

Grey Bears celebrate 40th anniversary

By **STEPHEN BAXTER**

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IF YOU GO

ANNUAL HARVEST PICNIC

WHAT: Grey Bears will host a harvest picnic with a barbecue lunch, raffle and live music.

WHERE: Harvey West Park, 326 Evergreen St., Santa Cruz

WHEN: 11:30 a.m. Sept. 24

COST: Free for seniors age 55 and older

INFORMATION: www.greybears.org

"It's not just about the food," said Grey Bears Executive Director Tim Bratton. "There are some amazing human connections."

This month, Grey Bears will

SEE BEARS ON C3



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL FILE

Colin Morgan of Aptos drops off a computer and printer to Juan Martinez at the Grey Bears e-waste recycling center.

SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL FILE

Grey Bears Executive Director Tim Bratton at the group's facility on Chanticleer Avenue.

BEARS

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celebrate its 40th anniversary with a picnic at Harvey West Park in Santa Cruz. Since its first Harvest Festival meal for seniors in Santa Cruz County in 1973, the group's leaders have focused on food delivery and services for senior citizens.

Many of its volunteers also are retirees and seniors.

Fred Betz, a 70-year-old volunteer in Watsonville, delivers to 75 or more stops on Thursdays. He tries to talk with the home bound seniors on his routes — who are often thankful.

As he delivered a bag with a loaf of bread, one woman told him, "I just finished my last slice of bread. Thank you."

When he walked across a street and dropped a bag of groceries at another woman's doorstep, she told him, "Thanks, you saved my life."

Betz said he didn't "quiz" the woman about what she meant, but he enjoyed doing something in his retirement to help others.

"It's worth doing," he said.

Grey Bears started in the early 1970s when Kristina Mailliard, then 23, and her boyfriend, Gary Denny, shared fruits and vegetables from their garden with seniors.

After they met some undernourished seniors, they held a "harvest festival" meal and saw an unmet, ongoing need. The group became a nonprofit in 1976 as California Grey Bears —

IF YOU GO

WAREHOUSE SALE

WHAT: Grey Bears will have more than 1,000 pieces of glassware, crystal and art for sale.

WHERE: Grey Bears, 2710 Chanticleer Ave., Santa Cruz

WHEN: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday

DETAILS: www.greybears.org/art-glass-sale-this-sat-sept-7

thinking it would expand elsewhere in the state. Now, the group is in the process of changing the name to Grey Bears because it only works in Santa Cruz County and northern Monterey County.

Participants in the weekly food program must be 55 or older, and there are no income requirements. Drivers deliver dozens of bags to places such as the Circle Church on Errett Circle in Santa Cruz, and a senior center on Bay Avenue in Capitola — where seniors can collect them.

The group also has diversified into recycling and electronic waste — and it runs a thrift shop at its 3 1/2 acre property on Chanticleer Avenue. A repair cafe also recently started to help people fix broken electronics, appliances, toys, clothing, furniture and other items.

"That's what we do here — take stuff that people are throwing away and do stuff with it," Bratton said.

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