

# 2023 Organization of the Year

## Casa de la Cultura Center

Casa de la Cultura Center is a high-impact, grassroots organization which was founded in 1989 by Sister Rosa Dolores Rodriguez. It is a heart that beats for the farm working community, and is a hospital for the sick, a pantry for the hungry, and a haven for the weary. They are the only nonprofit in the area that specializes in comprehensive services for the hundreds of families who migrate through the Watsonville and Salinas Valleys to help grow and harvest the world's multi-billion dollar fresh food supply. Casa de la Cultura Center also offers classes on literacy, music, computers, ESL, nutrition, cooking, sewing, and much more are offered to the community.

There are free clinics run by culturally competent practitioners offering general care, diabetes treatment, counseling, acupuncture, and Healing Touch. Their "Casita de Salud" program offers health education and screenings in the fields and community.

Casa de la Cultura also offers free fresh, healthy food to the harvesting community, as well as emergency financial assistance for rent, utilities, and other basic needs which are provided to families who are constantly working hard to be self-sufficient. Their clients sustain the berry, lettuce, grapes, celery, broccoli and artichoke industries in this region, and they are responsible for harvesting crops that reach all of our tables.

Casa de la Cultura Center provides emergency assistance to families who have been impacted by an expensive housing market, the pandemic, fires and most recently they are working with residents who have lost so much during the flooding in Pajaro.

Each year they hold a special community event, Casa de la Cultura Center Christmas Posada, where businesses and community members come together to donate toys, food, and celebrate the wonderful and valuable community of Pajaro.

When Sister Rosa Dolores was growing up, her family traveled to and from California as migrant workers. In 1966, she joined the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. In 1989, Sister Rosa responded to a call to serve the people of Pajaro after the Loma Prieta earthquake. Sister Rosa began community organizing around infrastructure improvements and offering skills training to women in the community.

"I want others to be proud of who they are: their culture, their language, and to live their lives to the fullest." - Sister Rosa, Executive Director

\*Information from [casadelaculturacenter.org](http://casadelaculturacenter.org)