

New Solutions for Challenging Times



2010-2015 STRATEGIC PLAN

PUENTE **DE LA COSTA SUR**

The Community Resource Center for the South Coast

WHO WE ARE

Puente is a catalyst for inclusive new solutions and opportunities in our own rural community and beyond.

Puente:

1. Cultivates a vibrant and dynamic community that reflects and promotes the values of self-determination, self-sufficiency, social justice, and commitment to our natural environment, collective history, heritage, and community.
2. Provides comprehensive education and leadership development programs designed to transform lives and support residents to advocate for themselves and their communities.
3. Advocates for fair, equitable, prevention-oriented policies and practices in the areas of education, youth employment, housing, medical care, transportation, and food security.
4. Listens to you, our stakeholders. We take your trust seriously, and actively work to maintain effective programming, governance, and internal operations to ensure Puente's lasting presence for generations to come.

CREDITS

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Photo by Kerry Lobel

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OUR VISION

Puente is an integral and active member of our rural San Mateo County South Coast community—a community that is healthy, inclusive, and sustainable, with diverse populations that accomplish their highest individual and community dreams.

OUR MISSION

As the region's only Community Resource Center, Puente serves the San Mateo County South Coast communities of Pescadero, La Honda, Loma Mar, and San Gregorio. Puente both advocates for our communities and leverages resources that foster economic prosperity and security, and that promote individual and community health and wellness. We support local leaders and work together with our neighbors creating solutions for our diverse communities.

OUR VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Puente answers, first, to our South Coast residents of La Honda, Loma Mar, San Gregorio, and Pescadero. Puente respects and honors our collective history, heritage, and community. We believe in our community's capacity to turn dreams into action, and we believe that every member of our community deserves opportunities to learn and grow.

Our values and guiding principles apply to our work at all levels, inside our organization with staff, volunteers, and program participants as well as in all our relationships with our broader community.

NEW SOLUTIONS FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

From the Board of Directors

The South Coast of San Mateo County is a special place with unique opportunities and challenges for all who live here. Puente is an organization that serves those who live here by building bridges on the South Coast – bridges between people and the resources they need to survive and thrive here, between members of diverse communities, between residents and our spectacular environment, and between our community's past and our future.

This Strategic Plan is a bridge between Puente's history of continual evolution and a vision of the roles Puente can play in the future of the South Coast. The plan looks back with respect for the people of the South Coast who have inspired us to discover new possibilities, and forward with awe as we envision Puente's role in a South Coast where we can help ensure that all here share an opportunity to live and thrive in a healthy, just and diverse community.

Bridges might suggest leaving one place and arriving at another. In this case, we believe that our strategic bridge keeps us centered on the values that brought us here in the first place: a deep caring for all the people, the environment, and the history of the South Coast.

The Board would like to thank the Sand Hill Foundation for understanding Puente's need for a new strategic plan and funding it, the consultants who led the planning effort, our dedicated staff, and the members of the planning committee. We especially thank the people of the South Coast, who inspire us all to pursue this plan as we cross our next set of bridges on our journey, together, here in this unique place.

Sincerely,



Robert C. Johnson, Ph.D.
Chair, Board of Directors

How This Plan Was Developed

In 2009, with support from the Sand Hill Foundation, Puente engaged the consultants Nancy Ragey and Alfredo Vergara-Lobo with the purpose of facilitating a strategic planning process, and ultimately the creation of the Puente Strategic Plan. Nancy and Alfredo worked with a Puente planning team consisting of board, volunteers and staff members. During team meetings and a full-day retreat with board members and the entire Puente staff, all facets of Puente were embraced discussed and analyzed.

In preparation and prior to the all day retreat, Nancy and Alfredo generously conducted nearly 100 individual and group interviews. They held focus groups with current and former Puente staff members, program participants, community members and volunteers, board members, funders, and program allies to gather information about Puente's strengths, limitations, opportunities and challenges.

Further, the Puente staff conducted defined focus groups with participants from La Sala (gathering of farm workers), English as Second Language Classes, and Youth Staff. Additional data collection and analyses activities included review of relevant research reports and Puente organizational documents. This information helped determine pressing issues, informed Puente's direction and set priorities for the next five years.

The following strategic framework represents the major goals and strategic priorities adopted by the board. This report is the results of our planning activities, ones that will be undertaken with specific accomplishments that Puente will achieve by the end of the FY 2011 and 2012 program years.

Congratulations to all the Puente Strategic Planning group members. Although taking a great deal of collective effort, focus, time and most especially perseverance, Puente's Board members, staff and volunteers are to be acknowledged and thanked for a job well done.



Jeff Haas
Chair, Strategic Planning Committee

STRATEGIC PLAN

The Puente strategic plan has four equally essential components: community, transformation, advocacy, and organizational viability.

Community Puente cultivates a vibrant and dynamic community—within its own organization and for the South Coast—that reflects and promotes the values of self-determination, self-sufficiency, social justice, and commitment to our natural environment, collective history, heritage, and community. Strategies in this area aim for a “learning community,” from Puente’s services to its own organizational culture.

Transformation Participants in Puente programs transform their lives and advocate for themselves and their communities. Strategies in this area focus on education, jobs, and leadership development within Puente’s own organization and on the South Coast.

Advocacy Puente—led and driven by youth as well as adults—advocates for fair, equitable, prevention-oriented policies and practices for the South Coast in areas of education, youth employment, housing, medical care, transportation, and food security on par with the rest of San Mateo County. Strategies on this front seek to both mobilize South Coast youth and adults and partner with local, regional, and national allies.

Organizational Viability Puente assures effective programming, governance, and internal operations, and ensures long-term organizational sustainability. Strategies range from bolstering the board of directors to exploring the feasibility of owning the building that houses the organization.

COMMUNITY

Puente cultivates a vibrant and dynamic organizational community that reflects and promotes the values of self-determination, self-sufficiency, social justice, and commitment to our natural environment, collective history, heritage, and community

The individuals and families served by Puente face wide-ranging challenges compounded by the isolation that stems from living in rural communities, language barriers, and difficulties with negotiating new or changing cultural and social landscapes. Puente provides opportunities all those of different ages, races, and languages to gather on behalf of the community.

Puente believes that, along with access to physical and mental health services, youth and adults need the space to explore, honor, and integrate their physical and emotional health. We seek realistic and culturally diverse ways to incorporate wellness into Puente's programs and into our community's life, from activities to education to healthy foods, led by the community itself, its interests and needs.

Puente is committed to ensuring a wide variety of opportunities for staff and program participants to assume leadership roles within the organization and to support opportunities for professional development.

STRATEGIES

- 1) Offer holistic support services, integrating culturally appropriate activities that can help youth and adults take control of their own physical and mental health.**
- 2) Create an organizational culture that promotes shared leadership and ongoing learning for participants and staff.**
- 3) Work to create and integrate diverse communities.**

TRANSFORMATION

Participants in Puente programs transform their lives and advocate for themselves and their communities.

In 2010, Puente's South Coast Rural Literacy Program serves as the center for a unique collaboration with more than two-dozen volunteer tutors from the South Coast and professional staff provided by San Mateo County. Puente's educational programs, tutoring, and classes cover a range from literacy to homework clubs to GED studies to Chinese and other electives. Already, 15% of the Spanish speakers in this most rural and isolated area of the County are enrolled in Puente learning programs.

Puente tutoring programs and classes integrate both newcomers and longtime residents as volunteers, tutors, and students, building trusting and personal relationships as well as improving learning, skills, and leadership. Puente's programs also engage residents in the areas of health, wellness, and community building.

Learning opportunities abound outside of the traditional classroom on the South Coast, in the farms, businesses, and watershed where we can take advantage of training by local resource conservation experts, organic farmers, recycled material entrepreneurs, and bilingual instructors.

Childcare is provided for all programs as transportation (when available through our local provider, SamCoast) in an effort to remove any barriers to participation.

STRATEGIES

- 1) Design and implement comprehensive leadership development and education programs for adults and youth on the South Coast.**
- 2) Ensure leadership development opportunities within and across Puente programs.**
- 3) Infuse political education, action, research, and community organizing into Puente programs.**
- 4) Develop partnerships with educational and career development institutions that can help participants achieve their educational and career goals.**
- 5) Promote green jobs and better position the South Coast for long-term sustainability.**

Puente—led and driven by youth as well as adults—advocates for fair, equitable, prevention-oriented policies and practices for the South Coast in such areas as education, youth employment, housing, medical care, transportation, and food security on par with the rest of San Mateo County.

Many basic services that the rest of San Mateo County takes for granted are unavailable on the South Coast, things as simple as health care and public transportation, let alone a laundromat. Since 2008, Puente has created an intricate network of public and private services that support greater self-sufficiency for the region's residents, so that they don't have to travel as much as an hour for mental health counseling, youth guidance, or a food bank.

Puente has secured new County support and gotten more County staff posted at Puente to assist with enrollment in safety net and health programs, even in a time of reduced state resources. Puente has seized opportunities and created partnerships to bring jobs, small business opportunities, literacy programs, and parenting support to our isolated community.

At Puente we are in an excellent position to use our knowledge of South Coast needs to advocate for specific system reform policies for a more just distribution of financial and programmatic resources. This work must continue and it is best driven by a targeted policy generated by the community and for the community and shepherded by homegrown leaders, both youth and adults.

STRATEGIES

- 1) **Create and advocate for policies that improve the lives of South Coast residents.**
- 2) **Organize and mobilize youth and adults around campaigns to ensure their access to education, healthcare, employment, affordable housing, transportation and food security.**
- 3) **Partner with local, regional, and national allies to advance the quality of life for residents of the South Coast.**

ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY

Puente assures effective programming, governance, and internal operations, and ensures long-term organizational sustainability.

In 2010, the globalization of food and the nation's economic downturn have hit the South Coast especially hard. The increased demand for safety net as well as health and wellness services, along with Puente's increased reliance on funding from San Mateo County, require Puente to strengthen its fund development efforts. Puente's current lease with the La Honda Pescadero Unified School District expires in 2018, so planning for Puente's future infrastructure is in order.

Staff and board members have agreed that Puente should create a clearer leadership path and solidify its human resources, while recognizing that the board would benefit from expanded representation of Puente's constituencies.

Many stakeholders have advised Puente to develop internal processes to support demonstrating its programmatic impact as well as increase its capacity to communicate its results to multiple audiences. Puente's rural location makes it even more important to devise effective ways to communicate with program participants, stakeholders, and allies both within the region as well as in the larger community.

STRATEGIES

- 1) **Incorporate consistent data management, evaluation, and communication activities into all of Puente's programming.**
- 2) **Strengthen fund development efforts and pursue earned income strategies.**
- 3) **Explore feasibility of purchasing a building for Puente.**
- 4) **Strengthen the management structure and human resource systems.**
- 5) **Ensure an effective, engaged, and diverse board of directors.**
- 6) **Streamline Puente programs and services to fit within this strategic plan.**

KEY MILESTONES

Puente's 2010-2015 strategic plan reaches these milestones:

Community

- 50% of all community actions, from civil to agricultural to health-related developments, include balanced representation of local racial diversity, including traditionally disenfranchised populations, significantly increasing Latino voices and civic engagement. (by 12/2015)
- Three or more college-educated Puente alumni are engaged in some aspect of our South Coast's local decision-making systems and/or structures. (By 12/2015)
- 100% of elementary and 6th-grade students complete hands-on watershed instruction. (By 12/2010)

Transformation

- 15% of Spanish speakers in our region enroll in Puente's Learning Center programs. (By 12/2013)
- 60% of the youth enrolled in Puente's programs show marked improvement in school, secure a job, enroll in post-secondary school, or enroll in accredited vocational training, and 83% achieve literacy and numeracy gains of at least one level over a one-year period as measured by a pre- and post-program assessment test. (by 12/2013)
- 90% of the youth who participate in Puente's programs go on to college or vocational programs within two years of their high school graduation. (By 12/2013)

Advocacy

- All on the South Coast have access to affordable, healthy food. (by 12/2015)
- Our community has mobile, sustainable health delivery. (by 12/2013)

Organizational Viability

- Puente has a clear fund development and business plan. (by 12/2011)
- Puente's board of directors has 17 members with targeted skills and knowledge. (by 12/2012)
- Programs and services fit closely to this strategic plan. (By 12/2012)

MANY THANKS

Thanks to those who kindly shared their thoughts and perspectives during the Strategic Planning Process.

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FOCUS GROUPS

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SPECIAL THANKS

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