

✓ C.F. COMMUNITY ACTION BOARD RP 3/31/89

Helping people get the help they need

By JENNIFER KOSS
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A program to see that Santa Cruz County's poorer residents can tap benefits to which they're entitled is in the early stages, awaiting only the funding to get off the ground.

Christine Johnson-Lyons, director of Community Action Board Inc. in Aptos, said the "Public Benefit Advocacy Project" was inspired by Barbara Garcia, director of Salud Para La Gente health clinic in Watsonville, and is now a joint effort of the two agencies, which are seeking \$20,000 from the Greater Santa Cruz County Community Foundation. Salud Para La Gente would also kick in \$15,000 and CAB would contribute \$10,000.

The money would pay for two Public Benefit Advocates. The job of the advocates would be to make sure poor people had "full access to vitally needed public benefit resources to which they are legally and morally entitled," according to a written summary of the project.

The project came about after meetings between community groups and county agency representatives on the topic of prenatal

Network brings information to people

By LARAMIE TREVINO
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The Community Resource Network wants to know what North Monterey County residents want and it will show them how to get it.

The Monterey County network's goals are similar to those of Santa Cruz County's new public advocacy project. Since network representatives visited Pajaro on its information campaign last fall, they have compiled a bilingual publication listing more than 200 agencies that provide services to the people of Pajaro, who live in Monterey County but have close ties to Watsonville in Santa Cruz County.

With only a bridge separating

Pajaro and Watsonville, residents often become confused when they are referred to Monterey County agencies, most of which are located in Salinas.

"Part of our job is to tell them where to go for services," said Lynn Riddle, a CRN representative and Monterey County planning commissioner.

Yesterday, Riddle and Monterey County health educator Dolores Saluppo presided over a brochure-laden table at the Pajaro Branch Library for Resource Day, an event offered six times a year on a rotating basis through North County's libraries in Castroville, Aromas, Prunedale and Pajaro.

At each Resource Day, the

guide, the result of a 10-month effort funded by a \$1,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Monterey County, is available, and information tables are manned by two representatives from any of the 20 network members. Usually a bilingual person is on hand

When they go out into the community on these information ventures, CRN representatives depend on local library staff, such as Pajaro Branch Library aide Juliette Mendoza, to fill them in on residents' concerns.

"We get a good sense of what's going on," Saluppo said.

When business is slow, Riddle has been known to work the room and initiate contact with library patrons.

Network members also provide outreach at events such as the annual artichoke festival in Castroville and at the Aromas Day celebration.

Started a year and half ago, the network is made up of people who want to make sure the social-service system works for the people who need it, Riddle said.

Several months back, Saluppo not only located a walker for a woman in North County, she also delivered it.

The next Resource Day will be in May at the Aromas Library. More information about Monterey County services and resource days is available by calling 633-3373.

care for poor women, the summary states. It became clear that many poor people, and especially Spanish-speaking poor people, did not know what benefits were available to them or how to take advantage of them.

"There's definitely a need," Johnson-Lyons said. "And we're trying to put together something that would offer services for both North (Santa Cruz) County and South County."

The Public Benefit Advocates

would be based at "gatekeeper" organizations — at La Familia Center in Santa Cruz for North County residents and at Salud Para La Gente for South County residents. Salud Para La Gente would serve as the project's lead

agency and financial agent and would supervise the South County Public Benefit Advocate, with CAB supervising the North County position.

Johnson-Lyons and Garcia

wrote to Watsonville Mayor Betty Murphy, seeking a letter of support.

"This project is needed," they wrote, "to address the current lack of access to available public benefit programs for health, housing, public welfare, and energy conservation assistance."

Murphy responded with a letter stating, "As a strong supporter of health care, I am mindful of the necessity to provide the kind of services that this project offers in the Pajaro Valley."

Of Salud Para La Gente and CAB, she wrote, "Both have a long tradition of high-quality service and advocacy for the low-income community of Santa Cruz County."

The Public Benefit Advocacy Project also has the support of the county's health-services and human-resources agencies, which would provide technical assistance and staff training for the project. The project also has the support of such groups as the local League of United Latin American Citizens and the Legal Aid Society.