## The Californian

## Children's healthcare center in downtown Salinas offers glimmer of hope to vulnerable patients

**Jocelyn Ortega** Salinas Californian

Published 11:51 a.m. PT May 20, 2022 | **Updated 12:00 p.m. PT May 20, 2022** 

A new medical office in Salinas means travel is one less obstacle for families of chronically ill or developmentally delayed infants and children.

The non-profit Coastal Kids Home Care (CKHC) opened its new headquarters in downtown Salinas this week, bringing nurses and care directly to the homes and neighborhoods of those in need.

Parents like Pamela Bradley, whose four children have special needs and have relied on the care of nurses at CKHC for years, are expected to benefit from the Salinas office and clinic space.

"We've never had them this close and for me, it's a lifesaver," Bradley said. "My children are medically fragile and sometimes I can't even lift one of my kids up. For years, we've been paired up with really good nurses who help out."

Since 2005, CKHC has helped thousands of patients throughout Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Benito and Santa Clara counties. Most of the work involves nurses and other medical professionals making in-home visits to the most vulnerable young patients in need of care.

Tony and Christina Macias have a 10-year-old son Niko who is battling cancer. Tony says the new facility offers a glimmer of hope to young patients.

"The kids get used to going to the hospital and getting scared," he said. "But when the nurses come over, the kids' eyes just light up and they're so at ease."

The family says they would often drive long hours to medical facilities, as far as Stanford, to get Niko's lab work done. That is until they were contacted by staff at CKHC who offered to have a nurse to come to the family's home.













"When the pandemic hit, he'd already been through surgery, started chemo," Christina said. "We'd be stuck in traffic for hours when he was sick and couldn't just take him out of the house because now, we have an immunocompromised child."

Niko says having in-home care for the last two years has made all the difference.

"It was a little scary at first being sick, but my favorite part is having the nurses there because then we don't have to drive far for them to help us," he said.

The new building includes multiple nature-themed therapy rooms with artwork depicting beaches, the safari and farm life on the Central Coast to create a more fun and relaxed therapy and treatment experience.

Staff and services range from pediatric nurses, physical and occupational therapists, social workers, clinicians, counseling offices and new technology to assist workers.

CKHC has roughly 150 employees, and families have the option of getting clinical therapy inoffice or at home.

Maria Ceja, director of finance at CKHC, says the organization saw a great need for at-home care during the pandemic. This she says, inspired the organization to expand services in Salinas.

"During COVID, the amount of calls for counseling was very high," Ceja said. "This population seems to have more sick and vulnerable families and the nurses worked non-stop. We want to continue that work."

The new building was made possible through fundraising, a grant from the Central California Alliance for Health, and a \$300,000 donation from Silicon Valley couple Valeta and T.J. Rodgers. The couple says they were inspired by the CKHC's mission to help children.

"You hear stories about children who need help, children you don't want to be in a hospital, they could get an infection there," T.J. said. "Then it was COVID time, so they could get COVID there on top of all these other problems, but what happens when they're sick enough that they can't stay home alone?"

The building on Pajaro Street was been named in honor of the Rodgers, as a sign of gratitude. The office is open Monday through Friday, but staff says calls are taken every day.

More information at coastalkidshomecare.org

