



County of Santa Cruz

COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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SUSAN A. MAURIELLO, J.D., COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

PRESS RELEASE

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HUMAN SERVICES LEADER ESPINOLA TO RETIRE

Cecilia Espinola, Santa Cruz County's Human Services director and its longest-serving department head, is retiring at the end of the year, the County announced today.

A Santa Cruz native, Espinola is known for her leadership of a department that serves thousands of County residents while navigating an ever-changing regulatory environment and providing leadership on issues that impact low-income residents, job seekers, foster children and more. Last year, the Department served 91,000 clients – one-third of County residents.

"I've been lucky to spend my career in a field for which I have a great passion and commitment. With our dedicated staff and community partners, we've been able to make a positive impact on the lives of our residents," Espinola said. "It's been my great honor to serve the community in which I grew up."

"It has been an honor to work side-by-side with Cecilia for more than two decades," County Administrative Officer Susan Mauriello said. "Her dedicated and creative leadership has served Santa Cruz County residents well, and she will be greatly missed both as a professional and as a friend."

As starting her career in 1986 as a departmental senior analyst, Espinola helped create an Adult and Long Term Care Division. After being appointed to lead the department in 1997, one of Espinola's first tasks was to hold a series of community meetings on President Clinton's welfare reforms. Under her leadership, the Human Services Department opened a South County career center and worked with Cabrillo College to establish accelerated credentialing programs and Fast Track to Work (now known as the Student Resource & Support Network).



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Espinola also steered the department through the 2002 loss of a local utility tax and the 2007-2009 Great Recession, made Santa Cruz County the third in the state to open a call center for clients and implemented programs to improve customer service, and signed up thousands of new enrollees under the Affordable Care Act. She has also implemented system improvements for foster youth, a process that will continue under a bill authored by California Assemblymember and former Santa Cruz County supervisor Mark Stone.

“Throughout her career, Cecilia has been a leader in creating positive change at the local level by engaging stakeholders and focusing on clients’ needs,” said Stone, D-Monterey Bay. “During my time on the Board of Supervisors and now in the Assembly, she has helped me and many others imagine what the system could be – a tool for social change and a critical ladder up to help residents of all circumstances reach the American Dream.”

Espinola is a past president of the California Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) and remains an active member, having served in a variety of leadership positions in the group. She is a member of the Bay Area Social Services Consortium (BASSC), has served on the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) Board, and is a founding commissioner of the First 5 Santa Cruz County Commission. She also served as a member of the National Association of Social Workers Blue Ribbon Panel on Economic Security and on the Advisory Council for the Center of Advanced Study of Aging Services at UC Berkeley.

Cecilia earned her Masters of Social Welfare Degree from UC Berkeley in 1983 and is the proud mother of two daughters, ages 24 and 27.

The Human Services Department offers a range of services to County residents, including food support, workforce development, In-Home Supportive Services and elderly care, foster care, child protective services, adult protective services, veteran’s services and more.