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News Release

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Freshly Prepared Meals to Return to Senior Nutrition Program *Kitchens to Reopen at 11 of 13 Centers with New County Funding*

In January 2015, participants of the Senior Nutrition Program will receive meals that are freshly prepared in community center kitchens rather than cooked in a central facility and delivered.

Hearing the concerns of seniors about the quality of the meals and the inability of the meal provider to include ethnic foods, Supervisor Dave Cortese requested that the County invest more in the Senior Nutrition Program that it runs with the City of San Jose to re-open kitchens at 11 of the 13 community centers so that visitors can have meals cooked on site. In the 2015 Budget approved in June, the Board of Supervisors allocated an extra \$400,000 to the program in ongoing costs for that purpose.

The San Jose City Council recently voted to amend a contract with Bateman, the meal provider, and accept the County funding to increase the total cost of the program to \$1.8 million. The County pays two-thirds of the cost of the program, which provides meals to about 800 daily.

The company said the kitchens could be ready by January 1, 2015, to begin serving meals at the centers.

“For some seniors, this is the only hot meal they have all day,” Cortese said. “We can now do a better job of providing fresh and nutritious food to our oldest residents.”

The 11 community centers -- Alma, Almaden, Berryessa, Cypress, Evergreen, Gardner, Mayfair, Roosevelt, Seven Trees, Southside and Willows – will be staffed with a cook and a site manager and support from volunteers. The meals are currently cooked at the Mayfair and Seven Trees centers and at a commercial kitchen in Santa Clara run by Bateman, the Senior Nutrition Program contractor.

Because of budget shortfalls, the City of San Jose in 2011 started having meals cooked at the three facilities and transported to others. Since then, many seniors have complained about the poor quality of meals provided at these sites, the limited food options and the loss of freshness and nutritional value. Seniors with transportation who receive meals at catered sites have been shifting to cook-on-site centers, which overburdens those sites and diminishes the attendance at catered sites. Some have stopped visiting the centers altogether.

For more information or to schedule an interview, call the Office of Supervisor Dave Cortese at 408-299-5030.