

MEDIA ADVISORY



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Community Bridges WIC wins Best Practice Award for Excellence in Health Linkages, Program Promotion and Outreach

The California WIC Association awarded its Best Practices Award to Community Bridges WIC of Santa Cruz County. The local nonprofit received the award for its new model for reaching and serving area families.

Community Bridges found many innovative ways to promote WIC and to reach out to the underserved populations in the past year, including the efforts listed below.

Club Bebes is a program designed to promote breastfeeding in their community by creating a partnership with Sutter Hospital. Once a week, an informal group meets at WIC to support Spanish-speaking, breastfeeding mothers. The gathering is facilitated by an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) from Sutter Hospital or WIC.

For the second year in a row, the WIC IBCLC conducted several Breastfeeding Peer Counseling training classes during the summer for a total of 102 Spanish-speaking *Promotoras* from the community. The classes were conducted at WIC in the evening and on Saturday, so the students could attend all 20 hours of the training within a 5 week period. They loved it and were so excited about breastfeeding and so proud to earn their Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Certificate. Community Bridges now has added to the cumulative breastfeeding knowledge in the community in a very fundamental way – sisters and friends supporting each other.

After many years of dreaming of this opportunity, WIC and Watsonville Community Hospital formed a partnership to promote breastfeeding among Spanish-speaking women. WIC sends their Breastfeeding Peer Counselor (BF PC) to the hospital 3 times per week to go from bed to bed to visit postpartum women who plan to breastfeed. The Peer Counselor gives support and encouragement at a critical time, and then follows up with the client at WIC to provide ongoing phone calls and counseling for the many breastfeeding questions that come up for new mothers. Because the hospital does not have Spanish language lactation support services, this

partnership fills a significant need in the community, and will help increase breastfeeding rates even further.

In September of 2006, Community Bridges partnered with Second Harvest Food Bank in Watsonville to serve as a distribution site for fresh fruits, vegetables, canned goods and grains for needy families. Through the *Bread and Produce- Fresh Food for Families* project WIC clients can receive a bag of fresh fruits and vegetables and grain products. Second Harvest drops off the bags of food, and WIC staff offer them to clients throughout the day. Participants experiencing difficult circumstances can be referred to the Food Bank for additional assistance.

In October 2007, Second Harvest Food Bank added the Food for Children project to WIC services. This project provides families with a whole bag of seasonal fresh produce and a whole bag of canned goods. WIC staff love these projects because they can provide immediate help to families, and it also provides an excellent opportunity for staff to talk to families about new vegetables to try and how to prepare them.

Both of these projects are coordinated with the ongoing ID DAY Project which are days when the non-Spanish-speaking Mixtecan clients are scheduled at WIC. A third partnership with Casa De La Cultura Church in Pajaro brings a translator to WIC Watsonville on “Indigenous Languages Day” to translate for clients that speak indigenous languages of the Oaxacan region of Mexico.

Community Bridges has also done an outstanding job with the WIC Farmer’s Market project, The staff works extra hours every Friday from May to September to take an ISIS ready laptop and Farmer’s Market coupons out to an outreach booth at the Watsonville Farmers Market so it is easier for clients to pickup coupons and to use them on the spot. This innovative delivery system has made Community Bridges WIC one of the top WIC agencies with redemption rates over 78%.

Community Bridges is a human services nonprofit serving the Santa Cruz County community for over 30 years. Our family of programs include Meals on Wheels, Lift Line, Child Development Centers, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Live Oak Family Resource Center, La Manzana Community Resources, and WIC Nutrition Program.