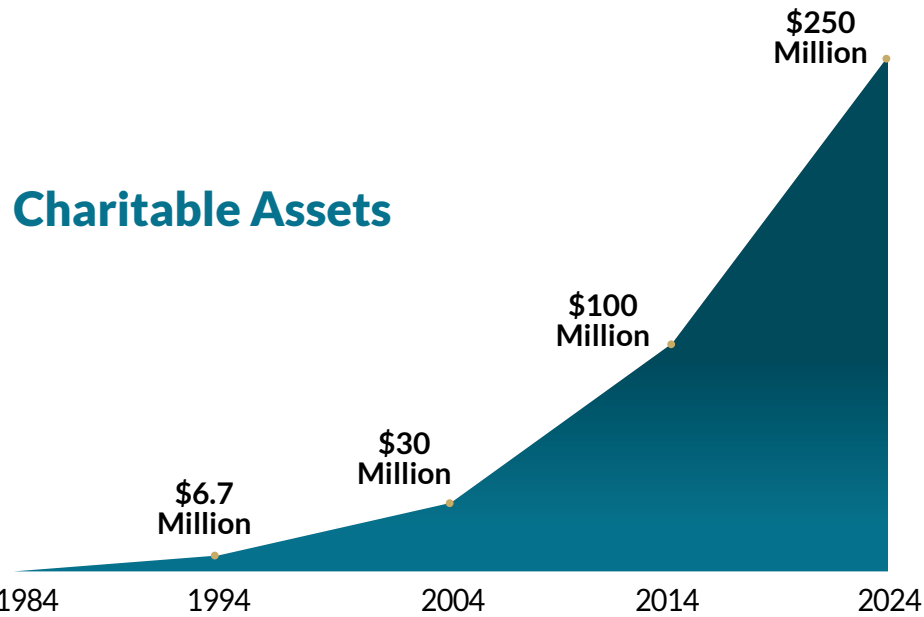
Mary was a dedicated community activist who helped lay the foundation for the San Lorenzo Valley's resilience. She championed disaster preparedness, natural resource preservation, and sustainable, community-centered development. Living her values through action, Mary instilled reciprocity and mutual aid in all she did. Her legacy endures in the care and service of the leaders she mentored, and the impact of her life will be felt for generations to come.

"This place matters to me. I care about the whole world but what can one person do about the whole world? You can really see the difference you make in a community. I know how to serve the San Lorenzo Valley. I will keep doing so - even after I am gone."

- Mary Hammer, Honorary Trustee, and co-founder of the Fund for the Future of the San Lorenzo Valley

The Difference We Make Together

Growing our impact



“Our county has a vibrant constellation of nonprofits with such good intent and a lot of ingenuity, and the Community Foundation serves many different roles to support our work: convener, holder of expertise, coach, and counsel.”

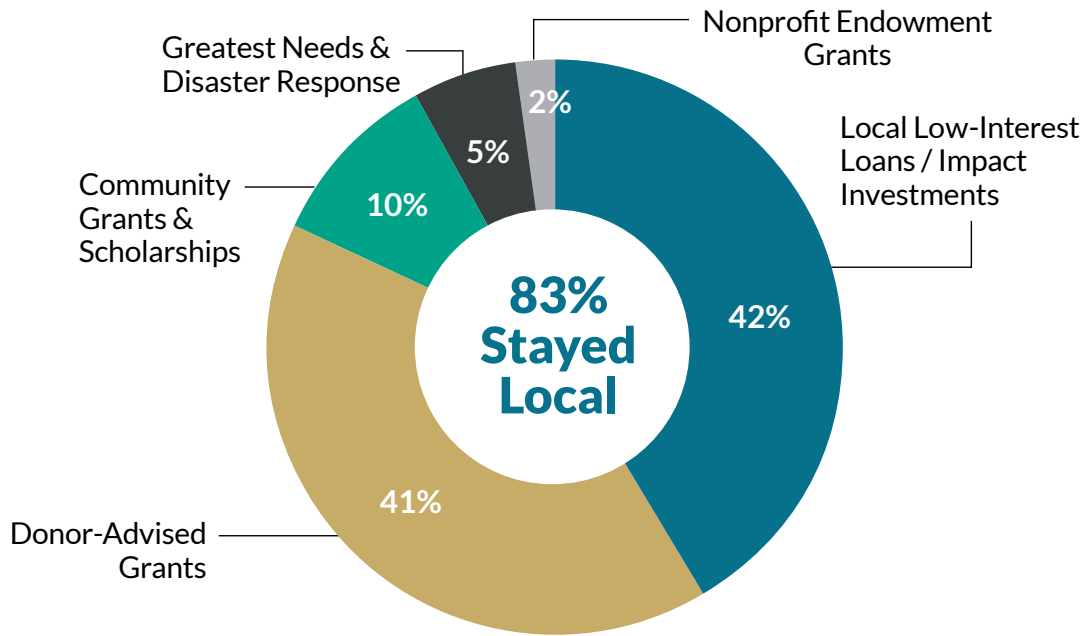
- Bryan Largay, Conservation Director, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County



“Community foundations have a unique and really important role to play in philanthropy. They are connectors, helping donors connect to local organizations that are aligned with their values and the causes they care about.”

- Christy Chin, Donor-Advised Fundholder

2024 Grants, Loans & Scholarships: \$38 Million invested in our region and beyond



Connecting capital to projects advancing solutions
\$11,150,000
in low-interest local impact loans made in 2024.

Strengthening effective nonprofits
300 local nonprofits
served with grants, seminars, meeting space,
and more.

Building resources for our community's future
\$22 Million
held in endowments for 67 nonprofits, schools,
and faith communities



“Being part of the Rise Together coalition with the Community Foundation has provided me with a deeper understanding of various perspectives, allowing me to connect with others in meaningful ways. I’ve learned that leadership extends beyond advocating for my own cause; it involves supporting and collaborating with fellow leaders to uplift their initiatives as well. This collaborative spirit has enriched our efforts and strengthened our impact in the community.”

– Gina Castañeda, Board Trustee; Founder, Aztecas Youth Soccer Academy, member of Rise Together



“The Foundation is my trusted partner in doing good for Santa Cruz County and they provide a smooth pathway. You put your money in and gain the tax advantage with your gift. They pool your gift with others, invest it wisely, and it stays in the community. What’s not to like?!”

– Dr. Keith McKenzie, Donor-Advised Fund Holder

Greatest Needs Fund

Flexible Funding to meet Emerging Needs



Volunteers and staff get ready to serve a holiday meal at Pajaro Valley Loaves & Fishes. In 2024, a grant from the Greatest Needs Fund helped with a kitchen remodel so they can fill the expanding need for warm meals for working families, elderly, disabled, and people experiencing homelessness.

PUTTING YOUR GENEROSITY TO WORK

**\$1.4
million**

in grants from the Greatest Needs Fund since 2021 for emergent needs in health and human services, economic and community development, education, the arts, and the environment.

We started the **Greatest Needs Fund** in 2021 to respond to our community's critical and emerging needs and work with nonprofit partners who can do the most good right now to positively impact our community. Grants in 2024 included: providing prenatal care and advocacy for pregnant farmworkers, domestic violence prevention, funding for mental health services, and homelessness prevention work including job training, case management, legal aid, and landlord-tenant mediation.

We're also thinking about the needs of tomorrow. Our **Santa Cruz County Endowment** is a permanent but flexible fund that is building resources today so we can meet our community's future needs...forever.



"Flexible funding is invaluable for an organization like ours. It allows us to adapt to the community's needs as they arise, like the pandemic and more recently, the Pajaro flood. With this flexibility, we can address immediate challenges effectively and plan for sustainable growth all while providing stable and reliable support for the people who depend on us."

- Ashley Bridges, Executive Director, Pajaro Valley Loaves & Fishes

Scholarships

Supporting Dreams of Higher Education



“This scholarship will help me pay the remaining cost of tuition and allow me to focus more on my academics. Thank you for this great honor. I hope to return to Watsonville and Pajaro Valley High to give back what I learned.”

- Mireya Garcia Zamora, 2024 scholarship recipient & first-year electrical engineering student at UC Berkeley

Scholarship awards are made possible thanks to the long history of local families contributing to young scholars' success by establishing scholarship funds at the Community Foundation. Donors have been inspired to give back to a school they loved, to support young people's dreams of attending college, or to honor loved ones' dedication to higher education. The **Santa Cruz County Scholarship Endowment** is a community scholarship fund that exists to benefit students of our region forever. Gifts in any amount, made by individuals, families, or businesses are welcome to support the higher education costs for local students attending college or pursuing the skilled trades.

The class of 2024 started high school at home, during a global pandemic. They weathered multiple climate disasters since then and had to navigate the emotional and economic fallout from these challenging times. Despite all they faced, 2024 awardees continued to excel in class, volunteer in the community, play sports, participate in clubs and extracurricular activities, and work nights and weekends to help their families make ends meet.

2024 Scholarships

\$280,000
in scholarships to
37 students

73% of awardees
are first in their families to
attend college

Over \$2.2 million
in scholarships has been
awarded to **450 students**
since 1988

New Tool to Fund Conservation on the Central Coast



Our Strike Fund helped Trust for Public Land successfully purchase the 866-acre Ferrini Ranch with a \$10 million loan. The ranch was slated for a 185-luxury home development. Dr. Chris Wilmers, wildlife biologist and director of the Santa Cruz Puma Project says, “Ferrini Ranch provides essential connectivity between the Santa Lucia Mountains and Fort Ord—one of our region’s biodiversity gems, and in so doing enhances the health and adaptability to climate change of our Central Coast region’s wildlife and plants.” Photo credit: Teresa Frahm



“I’m grateful that the Community Foundation has started the “Strike Fund.” It’s one way you can contribute and be a part of something that is really going to last forever. There aren’t that many things in the world that are that way.”

-Val Cole, Strike Fund Donor, Donor-Advised Fundholder and co-chair of the California Board for the Trust for Public Land

We established the **Central Coast Climate and Conservation Action Fund**, known as the **“Strike Fund,”** along with community members who want to protect our region’s most vulnerable lands and waterways. The priority is to connect wildlife corridors, preserve sacred ancestral lands, and build climate resilience across local watersheds and ecosystems rather than county lines. The Strike Fund acts as a revolving loan fund for the Central Coast region, empowering partners—including the Trust for Public Land, the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, and the Amah Mutsun Land Trust—to quickly purchase prioritized lands before they are sold and developed. As the loan is repaid, the fund is replenished, and donors’ dollars are used time and again, multiplying the impact of each gift.

Local Generosity Fuels Community Grants

In 2024 we granted
\$1.97 million

to 92 local nonprofits including those supporting the health and wellbeing of youth, seniors, and families, contributors to our arts and culture ecosystem, and partners working toward a sustainable and resilient Santa Cruz County where all can thrive.

Community grants are made possible each spring thanks to the generosity of dozens of individuals and families who entrust the Community Foundation with their charitable visions. These funds serve as our community's permanent resource for addressing the issues of today and tomorrow. Grants are also made possible through collective giving to funds started by the community like the **Fund for Women and Girls**, which ensures women and girls have opportunities to thrive, and the **Diversity Partnership Fund**, an enduring resource to support the LGBTQ+ community.



“One of the most important priorities of our Tribe is to ensure our members understand the directive given to us in our Creation Story; it is our responsibility to take care of Mother Earth and all living things. The Community Foundation has become a steadfast supporter in our work on traditional stewardship, cultivating healthy and resilient landscapes, and restoring sacredness to the land. We are grateful the Foundation understands this directive from our Creator.”

—Valentin Lopez, President of Amah Mustun Land Trust and Tribal Chairman

Mathematician Harold Widom said he did his best thinking as he rambled around the trails of Santa Cruz County. Because he wanted others to experience nature, Harold listed the Foundation as the beneficiary of his retirement accounts and created a Memorandum of Charitable intent (MOCI) instructing us to establish a permanent fund to increase access to and maintain parks and open spaces—forever. Three years after Harold's passing, his legacy is thriving. His generosity enabled community grants to Santa Cruz Mountains Trail Stewardship, Elkhorn Slough Foundation, and the Amah Mutsun Land Trust (AMLT). This past summer, AMLT held their Indigenous field school, a research-based cultural and environmental education program. Above: During the field school, AMLT Native Steward Esak Ordonez led a talk on cultural fire and prescribed fire for the interns at Mount Madonna.

Photo credit: AMLT



Making a Difference Here at Home

When you give with the Community Foundation, you're connecting to a powerful network of generous people who share your vision for a stronger, more vibrant Santa Cruz County. We're proud to be the home of more than 550 charitable funds created by your neighbors. You can give to any of these existing funds in arts & culture, education, the environment, racial equity, and more—or start your own. Find other local funds to support issues you're passionate about at cfsc.org/give.

Giving for today.

Our community has called on us to pool gifts of all sizes, and from donors across all walks of life, to grant out quickly to address today's needs.

THE RISE TOGETHER FUND FOR RACIAL EQUITY fuels a coalition of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color leaders and a team from the Foundation in our collective effort to advance racial equity locally.

THE IMMIGRANT SUPPORT FUND funds ongoing efforts to educate, protect, and serve immigrant families in Santa Cruz County.

THE FRIENDS OF THE FOUNDATION FUND sustains the Community Foundation's work helping nonprofits effectively achieve their missions, supporting generous community members in their giving, and enabling us to serve as a hub for local philanthropy.

Giving for tomorrow.

These permanent funds are designed to grow and meet the needs of future generations. Grants are made annually from a percentage of earnings.

THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY ENDOWMENT allows us the flexibility to bring resources to the areas of greatest need, via our most trusted community partnerships, working in their specific areas of expertise.

THE FOUNDATION FOREVER ENDOWMENT supports the Community Foundation's role in bringing people together to tackle community problems that are too big to solve alone.

DISASTER RESPONSE SUPPORT ENDOWMENT invests perpetual resources to allow the Foundation to respond immediately in the wake of natural disaster.

"We have a small enough county where we can really help each other. I truly feel that together, we can make Santa Cruz County a better place and the Community Foundation is a thoughtful and skilled partner in this work."

- Leola Lapedes, Donor-Advised Fundholder, Legacy Society Member and Honorary Trustee

Your Partner in Effective Giving



Community Foundation Honorary Trustees Martina O'Sullivan and Leola Lapidés.

“There’s no other nonprofit in Santa Cruz County focused on making sure our community thrives both today and in the future. I can see the progress we’ve made through our collective giving over decades, and I know the Community Foundation is a trusted steward of today’s generosity which will benefit future generations.”

- Martina O'Sullivan, Community Foundation donor and Honorary Trustee

We love helping people give with confidence and make a difference—today, and for many years to come. We’re proud to be a place where charitable giving is personal, and meaningful. We offer easy, flexible, and strategic giving methods tailored to your own charitable interests and financial goals. When you work with us to create a charitable gift, we can ensure that the causes you care about are supported. We can help determine beneficial assets to give and structure a gift that can make lifelong income payments to you or a loved one. We have years of experience to help you have a profound impact on Santa Cruz County and our collective efforts to accelerate local, positive change now, and into the future.



Who We Help

Individuals, families, businesses, and nonprofits to make a lasting impact in our community and beyond.



What to Give

We are pleased to accept a range of assets including cash, securities, insurance, qualified distributions from IRAs, and real estate. We also accept matching gifts from employer-sponsored matching gift programs.



Ways to Give

Our team can explore how gifts of particular assets and structures might help donors achieve their financial and philanthropic goals. We are happy to offer donor-advised funds and charitable gift annuities and trusts to make immediate and long-term impact. Gifts may support any of our Foundation funds; create new funds in the name of the donor or a loved one; give to favorite nonprofit organizations; and may be planned as part of distributions from wills, trusts, and beneficiary designations.



The Difference We Make

We bring relationships and an in-depth understanding of the issues, opportunities, nonprofits, and resources that shape Santa Cruz County.

Join us

Learn more about how to give to your passions, leave a legacy, and deepen your investment in community-led change.

Investments with a Purpose

Our investment strategies are among the most mission aligned portfolios in the nation. We started one of the field’s early socially responsible portfolios in 2004 and have launched new options such as our gender equality focused Women’s Inclusion Portfolio. We’re allocating capital with an eye on the racial and gender diversity of asset fund managers. Loan funds are hard at work locally with low-interest loans for projects with a social impact such as supporting new entrant farmers, easing our affordability crisis with workforce housing, and growing immigrant-owned small businesses. From our grants to our investment strategy, the Foundation’s assets are working to make Santa Cruz County a better place, now and in the future.



“My clients are community minded, generous, and focused on doing the most good with the resources they have. The Foundation’s wealth of knowledge about local nonprofits—in addition to their resources and tools to maximize giving—makes them an important resource in my work.”

- Zach Brown, Certified Financial Planner



Teens from Jacob’s Heart Children’s Cancer Support Services got to visit Watsonville’s Starlight Elementary Teaching Kitchen for hands-on cooking lessons with professionals. Community grants to Jacob’s Heart are thanks to the Borina Family, and charitable funds they entrusted to the Foundation for investment and stewardship to fund programs for youth, seniors, those in hospice care, and historic preservation activities in the Pajaro Valley and Santa Cruz County, forever.

Financial Highlights

Preliminary, as of December 31, 2024

Assets

Cash & Equivalents.....	\$7,800,000
Investments	\$218,100,000
Charitable Trust Assets	\$2,300,000
Grants & Contributions Receivable ...	\$3,900,000
Loans Receivable	\$12,250,000
Loan Interest Receivable.....	\$20,000
Deposits & Prepaids.....	\$125,000
Fixed Assets	\$6,400,000
TOTAL ASSETS.....	\$250,895,000

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$230,000
Grants Payable	\$970,000
Agency Funds	\$22,600,000
Trust Liabilities	\$2,300,000
Charitable Gift Annuity Liabilities.....	\$500,000
Notes Payable	\$830,000
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$27,430,000

Our 2024 audit will be posted once prepared in 2025. View our financials and investment performance at cfsc.org/financials.