



# COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### BOARD SELECTS CRUZIO INTERNET TO EXPAND BROADBAND ACCESS

The County of Santa Cruz is thrilled to partner with Cruzio Internet to bring expanded broadband access to underserved and unserved areas across the county. This project will help bridge the digital divide by bringing low- and no-cost high-speed internet access to 4,000 homes throughout Santa Cruz County by the end of the year.

The project is being funded through a \$500,000 County grant using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, with up to 150 percent matching funds by Cruzio Internet. The funding will be used to expand the Equal Access Santa Cruz program, which provides needed internet resources to affordable housing developments and lower-income neighborhoods throughout the county, particularly for local students who need improved internet access to keep up with schoolwork.

“Reliable, affordable internet access is a basic right. We are committed to addressing digital inequality in our community and ensuring that all households have the internet access they need for work, school, healthcare, and more,” Supervisor Zach Friend said.

After the Board of Supervisors approved funding to expand internet access in April, the County engaged in a competitive request for proposals process. Cruzio Internet was selected and brings over 30 years of experience providing high quality reliable internet service to the Santa Cruz region.

Equal Access is spearheaded by Cruzio Internet, working with Community Foundation Santa Cruz County, the Santa Cruz County Office of Education and other local organizations. Among the persistent inequities that became glaringly visible at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of internet access threatened to put students, who already face obstacles to their education, even further behind during distance learning. Over 700 students and families in need have already been connected to high-speed internet.

“Equal Access has been a true partnership and this grant from the County is an invaluable boost to our efforts,” Cruzio President Peggy Dolgenos said. “We are fortunate that our community understands the importance of internet, especially to the generation of local residents now in elementary and high school.”