



2026 Photo Contest Guidelines

Our Shared Story

Share photographs that capture the people, places, and experiences that shape our community.

Winning photographs will be featured on the Community Foundation website, in publications and communications materials, and at a special award reception.

Eligibility

This call for photos is open to Santa Cruz County residents of all ages—no professional experience required! Non-resident photographers are also welcome to share their work.

Photo Categories:

- Community Celebrations and People
Who makes up our community story? What makes our community vibrant? Share photos of Iconic SC County events, community celebrations and gatherings, and the individuals that make up our community.
- Landscape & Wildlife
How does our beautiful natural home influence our lives? Showcase the beauty of our landscapes and animal friends! From the coast to the mountains, to the majestic wildlife, and all the striking architecture and art around our county.
- Nonprofit Mission in Action
Who serves our community? Share images of your favorite local nonprofit in action.
- Youth Category (Ages 0-17)
Share your talents and love of our community and tell our story through your shots. This category is open to photographers ages 0-17, with parental consent (parental/guardian consent form must be included in submission).

Prizes:

The 1st Place winner of each category will receive a \$300 award to donate as a grant to their favorite local nonprofit. The 2nd Place winner of each category will receive a \$200 award to donate as a grant to their favorite local nonprofit. The 3rd Place winner of each category will receive a \$100 award to donate as a grant to their favorite local nonprofit.

Important dates:

August 10: Submissions open

September 18: Submissions close, Midnight PST

End of September: Submissions will be reviewed by respected local photojournalists Kevin Painchaud of *Lookout*; Shmuel Thaler of *Santa Cruz Sentinel* and Tarmo Hannula of *The Pajaronian* and *Good Times*.

Mid-October: Contestants will be notified of decisions and a reception will be held along with a showcase posted to our website.

Submission Guidelines:

- There is a limit of five photographs per entrant
- Entrants in the youth category must have parental consent to be able to enter in the contest.
- Print entries are not accepted. Only electronic files submitted via our photo contest entry form will be entered into the contest.
- **Photos must be in a horizontal orientation, Any photos taken with smartphones in vertical orientation will not be considered, no exceptions.**
- Standard processing of the original file is acceptable. See below for more details.
- The electronic file name must include the entrant's first initial and last name, for example: JSanchez.jpeg (number them if you have more than one entry, like: JSanchez1.jpeg).
- **When choosing a name for your image, please keep the title to no more than five words.**
- Community Foundation Santa Cruz County reserves the right to disqualify any entry deemed unsuitable for consideration due to objectionable content, such as profanity, nudity, drug, alcohol, or tobacco use, or cruelty to persons or animals

Image Quality: Minimum 3600x4800 pixels

Format: jpeg or .png accepted

Image Editing Restrictions:

- Acceptable image editing of the original file examples include:
 - Cropping
 - Minor adjustments to color, white balance, tone, lighting levels and curves, shadows and highlights, saturation, contrast, and sharpness

- Moderate dodging and burning
 - Stitched panorama
 - Sharpening, removal of dust spots, and moderate reduction of image noise
- Photographs that have been digitally or otherwise altered beyond standard optimization will be disqualified. Examples include:
 - HDR frame stacking
 - Images that have been manipulated by the addition, removal, or alteration (painting over, cloning, or blurring) of anything in the original subject and scene that were photographed
 - Borders, signatures, or watermarks
 - Changes in color so significant that the processed colors are widely different from the original colors

Special Note: Your photo submission authorizes Community Foundation Santa Cruz County to use your image in marketing materials. You are responsible for obtaining permission to photograph subjects featured in your submission. All photos must be original work taken by the entrants. No third party may own or control any materials the photo contains, and the photo must not infringe upon the trademark, copyright, moral rights, intellectual rights, or rights of privacy of any entity or person. No compensation will be provided for the submitted photos other than the prize awards outlined in the contest rules. Photo credit opportunities may or may not apply and are at the discretion of Community Foundation Santa Cruz County.

Questions?

Contact Josué Monroy, Communications Coordinator, at jmonroy@cfsc.org or call us at 831.662.2000