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# Sam Karp is moving on

## He'll head up nationwide food network

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STAFF WRITER

Sam Karp, who has spent the last 10 years feeding the hungry and stirring the political waters in Santa Cruz County, is taking his show on the road.

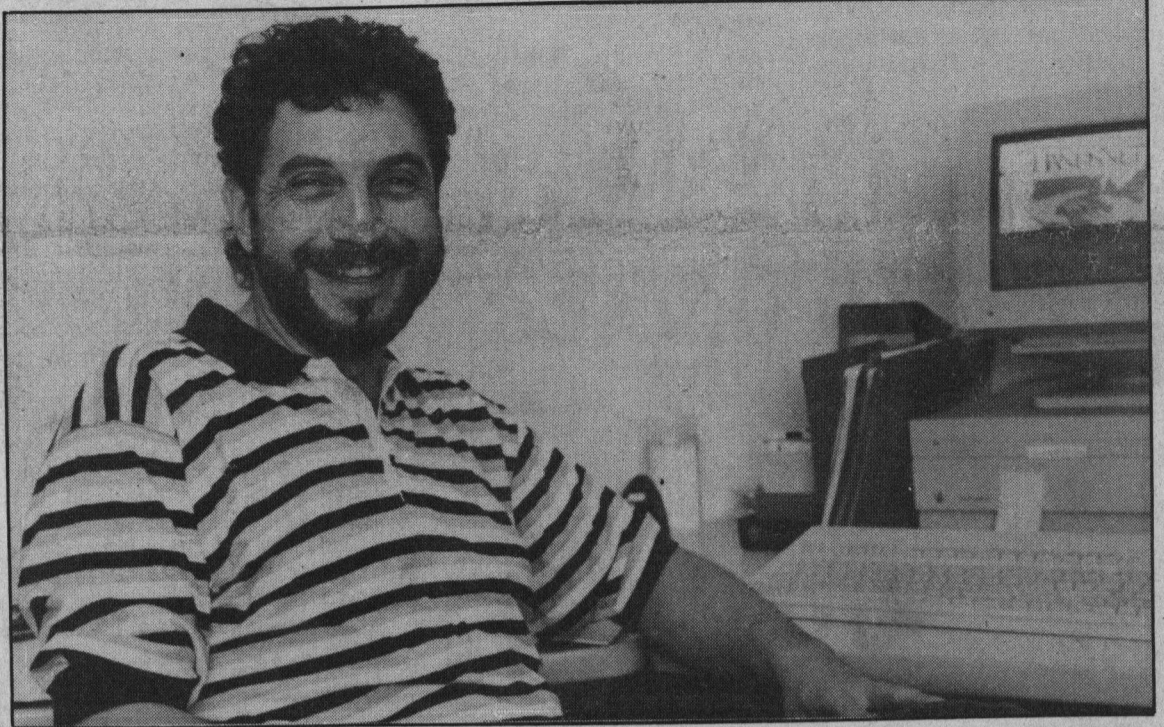
He will be leaving his post as administrator of Food and Nutrition Services this week to take on management of a computer network aimed at helping the hungry and homeless.

Karp, 41, has gained a reputation both for his own effective lobbying for programs helping the needy and for enlisting in the lobbying effort the people who receive the services.

For example, in 1981, when funding for seniors meals was endangered, Karp brought busloads of seniors to Sacramento to lobby the Legislature. The effort was successful.

"We learned that if you involve citizens," Karp said, "you could really make changes."

He also helped bring about a tax on entertainment admissions in Santa Cruz, the proceeds of which would go to local social-service agencies. A key to that was winning the support of the Santa Cruz Area Chamber of Commerce.



Diane Varni

Karp will use a computer system to help the hungry and homeless.

"We all agreed the services are important, not just for the people who receive the services, but for the quality of life for everyone in the community," Karp said.

And Karp feels his lobbying efforts have made a difference in the city of Watsonville, where the City Council is now giving money to some social-service agencies, although not Food and Nutrition. Karp thinks it won't be long before the city offers support to Food and Nutrition as well.

Now Karp wants to take his organizing skills to a broader audience. The HandsNet computer network he is man-

aging does just that.

HandsNet is an outgrowth of the effort to distribute the \$1.2 million collected in California as part of the Hands Across America fund-raising effort for the hungry and homeless.

The Hands Across America management turned to Karp for help in distributing the funds. Karp at first said he couldn't — he still had a full-time job with Food and Nutrition. He eventually relented, and took on the job half time, reducing his hours at Food and Nutrition to half time as well.

With financial and technical assistance from Apple

Computer Inc., Karp helped develop the computer network, which links food banks, homeless shelters and other programs that serve the poor.

The network has already proven its usefulness, Karp said. When Legal Aid of Los Angeles ran into a roadblock from federal officials over funding for the homeless, it put the word out on HandsNet, asking that pressure be placed on the California congressional delegation. Legal Aid was also seeking potential plaintiffs for a lawsuit against the government.

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## KARP

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Within one week, six potential plaintiffs were found around the state; but they were never needed because the lobbying effort requested by Legal Aid was so successful.

On a more day-to-day operational level, HandsNet enables food banks throughout the state to advertise their excess commodities. For instance, the Santa Cruz County Food Bank may have extra vegetables while a food bank in Southern California may have excess citrus fruit. A trade would benefit the hungry in both places.

HandsNet is now based in the same Aptos office building as Food and Nutrition. Karp said he may eventually base it in San Francisco — he's already made plans to move his family to Palo Alto, to ease his wife's burdensome commute to work at Stanford University Medical Center.

Karp said he looks back on his work at Food and Nutrition with a good deal of satisfaction. The agency had a budget of \$1 million and had 45 employees when Karp took over in 1978; today it has a budget of \$7.7 million and a staff of 189.

With the passage of Proposition 13 almost immediately after Karp took the Food and Nutrition post, the agency's funding was seriously threatened. He helped organize

social-service agencies and the people they serve, and helped persuade the Board of Supervisors to approve an alternative budget presented by representatives of non-profit agencies.

At the time, he recalls, conservative Supervisor Marilyn Liddicoat was one of his most vocal critics.

"She said, 'Your job is to feed people, not organize people,'" Karp recalled. He countered then, as he does now, that there's more to feeding people than handing out food. It's necessary, he believes, to apply political pressure to ensure the provision of such services.

"I think more than anything else," Karp said, "the acknowledgement that these issues are political issues and require political solutions is a satisfaction I'll always have about this work."

Such issues as feeding the hungry and providing care for the elderly have been "taken out of the realm of being viewed as charity, into a realm of being viewed as social justice," Karp said. "That may be the greatest achievement of our organization."