

NORTH COUNTY SENIOR CONNECTIONS

*Increasing wellness and food security for
vulnerable seniors in North San Diego County*



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Rancho Santa Fe Foundation

Building community by increasing the effectiveness and impact of collective giving



The Rancho Santa Fe Foundation has convened Interfaith Community Services and Dreams for Change to collaboratively host four lunches each week served by a food truck at faith centers and senior mobile home communities in San Marcos and Vista.

The core of the North County Senior Connections program is based on the premise that good nutrition is the path to senior physical and mental wellness. The program focuses on healthy meals served to seniors, along with activities and programs aimed at reducing senior isolation.

Over a six month pilot period from November 2014 to April 2015, the North County Senior Connections program has worked to increase food access and enhance community engagement opportunities for **313** unique vulnerable North County seniors.

As a community foundation, the Rancho Santa Fe Foundation offers the Community Impact Fund, a unique charitable giving option that allows donors to give collectively to make the most significant impact on needs in the local community and region. The Community Impact Fund currently supports North County Senior Connections.



North County Senior Connections

6 Month Program Outcomes & Results

The desired 6 month pilot program outcomes & results are as follows:

1. Serve 2,500 meals to 200 unduplicated vulnerable seniors over the six month pilot program.

2,416 meals were served to 313 unduplicated seniors over the six month pilot period which fell just short of our goal of 2,500 meals. The short in meal service is due in part to low attendance at the Tuesday stop, sporadic attendance at the Thursday stop, and nine days where lunch was not provided due to holidays.

2. 70% of senior program participants will report that meals provided by the Senior Connections program have improved their nutritional security at the conclusion of the six month pilot program.

77% of the senior program participants reported that the meals provided by the Senior Connections program have improved their nutritional security. 18% reported neutral feelings.

3. 70% of senior program participants will report that socialization, supportive services and case management through the Senior Connections program have improved their quality of life at the conclusion of the six month pilot program.

77% of senior program participants reported that the socialization, supportive services, and case management improve the quality of their lives and 8.9% reported neutral feelings. 18.7% of clients served reported receiving case management services and 6% reported enrolling in Cal-Fresh nutrition program.

4. Provide a menu that is nutritionally balanced, incorporates local produce, and meets the unique nutritional needs of seniors, appeals to their palate and incorporates best practices of farm-to-table cuisine.

The NCSC menu is varied and nutritious. Developed with specific senior nutrition needs in mind, the NCSC food truck *Thyme Together*, has compiled a menu that seniors are happy to eat. Half of all of the fresh produce is purchased from local San Diego farmer's markets, and brought directly to the seniors via *Thyme Together*. The weekly special is the favorite menu item, representing the program's success in increasing food variety for seniors.

Addressing Senior Nutrition by Increasing Food Security

Each week during the 6 month pilot, the North County Senior Connections program hosted food truck lunches and supportive services at four different sites, including two faith centers and two senior mobile home communities. NCSC provides a menu of nutritional meal options cognizant of senior dietary needs and assists seniors wanting to connect to CalFresh benefits. At each lunch seniors can choose from seven standing items with a weekly rotating special. Entrees are accompanied with their choice of soup, salad or chips, and a dessert or fruit. Seniors have the option of regular or decaf coffee, iced tea or bottled water for their beverage. All meals are made to order allowing for seniors to make special requests.

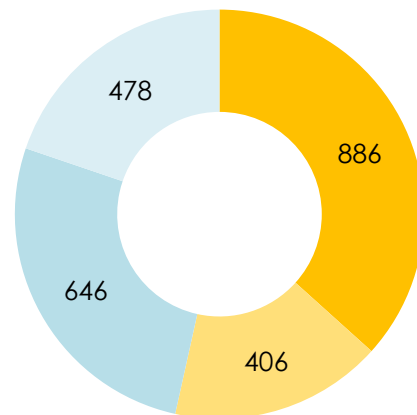
“It can be hard to get your lunch together as quickly as they do here, that’s part of what makes this program ideal.” – NCSC participant

NCSC MENU

Main Entrée	Number Served
Weekly Special	629
Turkey Sandwich	499
Chicken Philly	337
Soup and Sandwich	147
Turkey Burger	248
Salad with Chicken	221
Ham Sandwich	178
Chicken Tacos	157

TOTAL MEALS SERVED PER SITE

- Vista Village Mobile Home Park
- San Marcos Lutheran Church
- St. Francis of Assisi Church
- El Dorado Mobile Home Park



Addressing Senior Isolation by Increasing Socialization during Meals

The North County Senior Connections program is working to address seniors at risk for isolation by bringing the meal and program to them in a congregate location where they live and/or worship.

Each week a special program is presented to the seniors that encourages participation and dialogue among the attendees.

“So far, my favorites have been when bands come to play music, but we also had presentations on scams and drought-responsible gardening that I think gave really important information.” - NCSC participant

NCSC PROGRAMS

Chair Dancing
Genealogy Research
Brain Health
Healthy Lifestyle Tips
Avoiding Scams
Patio Gardening
Smart Phone Tutorial
Autobiography Class
Hawaiian Strummers
Blood Pressure Checks



Addressing Senior Wellness by Providing Access to Case Management Services

Some seniors are not comfortable admitting that they are in need. By partnering with Interfaith Community Services, the NCSC program allows for an onsite case manager to be present at every meal to build relationships and provide access to case management services before a crisis occurs. Interfaith's case manager has referred NCSC participants for their Minor Home Repairs program, Project CARE program, and the Senior Emergency Account.

18.7% of NCSC participants served reported receiving case management from Interfaith Community Services

Seniors want to be engaged, helpful and needed. They want to experience social connectedness and have a sense of belonging. Some Senior Connections participants are already providing informal care for their neighbors. NCSC is developing **caregiver support workshops** immediately after the lunch program. This support will be strengthened by bringing the informal caregivers together to discuss caregiving, educate them on available resources and encourage them to use the services that Interfaith Community Services offers.



Looking Ahead: The Future of NCSC

With the pilot phase complete, North County Senior Connections is looking ahead to determine the best strategies for expanding and improving the program.

New Partnership

The Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank will begin partnering with NCSC by offering a six week senior nutritional program that includes fresh produce for seniors to take home after their lunch. Through the Food Bank's SONDAS (Solving Obesity and Nutritional Disease Affecting Seniors) Program, North County Senior Connections participants will receive fresh, nutritious produce, nutritional education and the personal support necessary to make lasting, healthy changes to their lifestyles. Attending seniors receive nutrition-related handouts of the material discussed in class as well as various recipe cards that often coincide with the fresh produce participants receive at three out of the six sessions. The six week Senior Nutrition Program will be offered at each location throughout the year.

Additional Day of Service

To maximize the use of the food truck and to reach more vulnerable seniors in North County, the NCSC food truck, *Thyme Together* will begin offering a fifth day of lunch service! The new location, San Marcos United Methodist Church will host NCSC's lunch program on Fridays beginning in June.

Increasing Seniors Served

NCSC program staff is working on strategies to increase attendance with the goal of serving a minimum of 50 lunches a day at each location. Outreach and marketing strategies are being developed, including grocery gift card incentives. The program and menu offerings are being fine-tuned, based on survey responses from the seniors. San Marcos Lutheran Church, which had very low attendance, has been replaced by Palomar East Mobile Home Community, where 70 lunches were served on the first day!

About Dreams for Change and Interfaith Community Services

Dreams for Change www.dreamsforchange.org

Dreams for Change was organized in May 2009 to meet the needs of families and individuals adversely affected by the financial downturn. In 2010, DfC launched The Safe Parking Program and has served over 2,500 individuals fighting homelessness since then. In 2012, DfC expanded the Safe Parking Program to multiple locations and launched the nation's first mobile food truck, "The Fresh", which accepts CalFresh to meet the nutrition and hunger needs of the homeless.

Interfaith Community Services www.interfaithservices.org

Founded in 1982, ICS implements comprehensive programs to provide basic needs, social services, counseling, and economic development to empower the disadvantaged in our community. While ICS was originally founded by a diverse group of faith and community leaders, and is strengthened by the support and volunteerism of over 300 diverse faith centers, it is not a faith-based organization. Interfaith Community Services is North San Diego County's largest social service agency, providing a pathway towards self-sufficiency and independence for over 23,000 homeless and low-income community members each year.

Each year, Interfaith Community Services reaches thousands of seniors through a variety of services ranging from providing emergency shelter, social services and Vial of Life emergency information packets to completing minor home safety repairs. The overarching goal of ICS's Senior Services program is to build community among seniors while simultaneously enhancing the wellness and food security of North County seniors as they age in place.



Founded in 1981, the Rancho Santa Fe Foundation is an independent public charity and one of the largest community foundations in San Diego County. The RSF Foundation enables donors to create charitable funds, based on their philanthropic interests, which address a wide range of needs throughout San Diego County and around the world. The RSF Foundation also makes community impact grants that support local and regional nonprofit organizations and provides leadership that strengthens the philanthropic community in San Diego County. For more information, visit www.rsffoundation.org.

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