



JIM E. CHARLTON-FURLONG
REALTOR
CERTIFIED LUXURY HOME MARKETING SPECIALIST
EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS!
818.212.0638 Bailey Properties
santacruzsentinel.com

Sunday, October 15, 2017 » MORE AT [FACEBOOK.COM/SCSENTINEL](https://facebook.com/scsentinel) AND [TWITTER.COM/SCSENTINEL](https://twitter.com/scsentinel)

DISASTER RELIEF

County residents bring skills to Texas disaster relief efforts

David Rivas, Paul Garcia help at food banks in Beaumont and Houston

By Laura Shields

lshields@santacruzsentinel.com

WATSONVILLE » It's hard to watch natural disasters bash fellow Americans and feel powerless by the distance to use your skills to help.

Or at least that's what the staff at the Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County felt seeing coverage of the recent hurricanes that pummeled Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico.

Second Harvest depends on 3,000 volunteers to help 55,000 local residents meet their nutritional needs. Shipping food long distance to Texas didn't make sense. Instead, Second Harvest sent Feeding America two of its top workers to contribute to the country's recovery efforts.

"I basically jumped at the chance," said Second Harvest's Inventory Coordinator David Rivas by phone this week from

Texas. "It was going to be a great experience just to help out in any way I can with what's going on."

Rivas, 40, and fellow Watsonville resident Paul Garcia, 58, are finishing up their two weeks working at Texas food banks in Beaumont, Texas, and Houston. Garcia has volunteered at Second Harvest for two years. He has prior experience in relief efforts from coordinating donated supplies after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

Feeding America has five food banks in the affected area. It split up the pair to take advantage of their individual skill sets. Garcia was sent to the Houston Food Bank where he supervised crews of volunteers preparing food pallets for distribution. Rivas' focus was to organize supplies in the warehouse about 85 miles east of Houston at the

South East Texas Food Bank in Beaumont.

Rivas and Garcia were expected to return at the end of this week.

Even though the category 4 storm made landfall in late August, the recovery from Hurricane Harvey will take a long time. Houston recorded more than 50 inches of rain, followed by record flooding.

Rivas said he saw progress, even though the area remains in recovery. Both Santa Cruz County residents mentioned that the streets are filled with debris. The number of people wanting to help remains high. Rivas said he met people from other food banks, including ones from as far away as Oregon and Rhode Island. Garcia worked with many local volunteers, because nearby companies sent their employees

to work for a day. One day he worked with 15 children with Down syndrome — one of the best crews he's had.

"I just witnessed how people are bonding together here. They are putting everything aside and just helping each other," said Garcia. "I went down the streets, and neighbors are crossing streets and helping people pull stuff out of their house."

Donations continue to pour into the area, forcing the food banks to lease more warehouse room. In his final days in Texas, Rivas helped to move the excess supplies to the new space, giving the food bank more breathing space. He is familiar with all warehouse tasks having started as a volunteer at Second Harvest in 2013 and he progressed from driver to receiver to inventory coordinator. He said he's happy to jump on the forklift or tackle any task that will make things easier.



SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK SANTA CRUZ COUNTY — CONTRIBUTED

Watsonville residents David Rivas, left, and Paul Garcia contributed their food bank skills to the disaster relief efforts in Texas.

Relief

FROM PAGE 1

Garcia will continue building food pallets until his return to Watsonville. He said trucks continue to bring food, including deliveries from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Garcia said he really likes the work he's doing in Texas and back at Second Harvest, where he's treated like family. As a former heroin addict, he said he intends to volunteer as long as he can.

"All the bad stuff I did when I was an addict, I'm trying to turn it around by doing good. To make my karma right."

— Paul Garcia

"All the bad stuff I did when I was an addict, I'm trying to turn it around by doing good," explained Garcia. "To make my karma right."

Griggs

FROM PAGE 1

In their rowing and fishing adventures out in the kelp beds, however, they often saw and admired a 52-foot ketch that was anchored off the wharf during the spring, summer and early fall months.

The boys would row around this fine sailboat and make notes and sketches for their dream adventure to the South Seas. The "Tira" was sailed up to the Berkeley Marina each winter to avoid the usual winter storms, which gave the boys time to scheme about their planned adventure.

Grace (and perhaps Tara and Henninger as well) joined the local Sea Scouts to learn about seamanship, navigation and nautical chart, as well as ocean currents and wind patterns. They even did some research on where pirate treasure was reportedly buried in the South Pacific that provided more incentive.

Their plans for a South Pacific adventure were encouraged when they

met another high school kid who had actually sailed on the "Tira" the previous year.

Through conversations they learned how the sailboat was laid out and how the auxiliary diesel engines worked.

When the sailboat returned to Berkeley for the winter, the three boys began to plan for their South Pacific trip by gathering what they felt were all of the necessary supplies and gear. Keep in mind that they were 16 and 17 years old boys with good imaginations and large dreams.

They managed to find cases of dented cans of food at the local cannery, a beer keg to fill with extra water, tools for repair and a length of heavy rope and a large rock that had a special use. All they needed now was the "Tira."

Gary Griggs is a Distinguished Professor of Earth and Planetary Sciences at UC Santa Cruz. He can be reached at griggs@ucsc.edu. For past Ocean Backyard columns, visit <http://seymourcenter.ucsc.edu/about-us/news/our-ocean-backyard-archive/>.

IT *only* TAKES A SPARR.



Phase



ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT WILDFIRES.
smokeybear.com

