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SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

CAN NONPROFITS SOFTEN THE SAFETY NET BLOW?



Local community leaders spoke on a panel on Wednesday at Community Foundation Santa Cruz County. The panelists talked about the sweeping funding cuts local organizations and nonprofits that provide local safety net services are facing in the wake of the federal tax and spending bill signed in July. From left, Second Harvest Food Bank CEO Erica Padilla-Chavez, Salud Para La Gente CEO Donna Young, Community Action Board CEO MariaElena De La Garza, Dientes Community Dental Care CEO Laura Marcus, and Pajaro Valley Health Care District Board Chair and Community Bridges Marketing and Communications Manager Tony Nuñez.

SHMUEL THALER — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

By PK Hattis
PKHATTIS@SANTACRUZSENTINEL.COM

APTOS — When MariaElena De La Garza was growing up in Watsonville, her mother had a phrase she'd often repeat when times were tough: "Cada quien pone su granito de arena," Spanish for "Everyone contributes their little grain of sand."

That mantra has been top of mind for De La Garza in the wake of seismic policy shifts at the federal level that have already begun to drain millions of dollars from the budgets of numerous government agencies and nonprofits providing social safety net services. And the crisis is expected to worsen in the years to come.

"Today, when we hear the impacts, when we feel overwhelmed by the realities our communities are facing — that our nonprofits are facing — we need to remember that you bring your granito (grain of sand)," she said. "Whatever that granito is."

De La Garza, the executive director of Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County, was speaking alongside four other nonprofit leaders to a group of local philanthropic donors and community leaders brought together at Community Foundation Santa Cruz County's headquarters in Aptos. They were there to explain just how serious the fallout has been and will continue to be from recent state and federal actions mainly in response to H.R. 1, the spending bill passed by Congress and signed by President Donald Trump in July.

In a recent survey of 109 local nonprofits, the Community Foundation found that a majority had already experienced financial funding cuts, 33% had made or were preparing to make staffing cuts and 20% had cash reserves of two months or less. Many had shifted their focus to fundraising efforts or were searching for new revenue streams.

But the event was also imbued with De La Garza's ethos and a challenge to find ways to support those most impacted by the changes, even if replacing the evaporating funding is an infeasible task.

"There's no making up for what we're going to lose in the next two years from federal and state sources. We just can't," Community Foundation CEO Susan True told the Sentinel. "What is impressive to me about this group is their ability to strategize how we can make the cuts hurt the least, how we can protect what's most important to the families that they serve."

'DIFFICULT DECISIONS'

H.R. 1 includes nearly \$1 trillion in cuts to Medicaid — known as Medi-Cal in California — over the next decade along with heightened work requirements and eligibility verification rules that experts have warned will result in fewer people receiving coverage. Earlier this month, county Human Services Director Randy Morris told the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors that about 78,000 people across the county are Medi-Cal beneficiaries and, of that total, about 40,000 will be impacted through the combination of federal shifts and state changes; some in reaction to the federal moves.

Health care institutions that serve a large Medi-Cal population, such as Watsonville Community Hospital, have been put in serious financial peril because of a reliance on reimbursement revenue. Tony Nuñez, chair of the Pajaro Valley Health Care District Board, said the hospital expects to see an ongoing annual revenue reduction of between \$3.5 million and \$7 million due to the Medicaid cuts.

"(It) makes it really challenging for us to continue to provide the service as we do and so we have some really difficult decisions to make going forward; we have some

really difficult moments in front of us," said Nuñez. "And it's not just us."

Donna Young, CEO of Watsonville-based Salud Para La Gente, said the health care provider is also facing a 10% revenue drop due to state and federal changes.

Salud Para La Gente is a federally qualified health center and Young said the federal and state changes are nothing short of an "existential threat." Hospitals and federally qualified health centers are both mandated to provide services to community members in need, regardless of insurance status. As reimbursements dry up, these institutions will be left to shoulder the financial burden, Young and Nuñez explained.

"We are really threatened right now with cutbacks to funding," said Young.

Laura Marcus, CEO of Dientes Community Dental, was also a panelist at the Wednesday event. She explained how her organization, which provides dental care low-income patients, has undergone a period of significant expansion in the past 10 years, in large part due to the Affordable Care Act — which allowed more people to have insurance.

Dientes grew from one clinic with eight chairs to now running five clinics across the county that support 75,000 dental visits annually. But, she added, adult dental care is optional for states and when budgets tighten, that service is often the first to get dropped and patients stop visiting the dentist when they don't have coverage.

During the 2008 financial crisis, she said the adult benefits were eliminated from Medi-Cal and Dientes — which had a single clinic at the time — and experienced a 50% patient drop.

"But we were able to pivot. We provided more care for kids, and then we tried to

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COURTS' FOCUS: GUARD IN DC, ORE.

By Gene Johnson and Michael Kunzelman
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A truck driver who backed into a U.S. Coast Guard base in the San Francisco Bay Area — the site of earlier protests against federal immigration agents — was shot by law enforcement officers and wounded, authorities said Friday.

The driver was held for a mental health evaluation after "attempting to weaponize the vehicle to ram into Coast Guard Base Alameda" on Thursday night, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security posted on X. The FBI later said the driver was in custody.

A bystander was struck by a "fragment," treated at a hospital and released, the Department of Homeland Security statement said. It did not elaborate.

No Coast Guard personnel were hurt, it said. Officers issued "multiple verbal commands" to stop, but the driver failed to comply, "suddenly accelerating backwards at a high rate of speed directly toward them," the statement said.

"When the vehicle's actions posed a direct threat to the safety of Coast Guard and security personnel, law enforcement officers discharged several rounds of defensive live fire," it said.

The driver was wounded in the stomach and was expected to survive, the statement said.

The FBI was investigating. It sent evidence, crisis management and bomb technician teams to the scene.

"At this time, the incident appears to be

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Kamala Harris leaves door open for 2028 presidential run

By the Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Kamala Harris isn't ruling out another run for the White House.

In an interview with the BBC posted Saturday, Harris said she expects a woman will be president in the coming years, and it could "possibly" be her.

"I am not done," she said.

The former vice-president said she hasn't decided whether to mount a 2028 presidential campaign. But she dismissed the suggestion that she'd face long odds.

"I have lived my entire career a life of service and it's in my bones. And there are many ways to serve," she said. "I've never listened to polls."

She's recently given a series of interviews following the September release

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WEATHER FORECAST

TODAY
H: 66
L: 50

MON.
H: 71
L: 51

TUE.
H: 79
L: 54

Full weather report B8

CALIFORNIA

State gives Planned Parenthood \$140 million boost to keep clinics open after months of financial strain. Lawmakers say there's more work to be done. **PAGE B4**

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TODAY IN HISTORY

1774

The First Continental Congress adjourned in Philadelphia.

1825

The Erie Canal opened in upstate New York, connecting Lake Erie and the Hudson River.

1979

South Korean President Park Chung-hee was shot to death by the head of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, Kim Jae-kyu.

2000

The New York Yankees became the first team in more than a quarter-century to win three straight World Series championships, beating the New York Mets in Game 5 of their “Subway Series.”

2001

President George W. Bush signed the USA Patriot Act, giving authorities unprecedented ability to search, seize, detain or eavesdrop in their pursuit of possible terrorists.

2024

Israel launched predawn airstrikes against military targets in Iran in retaliation for a barrage of ballistic missiles the Islamic Republic fired on Israel on Oct. 1. It was the first time Israel’s military had openly attacked Iran.

BIRTHDAYS

Musician Milton Nascimento is 83. Actor Jaclyn Smith is 80. Artist and filmmaker Julian Schnabel is 74. Singer Natalie Merchant is 62. Country singer Keith Urban is 58. Writer-producer Seth MacFarlane is 52. Rapper Schoolboy Q is 39.

Star report

COUNTRY STAR REVEALS SONG LED TO DEATH THREATS Well, when it comes to college football rivalries, apparently, there’s no room for love, and if you don’t believe it just ask Megan Moroney. Because the 27-year-old revealed on a recent appearance on “Late Night with Seth Meyers,” that is exactly what happened to her: “So when I moved to Nashville, I found myself a Volunteers shirt, and I remember looking in the mirror, going ‘My mom would absolutely kill me right now if she saw me in this gaudy orange,’” she told Meyers. “So then I thought, that would make a really good love song. Like ‘I like this dude enough to not wear Georgia Red.” That is when Moroney made the shocking admission: “Yeah, I got death threats over that song,” she said.

— Tribune News Service

LOTTERY

FRIDAY’S WINNING NUMBERS

Daily 3 Afternoon: 3, 1, 7
Daily 3 Evening: 4, 8, 3
Daily 4: 9, 0, 1, 8
Fantasy 5: 18, 21, 25, 30, 39
DAILY DERBY
1st: 7, Eureka
2nd: 6, Whirl Win
3rd: 9, Whirling Spirit
Race time: 1:42.97
SUPER LOTTO PLUS Wednesday’s drawing: 3, 17, 20, 25, 37
Mega number: 2
Saturday’s estimated jackpot: \$10 million
MEGA MILLIONS Friday’s drawing: 11, 18, 31, 51, 56
Mega Number: 24
Tuesday’s estimated jackpot: \$714 million
POWERBALL Wednesday’s drawing: 18, 37, 52, 54, 60
Powerball: 12
Saturday’s estimated jackpot: \$344 million

NONPROFITS

From Page 1

raise more money so we could provide free care to those that were suddenly uninsured,” said Marcus. “We can’t do that today. Not with five clinics and 150 staff and 18,000 people needing services.”

Marcus said Medi-Cal is already poised to drop dental benefits for adults with an Unsatisfactory Immigration Status in July, in a move that she said will impact 3,000 Dientes patients.

Food benefits were also a major point of focus at the event. County officials have previously explained that the county is facing an immediate loss of \$16.8 million due to H.R. 1 cuts to food programs such as CalFresh and cascading reductions for years to come. When that happens, explained Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County CEO Erica Padilla-Chavez, hungry families will turn to the food bank.

“It’s \$78 million annually through (CalFresh) that comes into Santa Cruz County,” said Padilla-Chavez. “I don’t have the ability to fill that gap, nor will I ever.”

The timeline for the food bank stepping up its responsibilities to hungry residents was also shifted into high gear recently due to the ongoing federal government shutdown. State officials announced Wednesday that the shutdown will likely take CalFresh benefits offline starting Nov. 1 and California Gov. Gavin Newsom, in response, said he would deploy California National Guard troops across the state to assist with food bank

operations.

DOUBLING DOWN

Even amid the onslaught of bad news, the nonprofit leaders didn’t want Wednesday’s audience — or the public — to think they were embracing an attitude of resignation. Just the opposite, they said.

Several speakers said rather than pulling inward to protect their own organizations, the nonprofits have taken a collaborative stance and have banded together to weather the storm.

Young said with federal health care changes slated to take effect next year, her team is doubling down on efforts to help residents enroll in Medi-Cal through the end of this year. That’s happening alongside programs where medical workers venture out to local farms to provide health screenings, blood pressure checks and more to farmworkers.

“I feel supported by our community, I feel supported by our leaders,” said Young. “I know that together, I can literally pick up the phone, or text, or email and we will help each other.”

About 45% of the people Second Harvest serves are from the immigrant community, said Padilla-Chavez. But many are afraid to venture out to the food bank due to federal government rhetoric and actions around immigration enforcement. To help address these concerns, Padilla-Chavez said Second Harvest has launched a home delivery system in collaboration with other local partners.

“We know accessing food should not be a fearful thing,” said Padilla-Chavez.



Peggy Flynn, far left, Curt Coleman, far right, and other members of the audience listen to Wednesday’s panel discussion at Community Foundation Santa Cruz. **SHMUEL THALER — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL**

“We’ve heard countless stories of people saying, ‘I don’t even like to go to the store out of fear.’”

In addition to that, Padilla-Chavez said all of the local nonprofits are looking to create better operational efficiency within their organizations without staffing cuts, as that is an area of high cost.

De La Garza also spoke to the pervasive sense of fear that has blanketed the local immigrant community. She said the Community Action Board and other nonprofits have ramped up efforts to help local immigrant families create Childcare Safety Plans that protect children if a parent is detained or deported.

De La Garza said the Pajaro Valley and greater South County region is also still recovering from devastating floods in 2023, so her group has worked to keep its

attention focused on those supportive efforts as well.

Marcus said Dientes opened its fifth clinic off of Penny Lane in Watsonville in August, despite difficulties on the horizon.

“That’s really a motto at Dientes: Dare to lead, be brave, take the chances; because people need us,” said Marcus, “and we need you.”

Núñez said what makes him hopeful is some of the outside-the-box thinking and innovative strategies that are arising out of the current chaos.

“We’re trying to address some of the challenges by being strategic and by expanding services, knowing that we can’t stay doing the same thing we are currently doing and expect that we are going to simply survive,” he said. “There needs to be change, there needs to be partnership,

there needs to be innovation.”

The Sentinel reported in August that the health care district was planning to reengage with other regional providers that have the financial resources to assume operational responsibility of Watsonville Community Hospital. And yet, there remains an air of unpredictability that continues to hover over the nonprofit landscape, which has kept local service providers on their toes and makes their collaborative efforts all the more crucial.

“We kind of know what’s going to happen based on the policies that are being passed. But who are we kidding, we are living in a dysregulated time,” said Padilla-Chavez. “We don’t know what we’re going to wake up to tomorrow and we’re going to have to be responsive.”

COURTS

From Page 1

isolated, and there is no known current threat to the public,” FBI spokesperson Cameron Polan in San Francisco said in a statement.

No other details were immediately released.

Video from the scene showed what appeared to be a U-Haul truck trying to back into the base.

“U-Haul is assisting law enforcement to meet any investigative needs they have,” company spokesperson Jeff Lockridge said in a statement.

Coast Guard Island is a 67-acre (27-hectare) human-made island formed in 1913 in the Oakland Estuary between Oakland and Alameda. It is federally owned, does not allow visits from the general public without an escort or specific government identification, and it has been home to the current base, Base Alameda, since 2012, according to a Coast Guard document from 2016.

Base Alameda provides a variety of services for Coast Guard activities throughout the West Coast.

Earlier Thursday, protesters had assembled at the island, with many singing hymns and carrying signs saying, “Protect our neighbors” and “No ICE or troops in the Bay,” a reference to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the National Guard.

Hours earlier, Presi-

dent Donald Trump had called off a planned surge of federal agents into San Francisco to quell crime. Mayor Daniel Lurie and Gov. Gavin Newsom said it was unnecessary because crime is on the decline.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents began arriving at the Coast Guard base in the region earlier Thursday for a possible ramp up of immigration enforcement, a move that drew several hundred protesters.

Trump said he backed off after speaking to the mayor and several prominent business leaders who said they’re working hard to clean up the city.

U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem said Friday during a news conference in Minneapolis that she had discussed the incident with Trump and suggested the president could change his mind about holding off a federal enforcement surge in the Bay Area if more violence occurs.

If they “don’t figure out how to protect our law enforcement officers and protect our Coast Guard members, that we would be forced to come in and protect those individuals,” she said.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement informed Alameda County Sheriff Yesenia Sanchez that the operation had been called off for the entire Bay Area, a nine-county region of about 8 million people,



D.C. National Guard members clean up the park around Fort Stevens Recreation Center, on Oct. 11, in Washington. News of the cleanup sparked a community debate over the presence of the Guard. **GARY FIELDS — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Sgt. Roberto Morales, a spokesman for the sheriff, said Friday.

That decision was in contrast to others made by Trump to send the military into Democratic-run cities over fierce resistance from mayors and governors.

The deployment of National Guard troops on the streets of Washington faced challenges in two courts on Friday — one in the nation’s capital and another in West Virginia — while across the country a judge in Portland, Oregon, was considering whether to let Trump deploy troops there. Deployment remains blocked in the Chicago area.

HARRIS

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of her book, “107 Days.” It looks back on her experience replacing then-President Joe Biden as the 2024 Democratic presidential nominee after he dropped out of the race.

She ultimately lost to Republican President Donald Trump.

In an interview with The Associated Press last week, Harris, 60, also made clear that running again in 2028 is still on the table. She said she sees herself as a leader of the party, including in pushing back against Trump and preparing for the 2026 midterms.

Asked in an Oct. 17 interview with AP whether she had plans for a 2028 bid, Harris said, “I haven’t decided. Sincerely. I have not decided. I may or I may not. I have not decided.”



Former Vice President Kamala Harris greets people before she speaks, Friday, Oct. 17, 2025, in Birmingham, Ala. **MIKE STEWART — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Asked specifically whether she still wanted to do the job itself, she used the past tense, saying, “It’s a job I wanted to do.” But she noted that the only way to do it “is to run” and win.

Meanwhile, political jockeying among Democrats for the 2028 presidential contest appears to be playing out even earlier than usual.

Several potential candidates are already taking steps to get to know voters in key states, including California Gov. Gavin Newsom, term-limited Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear and California Rep. Ro Khanna. Upwards of 30 high-profile Democrats could ultimately enter the primary.

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