



LOCAL NETWORK SUCCESS STORIES FFY 2007

This report is a statewide compilation of **Success Stories** from local *Network* projects from FFY 2007. They were drawn from the annual progress reports submitted in October of each year by all projects. The stories here are from Local Incentive Award, Non-profit Incentive Award, and Local Food and Nutrition Education contractors. They are arranged by type of agency/channel and then alphabetical within each channel. Contact information for each project is included. We hope they are useful to both our funded and non-funded *Network* partners to strengthen all of our efforts to improve the dietary and physical activity habits of low-income Californians.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSIONS

Fun with Fruits & Veggies

Currently, Madera County is one of the poorest counties in California (33% are poor by definition). In addition 13% of its children under 5 are overweight due in part to poor nutrition and inadequate physical fitness. Madera County Children and Families Commission have come to realize that obesity is a significant factor influencing child health in the central valley.

Adventures in Nutrition – Food Olympics was designed to reinforce the importance of healthy eating and physical activity through coupling creative games with fruits and vegetables, tasting a wide variety of fruits and vegetables and having fun while doing so helps to foster life-long healthy habits. Children participated in different activities such as “Melon Weight-Lifting and Coconut Bowling” after answering fruit and vegetable related trivia questions. When the children participated in all of the activities they received a healthy snack. Parents received a goody bag filled with nutrition and physical activity information, as well as a cook book that focuses on incorporating more fruits and vegetables into meal time. This event exposed children to a wide variety of fruits and veggies, some of which the children had never tasted before. All families who attended had a great time.

As with large events lasting impacts are difficult to track, however it was noted that children and their families who come into the Family Resource Center after participating in “Nutrition Olympics” more often than not have been bringing in healthier foods such as, fruits and 100% juice instead of the chips and sodas.

This event is expected to be repeated annually; striving to get more families and children excited about fruits and vegetables and provide them with nutrition information and tips as well as a safe and fun environment to learn, play and interact together with fruits and vegetables.

For more information, please contact Diane Sandoval at dgonzales@first5madera.net.

CITY GOVERNMENTS

Our Apple Dumpling Gang

Helping homeless youth access and make healthy food choices is an everyday battle at the Manila Community Center. Children living isolated on the peninsula or living with their families in one-room, ramshackle motels, lack access to fresh produce and cold storage for it. Shopping at convenience stores and discount drug stores, these children often exist on a diet of chips, sodas, and sweets. For some of these children, school lunch and the nutrition activities at the Manila Community Center are the closest that they will come to experience the patience, anticipation, and success that comes from preparing and eating something fresh. Giving these children this experience is something that everyone at the Center strives for every day, but it can be difficult to achieve this goal. Introducing unfamiliar or subtler tastes while keeping children unfamiliar with cooking, safe and orderly during the cooking process can be a daunting task, but we do have our successes. Last fall, due to a bountiful apple crop and a group of enthusiastic aspiring young cooks, we had a great experience.

Thanks to a benign spring with little frost, mild winds, and a surprising reappearance of bees: the apple crops in the Pacific Northwest were bountiful. Not only were the apples plentiful, but they were big and healthy. Backyard apple trees were brimming and often wasted. Our staff decided to tap this resource and located some apple trees available for picking. Staff, then arranged field trips to bring children to these sites and let them experience the joy that comes from selecting the perfect apple, placing the ladder just right to reach it, and picking it successfully without dropping or bruising it. The apples were then brought back to the Center awaiting their use.

Because they had picked them, the children really enjoyed eating them. Some peeled them and dusted them lightly with cinnamon and sugar (apple pie without the crust); others sliced them thinly and dipped them in peanut butter, others preferred to just eat them whole. This hardly made a dent in our store of apples, so I suggested making applesauce. This suggestion was met with resistance, because the children said that they disliked the pallid, tasteless canned and jarred applesauce served from number ten cans in their school cafeterias. I, however, had a different perspective. Memories of apples bubbling on the stove and a kitchen filled with the aroma of fresh apples was something I wanted these children to have.

Reluctantly, the children helped me assemble the sieve and we broke out the cutting boards. We washed the apples and everyone volunteered to quarter them (working with forbidden sharp knives always has an appeal for children). We cooked the apples and sieved them and spiced the applesauce. Everyone sampled the applesauce and really enjoyed it—in fact, we made batch after batch of applesauce. The children never seemed to tire of chopping, cooking, and running the apples through the sieve. Visitors on their way to the beach poked their heads into our room, enticed by the smell of cooking apples. Staff from other programs at our Center brought bowls to be filled.

The kids took applesauce and fresh apples to younger children, staying at the motel. (I even kept a bag of apples in my car and we handed them out to friends and strangers.)

The apples are now gone and the trees are dormant, but this experience left a lasting impression on our “apple cooks” and a measurable behavior change. Something happened to these children on their way to McDonald’s and the mini mart. Instead of buying sodas, I now see these same children purchasing apple juice on a regular basis. This experience also reinforced in our staff the need to provide the connection between food from the farm and the table. The experience was also a reminder that this connection works, because it not only brings freshness and deliciousness, but it makes the food “personal.”

It has strengthened our resolve to increase our garden and gleaning field trips, expand our own Center garden, and, of course, we anticipate another great apple adventure this fall.

For more information, please contact Beverly Prosser at Holley Pering at manilacc@suddenlinkmail.com.

Por La Vida Nutrition Education Program: Improving the Health of Latino Community Members

The Por La Vida Nutrition Education Program targets Latino community members of low income and acculturation in the City of Montclair. Among this population, there is often confusion over the dietary recommendations (e.g. guidelines concerning portion sizes) and many feel that food cost is a barrier to making changes in their everyday lives. In addition, many have limited exposure to fruit and vegetables that are not called for in traditional recipes and are unaware of ways in which these “foreign” foods can be easily incorporated into their diet. Safety (e.g. some feel unsafe exercising on their own in public areas) and monetary (e.g. gym membership costs) concerns serve as barriers to engaging in regular physical exercise.

Through bilingual Health Educators and Promotoras, the City of Montclair Nutrition Education Program (funded by the *Network for a Healthy California*) provides Latino community members with nutrition and physical activity education courses. The primary aim of the program is to increase participants’ consumption of fruit and vegetables and their overall physical activity. Promotoras facilitate the 16 session Por La Vida-Mujeres Decididas curriculum and they maintain a positive, ongoing rapport with targeted community members after sessions are delivered. Health Educators lead the cooking demonstrations, advanced nutrition classes, field trips to local farmers’ markets, and nutrition workshops at various community events. Participants frequently report that they have taken steps to increase their consumption of a variety of fruit and vegetables (noted especially when they bring snacks to share with other participants) and that they have attempted to modify their recipes to make them more healthy (e.g. replacing lard with vegetable oil when cooking rice). Many also report that they have taken steps to increase their physical activity (e.g. participating in a neighborhood walking group). Interestingly enough, some request additional materials at the conclusion of the sessions to send to their relatives in other countries.

The Por La Vida Nutrition Program has had a positive impact on community member participants. Many note that they are grateful that they have been able to participate in the program. The information they learn in the sessions and the relationships they establish with other community members (a support network, if you will) help them in implementing and maintaining positive changes in their lives (e.g. incorporating new/more fruit and vegetables into their diet, modifying recipes to be more healthy, engaging in regular, inexpensive exercise activities). Participants share their struggles and successes in influencing their families (including spouses and children) to adopt healthier lifestyles.

A recent program participant was resistant to utilizing the knowledge she gained from the sessions until she was diagnosed with diabetes. When presented with her altered health status, she felt compelled to draw on whatever resources and knowledge she was aware of, including what she learned from the Por La Vida Nutrition Program.

She has commented that she is most appreciative of the information and ongoing support she has received from the Por La Vida Nutrition Program because it has empowered her in meetings with health/medical professionals and in her own life. For example, in health/medical appointments, she feels that she is far more aware of particular questions to ask and critical information she should offer. In addition, she has commented that the Por La Vida sessions provided her with the information she needed to alter her lifestyle (more specifically, her eating and exercise habits).

The participant who was compelled to alter her lifestyle due to an unfortunate medical diagnosis (diabetes) serves as an excellent example for other program participants of the potential future diseases/ailments that might befall them if they continue to lead unhealthy lifestyles. The participant (as she exists now) also represents the positive—what they can become—empowered and in control of their lives if they choose to utilize the information from the program.

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COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

California State University, Chico
Contract #: 04-35438

Sierra Cascade Nutrition and Activity Consortium

The California State University, Chico (CSUC), Research Foundation's Sierra Cascade Nutrition and Activity Consortium (SCNAC) are somewhat unique among the *Network for a Healthy California (Network)* local incentive awardees. SCNAC functions within a university and therefore has access to college students for nutrition education and physical activities with more than thirty partnering agencies. More importantly though, are the involvement of the graduate students with the impact evaluation studies. With their assistance, SCNAC is able to obtain clinical markers as well as student survey results.

This past year, SCNAC conducted an impact evaluation study with middle school students in a rural school environment. The effect of the Harvest of the Month (HOTM) was evaluated. Middle school students are notorious for being difficult, especially when trying to elicit a positive behavior change. Surprisingly, our challenges comprised more from being an outside organization from the school district and testing and receiving approval for all instruments.

Challenges included gaining in-class access to students for the pre and post surveys, as well as the myriad tasks of developing and field testing the data collection instrument, obtaining parent and district level permissions for the evaluation, and the completion of the many steps involved in obtaining CSUC Human Subjects Review Committee approval.

The results of this impact evaluation are noteworthy given the difficulty in promoting positive behavior change among middle school students.

Participating teachers were surprised by the enthusiastic student participation (and surprised by the student's enjoyment of the produce) in our HOTM activities, especially their positive response to the tasting of the spinach and broccoli. These middle school students were excited to try the produce and indicated that they enjoyed the food tastings.

A tremendously positive outcome of this program has been the relationship building with Thermalito Union School District administrators and teachers. As an example, at the beginning of the school year one elementary principal was resistant to the implementation of the SCNAC program in her school. In May, however, she shared her enthusiastically supportive comments for the SCNAC program with the school staff and stated her wish that SCNAC would be back in force for the upcoming school year. Our consistency in program delivery, effective communication, and creativity in promoting healthy diet and activity lifestyle patterns among school students were attributes she was impressed by and valued.

For more information, please contact Cindy Wolff at cwolff@csuchico.edu.

East Los Angeles College
Contract #: 05-45507

Spectacular Seniors Show Healthy Lifestyles Aren't Just For Kids

The nutrition education workshops for the seniors at Beverly Hospital under East Los Angeles College site who participated in this program were from fixed or low income, and some of them had limited access to transportation. Some of the seniors lived alone and were experiencing new challenges to maintaining healthy body weight, mobility, and strength.

Attendance was very good, with most seniors who attended the nutrition education workshops at Beverly Hospital and only missed the workshops if they had another obligation. Those without personal vehicles took public transportation and assisted ride vans to attend the workshops. Lesson plans included a workshop format and discussions included USDA food guide pyramid recommendations, nutrition label reading, and understanding dietary claims, options at fast food restaurants, and the health and community benefits of supporting their local certified farmers markets. Healthy taste tests conducted at the end of each workshop were wildly popular among the seniors and were excited to try everything and enthusiastically pledged to try making the recipes at home.

The seniors who participated in nutrition education workshop at Beverly Hospital were very enthusiastic about learning how a healthy diet would improve the quality of their lives. As students, they were very savvy consumers of both products and information. On the last day of the session, Happy Birthday with promotion of fruits and vegetables was sung to one of the seniors. It was just a wonderful end to a wonderful series of nutrition education workshops with the enthusiastic seniors.

Collaboration with the Senior Center of Beverly Hospital for the seniors will continue for the next grant year. The woman who directs all the senior programs is a very enthusiastic supporter of the goals and objectives of the *Network for a Healthy California*.

Family Friday

Target audiences who participated in the K-4 and K-5 After School Nutrition Program and the Summer School Nutrition Program at multiple sites were low-income elementary school students and their families.

Joseph Gascon Elementary School, one of the participants of the K-4 After School Nutrition and Summer School Program, hosted a *Family Friday* during the summer session. Parents and family members were invited to attend the nutrition program with their children. Parents learned about nutrition, physical fitness and participated in taste tests.

The cafeteria was decorated to show how family mealtimes can be fun, delicious and enjoyable. Parents and children participated in cooking or assembling of nutritious food items. At the end of the program day, parents were encouraged to ask and share any questions or topics related to nutrition and physical activity. Recipes and incentives were distributed at the end.

The attendance of the K-4 and K-5 After School Nutrition and Summer School Program was great and parents were eager to learn and ask questions. They shared about reducing soda consumption at home, increasing fruits and vegetable intake, shopping, cooking and eating with their kids, and exercising during commercial breaks.

Educating parents and family members of students of the K-4 and K-5 After School Nutrition Program and the Summer School Program influenced healthy food choices and behavior changes at home. Continuation and expansion of this promotion will be to include the Parent and Teacher Association and may be a great step in getting more parents involved.

Breakfast Anyone?

Nutrition education activities implemented during the early morning hours for students at the Teen Parent Program and Roosevelt High School indicated that students were not aware of how important it was to have a healthful breakfast. Teachers were not pleased with their school's breakfast menus and this compounded the problem of having a healthful breakfast.

The importance of healthful breakfast for students who enrolled in the nutrition education classes/activities at the Teen Parent Program and Roosevelt High School was incorporated into the curriculum, and provided the students with great examples of healthful breakfast by means of handouts and food demonstrations. Furthermore, students were better informed on how simple it was to incorporate breakfast into their busy schedules. Eating breakfast isn't always a practiced behavior and trying to create many various meals that are culturally appropriate was difficult. All students were asked what they would like to have for breakfast. It provided a means by which the lecture (lesson plans) was based on what constituted a good meal and what didn't. The information also provided with what students were familiar and gave the insight into family practices.

Food demonstrations provided to the students at the Teen Parent Program and Roosevelt High School had a different response than at the beginning of the year. Students seem more concerned with breakfast items provided to them at the school, and readily knew what was healthy and what was not. Many times, students would bring with them fruits to help improve the nutritional content of the meals that they ate during the day. Students actively participated in choosing food demonstrations menus, which showed them the idea of eating breakfast was no longer a foreign concept but a burgeoning one.

Based on the information gleaned from the previous year and coupled with teacher participation at the Teen Parent Program and Roosevelt High School, healthful breakfast will be a focal point for discussion with menu planners for appropriate changes to take place.

For more information, please contact Manjit Kaur at manjitkaurjs@msn.com.

Caught You Eating Healthy

Walking around during the students “nutrition break” *Network* staff noticed that they didn’t see much nutrition going on. What they did see was a lot of chips, artificially sweetened fruit drinks, and baked goods being consumed as snacks. It was very rare to see students eating fresh fruits and vegetables or drinking water. Even teachers made comments about how frustrating it was to watch students consume such unhealthy snacks.

One of the *Network* activities was to meet with the Student Council group. Staff proposed the idea of conducting a “Caught you Eating Healthy” activity during nutrition break. The students were very excited about being in charge of giving out raffle tickets to students they “caught” eating a healthy snack. The examples of healthy snacks they were given were: fresh fruit or vegetable, 100% fruit juice or water. The Principal made the announcement that the Student Council was going to be on the look out for students eating healthy. The classroom that collected the most raffle tickets would win a fruit platter for their classroom. The individual students who turned in raffle tickets would also be entered into a drawing to win a walking field trip to the local Farmers’ Market. The Student Council is now excited to conduct more “Caught you Eating Healthy” activities throughout the year.

Now, when staff walks through the campus they notice more students eating fresh fruits and vegetable. Teachers have reported that students are excited to brag about what healthy snack they brought to school that day. Students are asking their parents to buy them more healthy snacks. One first grade boy ran to his backpack to see what his mother had packed him for a snack. When he pulled out the bag of potato chips I heard him say “Why did my mom give me chips? I asked for an apple.”

The Student Council is already busy planning their next “Caught you Eating Healthy” event. The school environment as a whole has changed. The lead teacher signed up to teach an after-school “Healthy Cooking” Class. Another teacher included the preparation of a healthy snack as part of her after school physical activity class. For Mother’s Day, one of the teachers had her students make fruit bouquets and sent them home with them. The great things that have happened at Anderson Elementary School show *Network* staff that all they need to do is give the teachers and students some suggestions and tools to help create a healthy school environment and they can build upon that momentum. Staff is looking forward to seeing what other great activities take place in their schools. They have a lot of confidence in their teachers and students and believe they will have even more success stories to report on in the coming year.

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The Regents of the University of California, San Diego
Contract #: 06-55122

Nutrition Link

Health literacy, or “the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions” is a challenge faced by low-income populations and can contribute to poor health behavior choices.

The Nutrition Link website is a key vehicle of the school-based nutrition education curriculum. Technological access to health information or rewriting existing health materials at a simpler language level are recognized strategies for addressing health literacy issues. In order to maximize both the usability and instruction capacity of the website, a consumer study was conducted in spring 2007.

The results of the consumer study have provided rich feedback on a wide variety of topics, from text size to California website accessibility standards. This information will provide valuable guidance on revisions to the organization and content of the website for the benefit of teachers, students, and parents alike.

In Year 2, study results will be regularly reviewed against the progress of the proposed revisions to the website. Nutrition Link will seek to continue soliciting feedback from website users, possibly incorporating ongoing efforts or vehicles for input on the website itself. In addition, we anticipate that the success of these changes will be reflected in an increase in traffic to the website, as measured by page views, hits and web sessions, with the potential to positively impact the health literacy of our target audiences.

For more information, please contact Kari Herzog at kherzog@ucsd.edu.

San Diego Community College District
Contract #: 05-45532

Integrating Nutrition Education with English Language Instruction for Adult Immigrants

For the last five years, the San Diego Community College has been developing nutrition education curriculum to combine with English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction for adults acclimating to a new culture. Challenges, in addition to acquiring a new language, include becoming familiar with American customs of shopping, available foods, distinguishing unknown foods as more healthy than others and helping their children withstand the peer pressure of other children in the dominant American culture. The audience adult schools serve are recent refugees, legal and undocumented immigrants, low income families who usually have little schooling in their own countries.

Up until the time that the “Eating Well, Living Well” lessons were disseminated to adult schools, nutrition education that was required for adult immigrants in order to be eligible for nutrition assistance, was difficult for a limited English speaker to understand. There was unknown vocabulary, the concepts that were presented was more knowledge based (calories, serving size) than skill-based (practical strategies for healthy eating). Adults politely sat through the presentation without understanding the information that was given. Some nutrition education was delivered in the native language of the clients; but if an Arab immigrant attended a class in Spanish, again understanding was limited.

Adults attending adult school classes to learn ESL can learn about nutrition in English at their level of understanding. In addition the lessons teach very practical skills such as using pictures to create balanced meals; turning the cutting board over to prevent cross-contamination of foods; how to introduce new vegetables to children to overcome reticence to try foods that are foreign to them.

When surveyed, adult school students indicate that nutrition is a topic of interest and importance to them. They enjoy the interactive lessons and teachers are commenting about the changes in eating habits that they observe when students bring food to class for a party or snacks for break-time or lunch. It is very difficult to measure the extent of the changes that have occurred as a result of this nutrition education for limited-English speakers because the tests that have been developed are not appropriate for the limited English speaker. But teacher observation and reports in “broken” English from the students themselves tell us that the “Eating Well, Living Well” lessons are making a difference in the eating habits of immigrant families.

All of the work done by the “Eating Well, Living Well” project are on its website <http://www.sdcoe.net/eatingwell/>. Teachers and nutrition educators all over the world can access these materials and replicate the project.

For more information, please contact Nancy Hampson at nhampson@sdccd.edu.

I Can't Believe You Ate the Whole Tomato

Introducing children to the idea of a healthy snack can be challenging in and of itself. This challenge is exacerbated by the food service distribution center snack choices, where many of the low fat choices have an overwhelming amount of sugar to replace the lower fat content in the snack. Additionally, often healthier choices cost more than the allotted 60 cents cost per child for snack.

To address these issues, Sonoma State University partnered with the food bank to ensure there were always plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables for snack. They began a new snack program introducing the "MyPyramid Posters" and the "Color My Plate" educational materials prior to snack. Sonoma State University staff took field trips to local farms to educate the children on where their food is grown. One afternoon staff picked up a crate of tomatoes from the food bank. They put the sliced tomatoes out for snack. Staff was not sure what the response would be. They got great reviews! The children responded with "This was the best snack ever," "We should have these every day," "Can I have more?" "I never knew you could eat tomatoes raw." They ate a whole case of tomatoes!

The program decided to try something new. Staff developed a working relationship with the local food bank. Program staff visits the food bank once a week to pick up fresh fruits and vegetables to help supplement the snack program. Children now receive a variety of healthy snacks. The children ask for fruits and vegetables rather than a bag of chips. Before the children eat their healthy snack they now identify the type of food they are eating. All eight school sites have developed a "Snack Chart" incorporating the food groups and colors representing the food categories and vitamins associated with the food color group. The program expanded the snack program to include a food and waste cycling process. Each site created three bins, one for trash, one for recycling, and one composting their food. Children now learn about the food groups, the environmental impact of waste, and are aware of where their food is grown and how eating healthier foods impact their body.

The next steps are implementing healthier food choices during school celebrations and events. Sonoma State University staff has plans to meet with the School Wellness Committees, School Site Councils, and Parent Clubs. They also want to offer additional nutritional technical assistance to teachers and staff, and become a healthy model for the whole school. The program offers healthy snacks and food during after school and evening family programs as a model of how you CAN incorporate fruits and vegetables into every meal.

For more information, please contact Julie McClure at julie.mcclure@sonoma.edu.

COUNTY OFFICES OF EDUCATION

Service-Learning at Rock la Fleche

Students who attend Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE) court and community schools are typically facing serious personal, academic and familial challenges. Some live in foster care and are facing expulsion from their home school community while others live with family disintegration, incarceration and drug use and abuse. Most students attend court and community schools for a rather short time (one month to one year) and almost all of these teens function slightly too severely below grade level. It is into this environment that program coordinators and teachers try to promote messages of nutritious eating while at the same time acknowledging that these young people have many other, seemingly more important things to worry about.

Service-learning offers a model that helps students to understand the “why” of their learning through practical application of acquired skills and innate abilities. This approach integrates academics with service to the community and involves a high level of planning, preparation, and reflection for and with students. These processes invite students to have a voice in how and whom they serve and establish a level of expectation that calls for young people to operate as citizens who are responsible for and obligated to make changes and lasting improvements in their communities. In the ACOE Health and Nutrition Education Program service-learning took shape as students addressed the community initiative of childhood nutrition. With support from a BANPAC mini-grant, students at Rock la Fleche worked with partner Oakland Based Urban Gardens to plan and offer 5 garden-based nutrition workshops for 60 Oakland elementary school students. They videotaped their workshops and produced a high-quality DVD containing their reflections on their success in connecting with children and educating them about healthy eating. The real success of this project is the excitement with which students approached the work. They planned the workshops carefully, maintained precision in selecting the images and narratives to record and performed their roles with a strong sense of ownership. Their pride is clearly reflected in the finished project.

Using service-learning as a bridge to teach nutrition has become a part of the culture of Rock la Fleche and is an expected and welcome component of the annual academic program. As students teach others they learn themselves. It seems that the high school students are even more concerned and motivated to act regarding the issue of nutrition and healthy eating when the target is a young child more than when their own eating habits are under consideration. They feel like models and readily assume the responsibility to take care of young children.

The now standard program planning approach is to allow a new group of students and teachers to brainstorm the details of the 2007-08 annual project. Childhood nutrition will continue to be the organizing context. It will be exciting to see what creative ideas students explore during the winter planning phase.

For more information, please contact Toni Adams at vtoni@acoe.k12.ca.us.

Extending the Vision

Tennyson High School is home to the THE (Tennyson High Education) Farm and has a Youth In Focus grant from the Public Health Institute as well as funding from the San Francisco Foundation to support THE Farm. Alameda County Office on Education (ACOE) has been working to change eating behaviors of students. The three students who participated in the action research project were interviewed and when asked if their eating had changed since they started the program, they all said, “No, I can’t tell you the last time I had a soda, and I don’t eat chips EVERYDAY after school, but no my eating habits haven’t changed.”

The following is an anecdote reported by the Nutrition Site Coordinator at the high school.

Leadership high school students religiously reward fellow classmates with candy for participating in various school activities. Prompted by their teacher, two leadership students approached me one day asking for “healthy alternatives” that they could give out in place of candy. None of the alternatives from fruit to backpacks to gift cards were well received by them.

Frustrated, I asked them why they believe it is acceptable to reward their friend with things that are ultimately hurting their bodies. How many people with diabetes did they know? I could tell I was getting through to them but they remained stuck to the idea of candy being the only motivator that could possibly work. I charged them with the responsibility of thinking up a better alternative.

They ended up giving away strawberries and pineapple; rewards their classmates coveted. I overheard a conversation with the leadership students “What?! Why are you guys not giving out candy?!” another disappointed student asked. Her classmates' response was laden with the righteous attitude of a seven year old, “Because we are not giving out things that are bad for people anymore!”

ACOE is seeing change, one student at a time. The Synergize group did an action research project on how closed campus would challenge their food system on the high school. This year now that campus is closed, they are going to survey their peers to find out what’s going on at lunch time. This idea of youth becoming knowledgeable about their community food systems is powerful, because they are going to be our leaders tomorrow. They will lead us to success.

For more information, please contact Christine Boynton at cboynton@acoe.org.

Roosevelt Elementary Named One of the Healthiest Schools in the Nation!

Roosevelt Elementary *Corterback Club* emerged from one principal's fight with the price of inactivity amongst school-agers. His determination to battle the childhood obesity problem began with his own school site. Fresno County has some of the highest obesity rates in the State with over 30% of our students considered overweight. The principal partnered with Fresno County Office of Education's (FCOE) Wellness and Nutrition Program and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation to take a giant step in getting kids on the right track to lifelong health. FCOE provided on-going nutrition and physical activity training as well as lead their NAC groups. The biggest challenge for the principal was to get buy-in from staff, parents, and students as he went about overhauling the Roosevelt campus including eliminating "junk" foods in the classrooms. His goal was to increase the physical education (PE) minutes on campus and get his students eating more fresh fruits and vegetables through the Harvest of the Month Program (HOTM).

With the combined efforts of FCOE staff, Roosevelt staff and parents and the addition of such programs as *Run Across America*, *HOTM*, *Fun Fit Friday's*, and daily physical education and nutrition education throughout the entire school day (including after-school), this school was victorious! So victorious that Roosevelt was featured on the second season opener of the series *Let's Just Play, Go Healthy Challenge* on Nickelodeon. The valley children impressed the producers because they became agents of change in their community. In September, Roosevelt Elementary was named one of only 26 schools in the nation as one of the Healthiest Schools in American by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. This kind of action has inspired, in a friendly competitive way, a generation of fellow peers from residing schools to change their lifestyles and develop a healthy, active lifestyle. Roosevelt also began an on-site Wellness Council made up of 4th-6th grade students and a Garden Council consisting of 1st -3rd grade students. The Food Service Director played a major role in creating a healthy and nutritious school environment. The Director swapped out their typical cafeteria offerings for whole grain breads, low fat cheese, daily fresh produce and she eliminated sugary cereals as breakfast.

There are 15 school sites within Central Unified School District. The Superintendent has seen the impact that taking simple steps on a school campus can really make a difference. Students look forward to daily PE and the monthly taste testing with our HOTM program. Food Service has seen an increase in sales since they started offering healthier breakfast and lunch meals and parents aren't sending in the sugary cupcakes and soda for classroom parties anymore.

Other principals in the district are being asked by the parents to take the same steps that Roosevelt has taken to their school site as well. More schools have also signed up to participate in the HOTM program and inquired about our Nutrition Workshops, for their staff.

For more information, please contact Michelle Roman at mroman@fcoe.k12.ca.us.

Humboldt COE Success Story

One of the activities outlined in Humboldt County Office of Education (COE) scope of work is to provide nutrition education to 4th and 5th grade students by recruiting teachers to participate in Power Play! During the first year of the contract it was challenging to recruit the 46 teachers Humboldt COE had targeted. Humboldt COE staff was able to recruit 13 teachers.

In the spring of the first year of the contract, Humboldt COE staff met with the teachers to gain feedback on the program. The majority of the teachers expressed an interest in participating in the Harvest of the Month (HOTM) program that currently is offered to K-3 grade level. As a result, Humboldt COE staff developed a plan to integrate HOTM in the 2006/07 contract year. Humboldt COE held a teacher training in August where they rolled out the above mentioned plan to 4th and 5th grade teachers. The training was well received and ultimately the number of participating teachers doubled from 13 to 26 during the 2006/07 year with approximately 90% completing a minimum of five activities. Informal survey results showed that the students as well as the teachers are enjoying the Power Play! /HOTM program as well as the supplemental activities provided. By the end of this contract year they had 32 teachers signed up to participate in Power Play! during the 2007/08 school year.

As a result, approximately 950 9-11 year old students are receiving nutrition education on a regular basis. Additionally, the impact evaluation conducted with this target group showed an increase in preference for 15 of the 19 fruits/vegetables. Additionally, there was a significant increase in knowledge around fruits and vegetables.

Humboldt COE will continue to recruit 4th/5th grade teachers and enhance the program as needed.

For more information, please contact Linda Prescott at lprescott@humboldt.k12.ca.us.

LACOE Coalition: Making a Difference through Collaboration!

Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) Coalition subcontracts with five school districts in LA County and LACOE's own Division of Alternative and Special Education. They share the same common goal, which is to help the students and their families live a better, healthier life. The rates of overweight and obesity in LA County are higher than the national and state average and continuously rising. One of the biggest challenges facing the target audience is having less access to affordable and healthier food choices, which contributes to negative outcomes such as obesity and low student achievement.

Some of the challenges faced in trying to meet the Coalition objectives include staffing and programmatic changes. Many of the nutrition education activities that were planned for this year, such as provider and consumer nutrition education trainings and Harvest of the Month (HOTM) taste testing, couldn't be fully executed due to the delay in filling full-time Nutrition Coordinator positions. Four of the six subcontracting districts weren't able to fill these positions until the middle or end of the 2006-2007 school year. The greatest success for the Coalition has been filling the Nutrition Coordinator positions and the increased administrative support that was observed as a result of their hard work and collaboration. They've built great rapport with school staff, which makes it easier to integrate nutrition education activities during regular classroom activities. Another program success has been gaining the knowledge and expertise of the new Coalition Director, Dr. Better Hennessy. She has many years of experience in promoting proper nutrition and physical activity and will provide excellent guidance and service to the Coalition.

Based on the nutrition education interventions implemented this year, overall student nutrition knowledge has increased at the participating sites. Overall feedback from teachers and administrators are positive. Teachers appreciate receiving nutrition education materials that are linked to the California core content standards.

LACOE Educational Programs is meeting the needs of their students by working closely with Special Ed. teachers to provide appropriate nutrition education materials for students with various developmental and cognitive disabilities.

Glendale Unified School District (USD) recently hired their full time Nutrition Coordinator and in a matter of weeks, she was able to meet with all the participating school site principals and encourage most of the teachers to sign-up for the HOTM program.

Inglewood USD held their first Annual Parent-Family Summit on June 16, 2007. About 700 people attended this event and participated in various health related and nutrition education activities. The Los Angeles News Observer reported, "In the nutrition workshop, parents examined food facts in order to plan meals for their families." The wish would be that "Nutrition Awareness" Workshops were always included in Inglewood School District's events targeting parents, teachers, students, and community members

Here are some comments from parents who participated in a Healthy Cook-off event at Lincoln Child Development Center at Redondo Beach USD: "It feels good to stay with my child, she's so happy when I can do things with her, and I'm so glad to participate." - Nora

"The salad is healthy, the ingredients were fresh, and it was so easy to make!" - Maria

"I like the togetherness." – Joanna

"I think it's important for kids to know about food; I really want to cook more with my child." – Daisy

At Rowland and San Gabriel USD, students participate in ongoing cooking in the classroom activities, which have resulted in positive relationships with *Network* staff. Students are frequently engaged in discussions about improving health and quality of life.

Nutrition Education classroom activities have had great success. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on integrating nutrition in regular classroom activities. The support and ongoing participation of school staff is integral to the continued success of this program. Use staff development opportunities to identify barriers to implementation of nutrition education activities in the classrooms and cafeteria and work closely with participating teachers and other school staff to find solutions. Collaborate more closely with food service staff where applicable to promote featured HOTM produce in the cafeteria.

Continue with skill-based nutrition education activities and engage youth and their parents in program planning and health promotion efforts in order to generate health advocates everywhere. Connect students and families with available resources in their communities and provide adequate opportunities to engage in healthy behaviors.

For more information, please contact Maryam Shayegh at Shayegh_Maryam@lacoed.edu.

Raisin' Awareness

The major challenge faced by the Merced County Office of Education (MCOE) is working with our Special Education student population. These groups of teachers need to have adaptive ways in which to teach their Special Education students about nutrition and physical activity, so that they may gain preference and knowledge for fruits and vegetables.

Students in the Special Education program range from infant to 22 years of age. They have varying degrees of learning levels (low functioning to high functioning) and have a long list of disabilities. This list includes autistic, emotionally disturbed, and severely handicapped to name a few.

The *Network* has provided an opportunity for the Special Education teachers to have access to Harvest of the Month (HOTM) nutrition information. Besides receiving a teacher newsletter and classroom nutrition resources, the program includes another component, classroom taste testing. As a side note to this story, it is quite common in Special Education to use food items as a reward. These food items might include pretzels, goldfish crackers, or in some cases, candy. Many of our teachers have been working to change this habit and/or the type of food being used for the reward.

One Special Education teacher was changing her classroom food reward to be raisins. Her class consists mainly of severely handicapped students who have mental retardation at varying levels. At the beginning of the school year, she introduced the dried fruit and showed that it had once been a grape. All of her students were very accepting, except for one. This particular student did not want to even try them. He would just look at them and say, no thank you. Each day she would offer the raisins and would receive the same response. In November 2006, the HOTM feature was dried fruit and the classroom received two story books about raisins and grapes. Mrs. Richardson read the story to the class and explained their reward of raisins even further. This one student still did not want to try them.

Each day she would still offer raisins as the reward and received the same response from the student. She had her classroom instructional aide work with the one student and read him the stories again at various times over the course of the year.

Later on in the year they were working on a class project and this student did something spectacular. The teacher and the classroom applauded for him, but she did not offer him any raisins. She knew this time his response would still be the same. He gazed at her with a look of question. She started to continue work on the project when he raised his hand and waited to be called upon. When she asked him what he wanted, he asked, "Do I get some raisins today?" The teacher smiled and said, "Of course you do!"

The positive effects of the constant introduction of fruits and vegetables is that our Special Education students can then make similar choices when given the options at home or in the community. They are given choices to teach them to think independently and that they have options in many aspects of their lives.

MCOE's next steps include obtaining additional stories from the teachers in both Special Education and regular classrooms. This has not been something that MCOE worked hard on obtaining, but the teachers have been sharing more. It has begun to make a difference and that makes them feel good about teaching nutrition education with their students. The teachers used to run when they saw us, now they get excited to tell us what their students are doing, what they are taste testing, or what their comments were regarding the HOTM. That gives us a big huge pat on the back for the hard work that we put into providing them their monthly HOTM packets and resources.

For more information, please contact Jaci Westbrook at jwestbrook@mcoe.org.

Nutrition Education from School to Home

Orange County Department of Education Coalition members provide teacher training and parent nutrition education classes in an effort to reach students both in the classroom and in the home. Ideally students receive education in the classroom that is reinforced by parent education efforts. It is a challenge to gain access to teachers for training due to limited teacher time available. Teachers struggle with pressure to meet educational standards and improve test scores. This often leaves them feeling as though they do not have time for anything else. The targeted parents often come with barriers including limited educational backgrounds, lower socio-economic status, language barriers, and limited transportation. Attending parent classes is a struggle for some parents who are caring for other children or need to work.

Network funding has allowed Coalition members to provide support and resources to teachers in providing nutrition education to students and families. This is particularly obvious in our preschool programs. The preschool programs that are a part of the coalition have embraced nutrition education and have made it an integral part of the classroom day. Nutrition education is integrated in a way that allows teachers to teach age appropriate skills and meet educational benchmarks through nutrition. Teachers and students find it fun and the message of making healthy food choices and being physically active is celebrated.

Coalition members worked together to produce a Harvest of the Month (HOTM) Toolkit to enable others to integrate nutrition education in the preschool environment. This toolkit includes background nutrition education information, nutrition education lessons tied to literacy, math, science, and art, and additional resources. It also includes tips on how to conduct parent classes, HOTM newsletters, and PowerPoint parent presentations. This resource has made it easy for our preschool teachers to integrate nutrition education and to reach parents. This toolkit is available on the coalition website for download, making it accessible to a larger audience.

Nutrition education was extended to the parents in a variety of ways. One school found that a parent breakfast worked well. Parents were invited to have breakfast with their students before school. Initially Child Nutrition Services donated the food. A nutrition lesson was present to families as they enjoyed breakfast. The breakfast was very popular with over 200 in attendance. Eventually, the cost of the monthly breakfast was offset by parent donations. Another school found that a similar idea work for a parent dinner. The parents at this school did not respond well to a morning time but a night event worked well. A class time just prior to student pick up and the integration of physical activity was a draw for some parents. These parents received a six week series of nutrition classes that included physical activity demonstrations at each. These parents came to school 2 hours prior to student pick up.

The key to successful parent education was to find the time that worked for the parents, provide translation, and to advertise well. Providing education to families and students enabled parents to support what was being taught in the classroom.

Network funding allows Coalition members to provide support and resources to provide nutrition education to teachers, children, and families on making healthy food choices and being physically active. Integrating nutrition education into the classroom makes it possible for teachers to teach nutrition in the limited time they have. Providing parent nutrition education when it is convenient for parents makes it possible to reach more parents. Providing education to students and families helps reinforce and support our messages.

The Coalition will continue to reach out to teachers to provide them with the resources they need to educate the students. This will include support on how to integrate nutrition education into the curriculum so that it becomes an integral part of the school day. Also the Coalition will continue to look for creative ways to educate parents in order to provide them with the tools they need to make healthy choices and to teach their children the same. In an effort to increase sustainability, parent leaders and school staff will be searched out so that they can be trained to provide nutrition education to parents and staff. Educational materials will be available on the website so that they are easily accessible.

For more information, please contact Kari Tuggle, MS, CHES, RD, at KTuggle@ocde.us.

Teachers – We couldn't do it without them!

Alternative Education school sites come with little or no space for physical activity and have no cafeteria or kitchen to provide the students with a healthy school meal. Often times these school sites are located in strip malls adjacent to a convenience store where the students stop in to grab “breakfast” consisting of a large soda and a bag of chips. These students are in class for only 4 hours a day and leave the school site only to walk to the closest fast food chain and purchase “lunch” consisting of a hamburger and fries for \$1.99. These are the challenges *Network* staff and teachers face everyday. How do they provide the students with the skills necessary to make positive food choices in their lives? How do they provide a small amount of physical activity throughout the day so that the students can experience fun and at the same time decrease their risk of chronic illness?

Network staff thought all hope was gone when they provided a high school class a lesson on the importance of eating fruits and vegetables and its role in preventing chronic illnesses. The teen aged students were engaged, asking questions such as, “Why is soda bad for me?”, “How much milk should I be drinking?”, and “If my mom has diabetes, will I get it too?” Great questions!! Great discussion!! One staff person packed up their “Scared Straight” props such as the clogged artery and the 1 pound of muscle vs. 1 pound of fat resources and headed to their car. The classroom teacher called them back and said, “Follow me.” They couldn't believe their eyes, next door to the school site was a liquor store and outside a patio table, similar to the ones you would see at a corner French café in Paris, and sitting as if they were sipping on tea and crumpets, were two female students who decided to dine on a 32 oz. soda and a large family size bag of chips! These two girls left the presentation and made a beeline to purchase their favorites. The staff person asked with shock and frustration, “Did you hear anything I just spoke about for 1 hour?” They replied, “But it's good!”

Staff realized then that information is not enough to change behavior. These students need exposure to fruits and vegetables more than once a month with the Harvest of the Month (HOTM) program, more than a guest speaker coming in to talk about the link to disease. Students need the skills to make choices at the convenience store that will remain there and the fast food restaurant chains that will also still remain and provide a meal for \$1.99. How could their program alone provide an intense nutrition education program for all of their 90 school sites? It wasn't possible.

And then opportunity knocks...the California Department of Education provided schools with funding to support physical education (PE) programs. All people interested in this process were called to the table. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction requested the staff person attend to provide input on the Nutrition Education component piece to the curriculum.

In the process of setting up a mini-grant process for teachers to submit if they would like to participate in PE programs, a suggestion from teachers, not the staff, but the teachers, was proposed. "We should require that no one can apply for this money unless they have attended *Network* training, or physical activity program training!" There was now a demand for *Network* training? A requirement? This was great news.

Since then the Division of Alternative Education has provided 4 physical activity program trainings. Since then teachers have requested a Nutrition elective course textbook. This was how it was going to be possible, now the teachers would have a resource, the students would have a reason and motivation, to learn how important nutrition education is for health. And now it would be sustained, when the program is long gone, nutrition education can continue and it would be able to provide intense nutrition education and exposure beyond the HOTM program and other *Network* activities.

As of July 1, 2007, *Network* staff established their own unit devoted to Health and Nutrition Services. They have suggested a textbook for a Nutrition course elective and they will continue to provide their teachers with professional development so that they can feel confident to teach the subject just as they teach math, English and history. They are also assisting with the development of an on-line nutrition course for those students completing health/PE credits from school site that does not have a facility or space to support a traditional PE program.

This collaborative effort will ultimately provide their students with the skills to make healthy choices and provide more opportunities for physical activity in a structured setting.

For more information, please contact Yvonne Ortega at Yvonne_Ortega@access.k12.ca.us.

Teaming with a Parent

On September 12, 2007, a staff person was at Bonny View School greeting parents and talking to them about the importance of a healthy breakfast for children and the whole family. They said they worked for Shasta County Office of Education-Nutrition Services and explained they would be coming to their children's classroom with nutrition education for the children and a cooking experience throughout the year. Also, that Nutrition Services provides free lunch for their child daily and how they are working to include more fresh fruits and vegetables and provide a balanced meal for the children. Parents were very interested in what their children were eating at school.

One mother in particular stayed to talk to the staff person about her daughter's eating habits. She explained her daughter had been tube-fed after birth because she had trouble swallowing her food. Her daughter was very particular at home about what food she would eat because of texture in her mouth. The child was very small and the mother was anxious about this issue.

The mother was very excited though about her daughter eating lunch at the preschool. She said her daughter is eating food at school that she would not even consider eating at home. She was thrilled that her daughter was trying new foods away from home.

While talking to the mother the staff person explained their classrooms eat "family style" and children pass the food to each other, serve themselves, and are able to decide what and how much they will eat at meal time. Often watching other children choose a food, without pressure, causes a child to also try a new food because it's just going around the table and it's what others are doing. Teachers promote a friendly positive atmosphere at meal times and talk a lot about the importance of trying new food and how different food helps our bodies.

This mother seemed so relieved that she was not alone in the struggle to get her daughter to eat. She was looking at us as a team to help her. The staff person talked to the teacher about this child and relayed the parent's comments so the teacher can work more closely with her. Starting in October Shasta County Office of Education will be returning to the classroom with the Go, Glow, Grow nutrition education program and cooking experiences with the children. These have been very successful in the past and are sure it will continue to impact this child's knowledge and willingness to try new foods.

For more information, please contact Tanya Marshall at tmarshall@shastacoe.org.

Sensing the Need for Healthy Lifestyles

Tulare County is an amazingly beautiful agricultural region within the Central Valley of California. In the midst of colorful persimmon orchards, fragrant tangerine blossoms and the sounds of busy farm workers, children and their families proceed with life virtually unaware of the vast array of locally grown produce. Teachers made mention that students in the schools have never tasted a sweet fresh snap pea or seen winter squash vines with their bright yellow flowers sprawled across the ground. A fourth grade teacher commented that, "Missions are perceived as a place for my students to take a field trip and my students do not comprehend it is also a variety of fig." Many educators made comments about the lack of knowledge of produce and exposure to sampling fresh locally grown fruits and vegetables. It was unusual to find students even in the upper grades that stopped to smell the aroma of a fresh peach or explore the treelike vegetable, asparagus.

Tulare County Office of Education's Scope of Work appeals to all the senses by including a variety of activities that are intended to increase knowledge, influence preference and change behavior in their students with regards to developing healthy lifestyles. One of their goals during classroom taste testing of Harvest of the Month (HOTM) featured produce was to review the Harvest of the Month newsletter facts with the students. The students were questioned on their knowledge and memory of HOTM produce facts. "My son has been telling me about the many fruits and vegetables he tries at school. I can't believe he is so interested in trying new foods," comments one parent. Another parent shared, "I know you guys are making a difference. My son goes to the middle school. When we go to the grocery store, I am surprised he knows so many interesting things about vegetables."

This monthly newsletter was widely used by the teachers and other school staff as a resource along with the monthly menu slicks containing HOTM facts and educational activities. Many of the schools with intercoms now read the Food Fact Calendar every day to the entire school. HOTM bulletin boards were placed in or near the school cafeteria to make the connection with knowledge and behavior change. The Food Service Directors now serve the HOTM produce on the school menu. One Director states, "The students have changed their eating habits since they have been exposed to different fruits and vegetables in the classroom."

Teachers and librarians have purchased books about featured HOTM produce that increase awareness of healthy eating. There are numerous activities on the school campus that support the HOTM educational message including but not limited to the National Nutrition Month event, an essay contest, various HOTM theme field trips and an annual HOTM Calendar Art contest.

These activities have touched the hearts of their participants as evident in this comment: “I see students bringing fruits and vegetables to school in their lunch and eating them with their friends. I have not seen this before.” This student’s testimonial states, “After tasting ‘Fruity Cabbage Salad’ many students said it was soooo good and wanted more. Actually after each taste test, I ask for seconds.” Even the writings of the students indicate to them a shift in perception about making healthy lifestyle changes. This is an excerpt from our Student Essay Contest, “Why Eat Seasonal Fruits and Vegetables”, “People from Nutrition Network have come and we got to learn about peas and asparagus. We also were able to taste these vegetables. Our principal doesn’t like very many vegetables, and he was in here when we tasted them, so he tried them. ‘These are good’, he said.”

“Thank you so much. This has been great this year. The students have really enjoyed the taste testing and learned a lot. I am always so surprised at how excited they are when you arrive with a new food sample. They really enjoy this and look forward to trying new foods. I can’t believe how willing they have been to try vegetables. Thanks so much.” This teacher’s comments provide all the motivation needed to make fresh locally grown produce available to the students and staff at their schools. Local farmers and ranchers have expressed interest and are eager to help them provide fresh seasonally grown produce to the classrooms and cafeterias. They hope to stimulate all the senses of students, teachers, parents and administrators by increasing participation in our HOTM nutrition education lessons and community events. It is their desire to influence and inspire the entire school environment to make healthy lifestyle changes.

For more information, please contact Nani Rowland at nrowland@tcoe.org.

INDIAN TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS

California Rural Indian Health Board, Inc
Contract #: 06-55074

California Rural Indian Health Board Successes

The 5th annual Youth Olympics was, once again, a great success. This year's event included one more informational booth than the previous year, for a total of 17 booths providing education involving nutrition, exercise and safety. The climbing wall was the most popular booth, being continuously attended for the duration of the event. Football, soccer, and basketball clinics were held for youth participants as well. Although California Rural Indian Health Board staff expected an increase in participation at this year's event, due to the popularity of a former NFL player who was the keynote speaker at the event, attendance had dropped because of conflict with school graduation dates that were changed this year. The Youth Olympics 2007 had expanded the incorporation of traditional cultural activities, and mentoring by leaders in the Native Community. Staff felt the interaction of the youth participants was more engaging and inspiring than past events. Native dancers attended the event and encouraged healthful activities in a culturally reinforcing setting.

The Health and Fitness Expo was even more successful than the previous year. Event planning and organization benefited from previous years' experience, and the popularity of the event amongst previous years' participants.

Three garden events were held during the year: Spring Garden Event, Garlic Gathering Cooking/Taste Testing, Healthy Food and Garden Fun. The relative remote location of the garden made meeting attendance goals of the events challenging. However, future events will be coordinated to be held in conjunction with planned tribal activities at the garden site to boost attendance.

The Healthful Cooking Class Series was an overall success, being well attended and well received. This year's series emphasized, quick, nutritious, easy and fresh snacks and meals. The next year's series will take into account results from surveyed participants of prior classes to broaden the base of community participation.

The 5 A Day Autumn/Health Fair was an unequivocal success. This event focused on safety, injury prevention and nutrition education while incorporating traditional foods.

For more information, please contact Stacey Kennedy at stacey.kennedy@crihb.net.

Native American Health Center
Contract #: 06-55104

Friendship, Food and Fun

When the Native American Health Center (NAHC) staff first came to teach at Friendship House, they were surprised to see how many of the participants ate “junk” food for snacks. The participants specifically enjoyed chips and soda as snacks after dinner because they were still hungry. Many of the participants were rather surprised, in class, when staff gave them fruit/vegetable samples and when staff prepared recipes which included fruit and vegetables. Some of them did not even know certain fruits and vegetables which seemed common to the staff.

The goal for NAHC staff collaboration with Friendship House was to increase the amount of fruits and vegetables consumed by participants. Their *Network* activities included giving fruit/vegetable sampling, giving food demos, and taking participants on local grocery and farmers’ market tours. Their approach in teaching the series was to make healthy eating fun and to have participant’s associate fruits/vegetables with positive feelings. The fashion in which they made small revisions in the series was through feedback from the participants themselves. For example, staff noticed some of the participants would state which stores were better in price and quality of produce when staff gave the market tours. Therefore, staff started making it a “memory game” to see which stores had better produce for the price and value. Participants were excited to have this type of interaction and more of them spoke up and interacted due to this game. Another example of making healthy eating fun was when participants told the staff they enjoyed the food demos because it was like a mini-party. This spurred the staff to have music after our food demos so participants could sample the food in a relaxed atmosphere and enjoy themselves while learning about healthy eating.

On a few occasions visiting Friendship House, NAHC staff noticed a few participants visiting the local grocery stores in the area and walking around together with fresh fruits in their hands. They was further surprised to see participants telling them which vegetables were cheaper, which stores had better produce and telling them how they enjoyed certain recipes NAHC staff had made. Participants would be excited when they asked staff when they were going to make their recipe again. Participants had associated the food demos with positive memories.

For their next cycle of classes, NAHC staff hopes to continue their activities with the feedback from their participants. Staff wants to continue teaching the series with the same small revisions. NAHC staff hopes that participants will associate healthy eating with positive feelings and therefore also be ready to interact and retain the nutrition and fitness information taught during the series.

For more information, please contact Christina Weahunt at chrisw@nativehealth.org.

Southern Indian Health Council, Inc
Contract #: 06-55117

It's How We Live

Campo Junior/Senior High is like every other school campus; filled with soda machines and vending machines and campus stores full of unhealthy food choices. The school lunches are altogether another issue. There are not many healthy choices available to the children. On any day you see many of them walking around with a soda in one hand and puffed cheese snacks in the other. To make matters worse, the school is located about 30 miles from the nearest grocery store making access to fruits and vegetables a challenge both inside and outside of the school setting.

Southern Indian Health Council, Inc. (SIHC) is part of a collaborative called the Mountain Empire Collaborative & Wellness Council and have been meeting for approximately two years now. One of the initial purposes of this collaborative was to implement the new California Nutrition Guidelines and to establish a local Wellness Policy by the beginning of the school year. Staff thought making these changes was going to be a big challenge with the students, but to their surprise many jumped on-board right away. Students from the Associated Student Body (ASB) attended the meetings, as well as other students who wanted to listen in. The students started having taste tests to find healthy snacks that the student body would want to buy in the school stores. They even started making the changes before the deadline date.

This year the school held a 2nd Wellness Fair (a product of the Collaborative), both years have been a great success. The fair is called "It's How We Live" and is all about promoting a healthier lifestyle by making better food choices and being more physically active. The Collaborative decided to hold the fair on Open House Night making it perfect to get the whole family involved. Because of its success, the Wellness Fair has become an annual event and attendance is anticipated to increase each year. Other changes around campus include instead of selling pizza, hot dogs, and soda at school functions to raise money, the ASB is now selling healthy food options picked out by the students.

Due to student and staff participation, the school lunches have improved offering more whole grains, fruits and vegetables. School garden programs are being started in several of the schools in the Mountain Empire School District. And lastly, staff is getting tougher on the students for not meeting the state mandated minutes for physical education. Alternative activities such as a walking program and a dance program are being explored for the students who do not want to participate in physical education class. The faculty, administration and student body are communicating now and the collaborative is going into its third year. As you can see there have been some positive changes and there are more to come in the future.

For more information, please contact Lisa Turner at turner@sihc.org.

United Indian Health Services
Contract #: 05-45542

Keeping Tradition Alive: Preserving the Health of the Native American Community

It cannot be argued that the history of American Indians has been a long and trying one. United Indian Health Services (UIHS) serves nine American Indian tribes within Humboldt and Del Norte Counties. Over time some of these Indians have slowly disconnected with their heritage in ways that are contributing to the health problems of these citizens. Traditional foods of these people have been replaced by fast food, and the processed food that seems to increasingly replace the healthier fruits, vegetables and whole grains in all American diets. They experience a disproportionately high incidence of diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disease. Their rate of diabetes is about three times that of the United States population as a whole, approaching 40 to 50 percent in adults.

The Nutrition Department at UIHS is working hard to educate the Indian population about the importance of a healthy diet. Their pride in culture and significance of family makes the events that UIHS do hold very special places to get the message out. UIHS have a number of events at Potowat Health Village and travel to many Indian festivals in nearby areas, but their annual Harvest Celebration is probably the most notable event for their purposes. About two hundred students from partnering schools and Headstarts in Humboldt and Del Norte counties, take fieldtrips to our Potowat Community Garden on the Friday before Halloween. Because of the lack of funding for these schools and Headstarts, this is generally the only field trip that these kids will take all year. Over the years, the celebration's reputation has grown, and the students, clients of UIHS and employees begin looking forward to it long before the flyers are sent out.

The Celebration itself is somewhat like a carnival. Booths are set up throughout the garden that consist of games that aim to educate children on anything from dental hygiene to waste management to the focus of the event, nutrition. There is Native American storytelling, produce and other incentives are distributed, and children are encouraged to try a number of healthy foods that reflect Indian culture and make use of produce from the garden itself. All in all the day is a great way to get children, parents, and teachers together to encourage healthy behaviors in a really fun way. Seeing those faces light up is enough to let all of the people involved in putting the Harvest Celebration on that it was more than worth the effort.

UIHS staff can clearly remember getting excited about what they were learning in school. The first thing they would do was to go home and tell their parents all about it. When these children leave the Harvest Celebration they are excited about what they've seen and done too. They are more likely to try healthy foods in the future and will tend to associate a garden with a very positive experience. This excitement will then hopefully be passed on to the families of these children. This is what gets the ball rolling for lasting change.

The success of the Harvest Celebration has made it one of the most enjoyable events that UIHS puts on. It is obvious that working with children is the key to getting the message across to Indians of all ages. UIHS will continue to improve on this event as well as creating new ways to have the same effect. Their goal is to entrust these children with the knowledge and the power to be teachers themselves. Children are the future, and our future is looking bright.

For more information, please contact Alison Aldridge at alison.aldridge@crihb.net.

**LOCAL FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION
PROJECTS**

CANGRESS- (Los Angeles Community Action Network [LA CAN])
Contract #: 06-55098

Eugene Hotel Workshop Series

Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) conducts nutrition education workshops in a wide variety of settings within the Skid Row community of downtown Los Angeles. However, when LA CAN initially met with staff at the Eugene Hotel to propose a workshop series, there was some doubt on their part that nutrition education workshops would be effective with their “special needs” population. They expressed concerns about language barriers among many monolingual Spanish speakers; they were unsure about an outside group working with people with HIV/AIDS, including a significant transgendered population; and they just generally didn’t operate workshops within their program. Through LA CAN staff’s dedication to working with Eugene Hotel staff to assure them of its success throughout the community, they agreed to a pilot workshop.

LA CAN met internally to be sure that language needs were met and that LA CAN staff would be educated and sensitive to any issues specific to people with HIV/AIDS and/or transgendered people. LA CAN conducted the first workshop for 13 people in mid-September and received an overwhelmingly positive response. The workshop was done in English and Spanish; participation was very high from all participants; and all participants said they would definitely return for more workshops. Due to the positive response and large number of questions, Eugene Hotel staff agreed to schedule four more workshops, to be completed during October 2008.

Feedback from the first Healthy Eating workshop showed that participants will be actively working to make changes in their eating habits. However, LA CAN believe the lasting impact will be that people that are often excluded from service and education systems will participate in a series of workshops in their own home and, eventually, will lead to increased consumption of healthy foods and improved overall health.

LA CAN and Eugene Hotel staff will work together to initiate another workshop series when sufficient turnover has taken place and there will be enough new residents to participate. Also, LA CAN will utilize this success to forge new partnerships with other programs serving “special needs” populations.

For more information, please contact Becky Dennison at beckyd@cangress.org.

The Rural-Urban Connection

Family child care providers, especially those that care for low-income children and/or who are low-income themselves, face unique challenges when making healthy food choices. With time and staffing constraints in the facilities, many providers will do their shopping at warehouse stores, and will often opt to prepare frozen or pre-made foods for the children. For many of them buying fresh fruits and vegetables is an unlikely option, mostly due to accessibility and cost.

One of the goals of the Children's Council is to "promote increased consumption of fruits and vegetables among Child Care Food Program participants." Under this goal, one of the objectives was to conduct tours of neighborhood farmers' markets and/or local community supported agriculture (CSA) pick-up sites, to encourage providers to buy local fresh produce. Originally the intent was to create a farmers' market or CSA pick-up site at the Children's Council, but unforeseen difficulties prevented this from happening.

After hearing about a similar event at the *Network* Food and Nutrition Education Action Committee meeting in Los Angeles in November 2006, it was decided to organize a nutrition fair for the child care providers, parents and community members. With much planning, this Nutrition Night took place on March 28, 2007 in the Mission Dolores school auditorium. Several thousand people were invited and about 130 (adults and children) came. The attendees visited nutrition education booths, sampled healthy foods from each food group, planted seeds and learned how to grow vegetables, learned about and purchased produce from a handful of local farmers in attendance, signed-up for CSA programs, participated in physical activity, and played games.

One unexpected outcome of this event was that the Children's Council staff participated. Close to 40% of the staff either volunteered for Nutrition Night or attended with their families. Since dedicating time and energy to a staff wellness program is not a possibility at this time, this unexpected success was quite an accomplishment.

The feedback from this event was overwhelmingly positive, both from the attendees and those that tabled. Children's Council Deputy Director stated that "The event was very well organized, demonstrated tremendous spirit, and offered valuable nutritional information to our extended community." The attendees have asked if there will be another Nutrition Night next year, and the answer is a definite YES.

Nutrition Night will surely become an annual event. Next year Children's Council will do increased outreach and publicity in order to get more families to attend the event. The Children's Council is looking forward to reconnecting with the presenters and brainstorming on how to attract more farmers.

Now that several farmers have participated, it is hoped that their experience will help draw others that were hesitant last year. Ideally Children's Council can connect with enough farmers to start our own "farmers' market" at the agency, especially with the lessons learned and difficulties of last year.

For more information, please contact Bergen Watterson at bwatterson@childrenscouncil.org.

“How Do the Vitamins Get Into the Vegetables?”

When teaching Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE) students at local elementary schools Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) staff often see a huge disconnect between the children and their food. CAFF staff teach them about fruits and vegetables and the importance of eating them but oftentimes there’s a missing component to their lessons—food origin. So many children can’t answer the question “Where does this come from?” or “What part of the plant are we eating?” CAFF staff was reminded of this food origin piece when a young boy recently asked “How do the vitamins get into the vegetables?” There are so many interrelated lessons to teach when conducting nutrition education.

One of the *Network* activities was to conduct garden- enhanced nutrition education. CAFF staff did this through farm tours and farmers’ market visits. Hosting 10-15 fieldtrips isn’t too difficult, weather permitting, but when staff got talking to a local farmer who was starting a farm education program at her farm staff wheels got spinning. By partnering, CAFF were able to help get her program off the ground, reach a greater number of students and use her farm as an additional fieldtrip site. She was even able to apply for some local funding to pay for bus transportation; a barrier for many low income schools. CAFF surpassed the number of projected fieldtrips and were able to reach many more children thanks to this partnership. The tours contain four nutrition-based learning stations that answer questions like “How do the vitamins get into the vegetables?” Seeing, touching, tasting—being on the farm really drives nutrition lessons home and makes eating fruits and vegetables fun.

After the farm tours kids would say “I love all vegetables” when asked what’s your favorite? When teaching nutrition the CAFF staff provides hands-on fun at the site of origin. Staff often chuckle when teachers or parents say the children won’t eat vegetables. More often than not, they find that if introduced to them in a fun way there’s no problem getting them to eat their fruits and vegetables.

CAFF staff is seeing an increased interest in both our farm and farmers’ market fieldtrips. In order to meet the increased demand staff will continue the partnership with their new farm friend and help them identify funding. In addition, staff will also focus on volunteer recruitment. Each fieldtrip has four learning stations manned by volunteers so they are always working to build their volunteer base. In summary, building more partnerships is the next step.

For more information, please contact Kristen Schroer at kristen@caff.org.

Community Services Planning Council, Inc. (Sacramento Hunger Coalition)
Contract #: 06-55110

Summer Celebration Leaves Residents Asking For More!

Two challenges that make it more difficult for the target audience (residents of Kennedy Estates in Sacramento) in making healthy food choices and/or being more physically active include access to fresh and healthy foods as well as lack of exposure to those foods.

In conducting a baseline survey it was found that due to lack of exposure many of the residents were familiar with and consumed many fruits and vegetables from their homeland or cooked in their native cuisines, but might not be familiar with or consume foods outside of their native cuisines.

Over the course of this contract, Sacramento Hunger Coalition provided residents with a series of opportunities to attend chef-facilitated healthy eating workshops focusing on different ethnic produce and cuisines in order to increase exposure and education to a multitude of fruits and vegetables.

Unfortunately, residents would only attend the workshops that were focusing on recipes from their own ethnic backgrounds.

Sacramento Hunger Coalition facilitated a Summer Celebration and Potluck where residents celebrated the summer harvest from the edible landscape and also prepared healthy dishes to share with the Kennedy Estates Community. In addition Sacramento Hunger Coalition partnered with the Health Education Council who provided jump ropes, balls, and hula-hoops for the families to participate in physical activity exercises after dinner.

Celebrating the summer harvest provided nutrition education and exposure to fresh produce grown on the landscape. The potluck increased exposure to healthy foods/recipes across many ethnic backgrounds, and the jump ropes and hula-hoops encouraged physical activity and re-enforced the sense community.

Because of the positive experience of nutrition education/exposure at the Summer Celebration it is believed that residents will be more inclined to taste and/or try healthy foods and produce outside of those familiar to them from their own ethnic backgrounds and healthy food in general. The experience was so positive that, as it was ending a group of residents approached staff and asked when the next celebration and potluck would be.

Based on the success of the Summer Celebration and Potluck, Sacramento Hunger Coalition intends to host the healthy eating workshops during the winter, spring, or summer harvest celebration to further provide nutrition education and exposure to fruits and vegetables. Staff knows that the residents enjoy (and therefore will attend) the potlucks and that they are willing to at least taste healthy and new foods that their neighbors within the Kennedy Estates Community have prepared.

For more information, please contact Melissa Ortiz-Gray at mortiz@healthcollaborative.org.

Council of Orange County, Society of St. Vincent de Paul;
dba, Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
Contract #: 04-75636

Kids Cafe Nutrition Education

Kids Cafes provide healthy fresh fruits and vegetables to the children each day at each of the 30 Kids Cafe sites. Outside influences such as parents and vending machines make it difficult to lead the participating children to healthy choices. Kids Cafe sites such as Tustin Community Center (TCC) face the added challenge of having a small market right next door to the site. Their challenge was in keeping the children at their site to eat the healthy snack instead of going next door for “other” snack foods. Through a multi-faceted approach, TCC was able to develop a program that involved Kids Cafe, the children, the parents, and the site staff. Through the Kids Cafe nutrition education program the children learned what healthy eating means. Parents were encouraged to stop sending money with the children for unhealthy snacks. As stated by Barbara Guerrero, the site coordinator, “Why would their children need to purchase snacks when a healthy one is provided by Kids Cafe?” Site staff was encouraged to set a good example of healthy eating to reinforce the nutrition education lessons they were teaching.

The children now look forward to Kids Cafe snack time. They understand the healthy choices provided through the Kids Cafe program. Although TCC has not had a vending machine, sites such as Stanton Boys & Girls Club have chosen to “Go Healthy.” Through nutrition lessons learned, the children decided to contact their vending machine provider to see if they could make the choices healthier. The machine now provides bottled water and 100% fruit juice instead of sodas. The children decorated the machine to reflect their healthy choice.

Through these lessons, Kids Cafe in Orange County now requires new sites to provide only healthy choices in addition to the Kids Cafe snack. Kids Cafe now also provides additional components once a week to turn the Friday snack into a meal.

It is encouraging to know that the healthy environment from the Kids Cafe program has even infected the Food Bank. For the Grand Opening celebration of the new Food Bank site, it was decided by the organizing committee that even though McDonalds was providing food, only healthy choices would be allowed (e.g. 100% fruit juices instead of sodas, salads instead of French fries, etc.)

Nutrition education is expanding into additional programs at the Food Bank. It is now a part of the Senior Brown Bag program and the Mobile Pantry program.

For more information, please contact Denise Stupak at denise@feedoc.org.

East Bay Asian Youth Center
Contract #: 06-55076

EBAYC's Nutrition Project: Go Deep!

Oakland Unified School District students in the San Antonio neighborhood have few opportunities to consume colorful fruits and vegetables or experience safe physical activities during and after school hours. While there are some new resources such as two produce stands, salad bars at lunch and social marketing materials available to students and their families, these resources are underutilized because students' preferences and knowledge are limited. Similarly, safe places and opportunities for regular physical activity have increased slightly in the neighborhood, but student and family awareness of these resources are limited.

Last year, the *Network* East Bay Asian Youth Center's (EBAYC) project brought comprehensive, engaging and culturally appropriate nutrition education to students at 3 of 6 neighborhood school sites in a variety of settings. EBAYC staff conducted 12 hands on, standards-based nutrition lessons to over 150 students at Roosevelt Middle School. Through 100 valid, matched pre and post-tests, staff knew this part of the project produced tremendous growth in knowledge and behaviors. In addition, over 50 students participated in semester long Garden and International Cooking Clubs. Staff also engaged parents several times through the multilingual, monthly Parent Action Committee meetings and through a "Got Love?" Health Fair that included over 300 participants.

Students have demonstrated tremendous growth in their knowledge of such nutrition topics such as whole foods verses processed foods, the food pyramid, etc. By connecting what they have learned in the classroom to after school enrichment activities such as our International Cooking and Garden Clubs, and community activities such as the Health Fair and parent meetings, EBAYC expect to deepen the impact of their work on individual students, as well as the families and the community.

This year EBAYC is bringing the project to additional sites in the neighborhood. EBAYC's staff is also increasing the scope of the Health Fair. Staff will also bring nutrition workshops to parents through the parent meetings, and hope to encourage students and families to advocate for more nutrition and physical activity resources.

For more information, please contact Susan Yee at susan@ebayc.org.

Food Bank of Yolo County
Contract #: 06-55088

The Power of a Small Change

One of the unincorporated towns in Yolo County, Esparto, is a small community with a population of 1,858 (2000 Census) located 22 miles from Davis, the largest established town in Yolo and 39 miles from Sacramento. The town is the gateway to Capay Valley, a fertile valley which is home to 49 farmers. Within such close proximity to fresh produce, there is only one corner market and one privately owned grocery store within the town limits. Access to fresh fruits and vegetables is limited for the community residents since the privately owned grocery store imports familiar produce such as iceberg lettuce, carrots, and potatoes. The corner market specializes in convenient, pre-packaged items.

A progressive cooperative pre-school program, Universal Early Learning Center, teaches parenting skills along with socialization activities to the children. The parents are active participants in their child's growth. One of those parents is a mother of 2 girls, ages 4 and 1.5 years. She has lost 31 pounds by changing her eating habits. She learned why and how to change her daily habits by accessing fresh fruits and vegetables from the Moveable Market (Food Bank of Yolo County) combined with tastings of produce prepared in a healthy method. She also was an active participant during cooking demonstrations given in conjunction with Healthy Lifestyle curriculum (Yolo County Health Department) and as a member of a walking group. She states, "I have learned to modify my diet by eating more fruits and vegetables. I am a picky eater, but I learned by different ways of cooking vegetables, that (it) tasted good. And with the availability from the Moveable Market visits, I am able to take advantage of the different produce available."

This mother is now becoming instrumental in changing the future health of her older daughter. "I have started this habit with my daughter. When she asks for junk food, I tell her to eat her vegetables first. This way, I know she will be more full and eat less of the junk food." As a model for her children, she is a prime example of the benefits of the nutrition education that the Moveable Market provides in collaboration with the Yolo County Health Department.

Lifestyle change pertaining to eating habits is a process that cannot be limited to verbal information. Reinforcement of nutrition education would be at its maximum benefit to the community when it includes visual aids such as pictures and/or poster displays, action tasks such as cooking demonstrations, and sensory aids such as tastings of the produce. All aspects combined may better show results in promoting increasing the consumption of fruits and vegetables within the underserved communities in Yolo County.

For more information, please contact Jose Martinez at josem@foodbankyc.org.

Health Education Council
Contract #: 06-55093

Community Farmers' Market Builds Community Pride

The Del Paso Heights Community Farmers' Market, now in its third season has experienced challenges and skepticism from local residents and businesses. Located in a neighborhood where people have few things to be proud of, the market has become a source of pride for the local residents, farmers, and shoppers.

When the Del Paso Heights Community Farmers' Market started in the summer of 2005, local residents weren't quite sure what to make of it. They stayed away, drove past and stared. Extensive Farmers' Market promotion and nutrition education resulted in an average of 227 customers per week, with the lowest daily attendance for the year being close to 90. As it turned out, residents were staying away because they didn't believe that the market would come back for a second season. The Del Paso Heights community has become used to agencies starting projects with a big bang and then letting them fizzle out, sometimes quickly and sometimes slowly.

In the 2006 season, the average attendance rose to 283 people per week. Constant promotion, improved Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) capacity and new nutrition education activities in the neighborhood were starting to show some results, but the neighborhood residents were still skeptical.

Now in the third season, the Market's attendance has increased dramatically, with an average attendance of 414, a 46% improvement to 2006 attendance. This dramatic increase is a result of emerging trust and knowledge.

Customers were often asked "Is this your first time at the market?" and the answer in 2005 and 2006 was usually yes. Now when asked, people say, "Oh no, I come every week." Customers are also saying that they are happy to have something in the neighborhood to be proud of. WIC and EBT use are also impressive. In 2007, a total of \$3,224 has been redeemed in WIC coupons and \$1,463 in EBT. With 4 weeks left in the season the Health Education Council is on its way to exceeding the 2006 season totals for WIC and EBT by \$360 and \$965 respectively. The market is certainly making an impression in the Heights.

The Farmers' Market planning committee is already thinking about next year's promotion and education activities and the long term sustainability of the market in the area. The committee is working with local agencies to build support both financially and programmatically for the market.

The committee knows that a Farmers' Market doesn't become an institution overnight, but by digging in their heels and getting the information out. Plans are to increase customer attendance by 100 to 200 attendees a year until they serve over 1,000 local, low-income residents a week.

For more information, please contact Melissa Guajardo at melissa@healthedcouncil.org.

Learning Lessons at the Sugar Station

In April, Occidental College, Center for Food and Justice staffed a nutrition education and physical activity booth at Adams Elementary School's Eat Lunch with Your Child Day event. On this day, parents were invited to eat lunch with their kids and participate in activities at the school throughout the afternoon. This was the first year taking part in this event. The majority of parents brought pizza, fast food, and soda for their students to eat for lunch, which only reinforced the need for nutrition education messages for both students and parents. The nutrition education booth included a "Sugar Station", where kids were asked to guess how many teaspoons of sugar they believed were in one 20-ounce bottle of soda. Kids were also asked to think about how many 20-ounce sodas they might drink in one day. Parents and students were shocked to learn that there are 16 teaspoons of sugar in one 20-ounce bottle of soda. To visually demonstrate the point, participants measured 16 teaspoons of sugar into a cup and saw what that amount of sugar looks like.

One mother visited the Sugar Station without her son. She participated in the demonstration activities and she was very struck by what it taught her. She asked, "If I bring over my son, will you show him also?" A couple of minutes later, the woman returned with her son, grabbed the hand of a staff member who was working at the booth and said, "Please explain this to my son." Her son was also surprised by the high sugar content of sodas as he was asked to measure out 16 teaspoons in a cup like his mom had done. The mother explained that she had been worried for a while that her son was drinking too much soda and had tried explaining to him just how bad they were for him, but in vain. Now, they both agreed that in the future they would think back to this activity any time they wanted to drink soda. Because of this demonstration, she said, she would become much stricter about how much soda she allowed her children to drink. The Sugar Station activity made a strong impact on this parent and son team, as it did on several others.

For the remainder of the school year Center for Food and Justice talked to students about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables, and also made an extra effort to talk to them about their sugar intake. At future Harvest of the Month tastes tests the students were encouraged to drink water rather than soda. The message shifted from a focus primarily on fruits and vegetables to one that included all aspects of a typical student's diet, including whole grains and most importantly, sugar.

The experience at Eat Lunch with Your Child Day reminded Center for Food and Justice of how much work there is left to do at the school and district, but also how important our presence there is. Next year, lunchtime events will highlight the school's salad bar, and the salad bar program will continually be promoted to parents so that they will encourage their students to make healthy food choices at school and home.

Although sodas are not sold in elementary schools, working with the principal will ensure that healthy beverage alternatives are always available so that healthy choices are easy choices for school students.

For more information, please contact Moira Beery at beery@oxy.edu.

People's Grocery
Contract #: 06-55102

People's Grocery Success Story

In the first year of funding People's Grocery integrated nutrition education activities with cooking classes, shopping tours, gardening, peer-to-peer trainings, and community events for West Oakland residents. The nutrition education activities were delivered through diverse, culturally, and community-relevant formats. While conducting the nutrition education interventions, the need to have access to healthy food became apparent. As a result, a marketing plan was created and includes opening a healthy "corner store" that sells low-price healthy foods, including fresh produce.

In addition, People's Grocery has been successful in capturing local and national media attention for their innovative approaches in creating positive change in their community. People's Grocery was included on the following media broadcasts: CNBC's "Green Collar Economy" series, Sundance Channel's "The Good Fight;" and KRON 4 "Bay Area Backroads" segment on urban farming.

For more information, please contact Brahm Ahmadi at brahm@peoplesgrocery.org.

Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties
Contract #: 03-75620

Mas es Mejor! A New Spanish Language Nutrition Video

The low-income families and individuals that are served by the Food Stamp Nutrition Education lack resources and often lack time, to access proper nutrition or nutrition information. Many of the small agencies that are served, like food pantries, are operated by volunteers with a low or non-existent budget and don't have the time or resources to dedicate to nutrition education at their facilities. Similarly, the Second Harvest Outreach Manager may have less time to dedicate to presentations at agencies to clients. The challenge was to find a way of sustaining the communication of nutrition information through 160 agencies and programs, when *Network* funding ends.

In an innovative approach to addressing this issue, Second Harvest culminated its 4 year nutrition education project by producing a Spanish language nutrition education video as part of the final report. Rather than just produce a written or Power Point presentation (which was done anyway), Second Harvest wanted to create a nutrition education DVD for our Spanish speaking clients. Second Harvest wanted a simple nutrition education device that agencies could play on a TV or computer for low-income families and individuals coming to pick up food or to receive social services, but which will not require much training for the busy agencies to use.

Because the dynamic, creative and energetic nutrition presentations by the Outreach Manager and an AmeriCorps volunteer tend to be fluid and often involve improvisation, it was decided to forgo a script and work in the documentary "cinema verite" style. Five locations were selected—field trips for low-income kids to the University of California, Santa Cruz, Farm and Garden, the Watsonville Farmers' Market, a Food For Children Distribution at a community clinic (Salud Para La Gente), and nutrition presentations with fruit and vegetable tasting at a soup kitchen (Loaves and Fishes) and the Second Harvest Food Bank.

Contracting with Migrant Media Productions, experienced in bi-lingual and bi-cultural educational media production, Second Harvest did all principal video work in June and July. The DVD was edited to create a smooth flow of nutrition information (eat lots of fruits and veggies, read ingredient labels, importance of garden experiences for children, need for physical activity, etc) capturing the various nutrition education venues of the project. An upbeat, original salsa music track and colorful graphics were the final touch. After a positive reception at the final report presentation in Los Angeles, the DVD was submitted to *Network* for approval, final edits were done, and a final version was completed.

To begin using this video for its intended purpose, Second Harvest immediately secured funding for 200 copies with a colorful label and boxes for our 2nd Annual Agency Summit on October 15, 2007. Copies were included in all binders for the 132 participants from over 40 agencies. It received enthusiastic reviews at the screening, and now is in the hands of many agencies that can use it to promote nutrition among their clients.

Second Harvest is also applying for additional funding to do agency trainings and supply inexpensive DVD player/TV units for food pantries who want to show the film and do follow-up curriculum.

Now, no matter what other funding is received for ongoing nutrition education, there will be a lasting tool which Second Harvest Food Bank and many other local agencies can use to capture the passion, enthusiasm and information which the project outreach staff has been able to communicate to thousands of low-income area residents in the past 4 years. Just as the project has been a catalyst for improved nutrition among the clients and a growing movement to improve nutrition and physical activity environments in the communities, the video will continue to take the message to those who need it most.

As noted above, Second Harvest is applying for funding to use the DVD as the heart of a series of mini-trainings for food pantries and other agencies with staffs or volunteers who don't have the time, energy or funding to do extensive nutrition education themselves. Between the DVD and some simple handouts and exercises, Second Harvest hopes to create a user friendly nutrition education package for the agencies served and collaborate with on the Central Coast.

For more information, please contact Lee Mercer at lee@thefoodbank.org.

Trust for Conservation Innovation/Nextcourse
Contract #: 06-55097

Growing Healthy Children One School at a Time

Nextcourse had been contacted by a Mission High School physical education (PE) teacher in spring of 2006 about her growing concern over the unhealthy foods her students were eating. While Mission High School was one of the first schools in San Francisco to improve foods in their on-site vending machines, students were still bringing unhealthy snack foods into the school. The PE teacher felt that her students did not have the information they needed to make better food choices, and asked Nextcourse to help.

Nextcourse worked with Mission High School's PE teacher to develop a classroom-based nutrition education proposal that was submitted to the *Network*, and subsequently funded. By fall of 2006 nutrition education classes were integrated into the school's PE program targeting younger 9th and 10th graders, and by the end of the school year almost 100 students had received important information on convenient and affordable ways to eat healthy.

In addition to the classroom education, participating students made regular trips to a nearby farm, learning about how food grows and enjoying lunches they prepared from the wide variety of available produce grown on the farm.

An important part of Nextcourse's Mission High nutrition education program is the inclusion of peer education both inside the classroom and during school food events. One peer leader says, "I didn't do this to get my credits. I did it because I wanted to see, to learn about food and farming...I'm more of a meat guy, but this has helped me to eat more vegetables and fruit." Reflecting back on his experiences as a peer leader, another student says, "I liked giving information to the students with the hope that they'll take time to look at and think about the foods they're eating, and make positive changes."

Their learning experiences were so positive in fact, that some of the participating students went on to work over the summer at the farm and its partnering café, and others have accepted Peer Leader positions for the upcoming school year.

Nextcourse wants to build on this year's success by working next year to create a culture of healthy eating within the school. By organizing a "food club" Nextcourse, together with our students, their parents, and teachers can come together to plan even more ways to get healthy eating messages out to the entire school community.

For more information, please contact Susie White at susie@nextcourse.org.

Nutrition *Telenovela*

Farm workers in California help grow some of the healthiest food produced in this country. They are responsible for planting, caring for, and harvesting many of the fruits and vegetables that people across the United States eat every day. However, because they earn so little and tend to live in isolated areas, farm workers are often unable to purchase the very foods that they grow. At the same time, it is challenging to reach farm worker populations with the kinds of information that might help promote increased access to and preferences for healthier food. Issues such as limited literacy and English language skills, lack of time to attend workshops, and fear of utilizing services prevent many farm workers from accessing nutrition information available to others in California.

In designing the work for this phase of UC Regents contract, the goal was to come up with a creative way of getting nutrition information out to farm workers. Soap operas and *telenovelas* (Spanish language soap operas) have been used with great success around the world to promote many different kinds of health messages. UC Regents decided to develop a nutrition education *telenovela* that would specifically target the nutrition issues and challenges that farm workers face. They gathered information from a variety of community stakeholders about how to make the *telenovela* engaging and educational, and hired a professional scriptwriter who created a wonderful story and script. However, they were still anxious to see how a farm worker audience would actually react to the script. UC Regents recently presented the script to a focus group of farm workers in Fresno to get their feedback and suggestions for changes. It was great to see the response from the focus group, which was very positive. The farm workers were engaged and amused by the script, seemed to find it very relevant to their experiences as agricultural workers in California, and consistently identified the key nutrition messages that we hoped to convey.

One of the advantages of the *telenovela* as an educational tool is that *telenovelas* are often viewed by all members of the family. It was exciting to see various members of the focus group identify with different aspects of the script, whether it was the challenges parents face in monitoring their children's diets when they spend so much time working in the fields, the lack of healthy options in the small corner stores that may be the only source of groceries in rural areas, or the feeling of being taken advantage of by employers that may not offer access to clean drinking water in the fields, leading to increased soda consumption. When this *telenovela* is completed, the goal is that it be presented in a variety of contexts, so that men, women and children of all ages have the opportunity to see it.

UC Regents is excited about the potential this *telenovela* will have to convey nutrition information and encourage healthy eating habits among farm workers.

Once production of the *telenovela* is complete, UC Regents staff is looking forward to collaborating with agencies and media outlets across the state to make sure that it is seen by as large a farm worker audience as possible. UC Regents staff also hopes that it will be a useful educational tool for organizations that work with farm worker populations.

For more information, please contact Christy Getz at cgetz@nature.berkeley.edu.

University of Southern California (Keck Diabetes Prevention Initiative of USC)
Contract #: 06-55109

Active Community Members Become Energetic Nutrition Teachers

Residents in many communities in Los Angeles are struggling with eating well and getting enough exercise, and both are contributing to high rates of obesity and diabetes.

A Community Advisory Board (CAB) in East Los Angeles was formed in one of these challenging neighborhoods to look at possible interventions to improve the lives of their residents. One intervention they thought would be successful is supermarket tours and hands on cooking demonstrations. Using the community's input, a curriculum was developed called "From the Market to Your Plate" and funds were received from the *Network* to implement it. Two nutrition students were part of the CAB. One attended monthly meetings for more than two years and another attended many meetings as well as interned in the central office for over a year. When it came time to hire the staff to teach the classes, they were the natural choice.

Not only are they nutrition students and members of the CAB, they also speak Spanish and were raised in the culture of the participants we are trying to educate. Both bring their enthusiasm to each class and have received very positive feedback from the participants. Classes are rarely missed and the participants especially enjoy sampling traditional, yet healthier foods that the students create.

The nutrition students are slated to continue teaching for the duration of the grant, and will also participate in other aspects such as putting on health fairs and assisting with the retail program. Being students, they have also assisted the project by enlisting other nutrition students to volunteer at *Network* events. Neither student could probably have imagined that when they began volunteering their time by attending community meetings that eventually, they would become star nutrition educators in the very community they wished to help.

For more information, please contact Valerie Ruelas at vruelas@chla.usc.edu.

Urban Resource Systems, Inc.
Contract #: 06-55087

Youth Cultivate a Healthy Summer in the Garden

Urban Sprouts provides garden-based nutrition education for middle and high school students attending some of San Francisco's most under-resourced schools. The neighborhoods around the schools contain more liquor stores and fast food restaurants than sources of healthy food, while billboards for fast food and soda companies meet your gaze at intersections. Students at these schools are "hungry" for the garden-based nutrition education that Urban Sprouts provide; they eat all the salads, fruits, vegetables, and healthy meals Urban Sprouts can create during nutrition classes. However, at these struggling schools, class periods are short and there is never enough time for cooking and gardening.

This spring, as the year came to a close, students didn't want to say good-bye to the garden! The summer stretched out before them, with hours to spend either outdoors, where street crime and violence are ever-present, or indoors with only the TV for company. Urban Sprouts decided to partner with the Garden for the Environment, a local community garden, to provide a two-week intensive summer program. Students jumped at the idea! More students signed up than we could have imagined. Urban Sprouts staff trained five high school students to serve as mentors and leaders for the 16 middle school students. The youth had an amazing two weeks of workshops about nutrition and the environment, physical garden work for over an hour, and two healthy meals every day. On the first day they cringed when staff produced granola and yogurt for breakfast, but by the second week they were comparing flavors of multi-grain cereals and asking for seconds on salad at lunchtime.

The summer program greatly strengthened the impact of an in-class garden-based nutrition education during the school year. For one reason, the summer program tripled students' total exposure to the program; after 20 hours of participation during the school year they worked with staff for another 40 hours over the summer. With this increase of involvement, staff saw change as students moved from knowledge of good nutrition and positive attitudes towards fruits and vegetables to signs of behavior change. Students took food from the garden, recipes, and new ideas to try at home. Second, the summer program increased our interaction with students' parents dramatically. More than 80% of students' parents attended the last day party, where their children gave tours of the garden and demonstrations of their gardening and cooking skills. Staff received more feedback than ever before from parents saying their children were asking for new healthy foods at home.

Urban Sprouts' experience with the summer program taught new strategies for reaching parents and involving them in the work done by the staff. Urban Sprouts gave students specific opportunities to try out their new learning at home, and staff communicated directly with parents regularly throughout the program.

The staff found that mobile phones were the best way to reach parents and youth, including through text messaging. Feedback from parents gave the staff input for the family nutrition workshops that will begin this fall.

For more information, please contact Abby R. Jaramillo at abby@urbansprouts.org.

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

Bella Vista Champions for Safe, Healthy Kids

When the Healthy Living Council at Bella Vista Elementary School was initially formed in 2006, the parents expressed that they had wanted some changes made and felt their concerns were not being heard and the school was unresponsive. Nutrition Service staff skillfully turned this negative energy to focus on health, both of the children and the school. At the monthly Healthy Living Council meetings, parents learned about healthy nutrition, Harvest of the Month and promoting physical activity as ways to support their own family's health and help to create a healthy community at the school. The group quickly identified an issue of concern to focus on: the traffic and unsafe driving behaviors around the school during morning drop-off time and after school pick-up time were putting students' safety at risk and discouraging walking to school. A student had been recently injured in a traffic accident in front of the school. Drivers were careless about observing students walking to school at the two major 4-way stops flanking the school. Parents in cars, dropping their children off at school were engaging in dangerous driving habits and dropping children off at unsafe spots.

With the guidance of Nutrition Services (NS) Healthy Living Council staff, the parents met with the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council who supported their issue and together the groups connected with the Oakland Police Department (OPD) to raise their concerns. The safety officer instructed the parents of the Healthy Living Council on how to start a school safety patrol. Fourth and fifth grade students were selected with input from the faculty and principal and were provided training and crossing guard equipment from OPD. Parent leaders were trained to monitor and supervise the safety patrol team.

Now into its second school year, the Healthy Living Council continues to meet monthly to provide nutrition education and a Harvest of the Month recipe demonstration. Many parents have incorporated the healthy eating behaviors they learned and are implementing them at home. The Health Living Council continues to recruit parent volunteers to oversee the safety patrol activities. A schedule of parent volunteers to help supervise in mornings and afternoons has been established. Student safety patrol members hold a separate monthly meeting and have designated captains and sergeants to lead their teams. They have taken a pledge of safety and review their responsibilities regularly. Many students want to join the safety patrol as it has become a desirable activity. Some thought is put into the selection process so selected students are not necessarily the "leadership" students, but that opportunity is provided to a diverse range of students who demonstrate commitment.

One teacher has observed that one of her students who was not performing well in class and experiencing problems academically, was selected to join the safety patrol and in the few months that he has been on the patrol, his grades have improved remarkably. This is a wonderful example of connecting health, safety and leadership opportunities to real academic success.

The student safety patrol will continue daily in the morning and afternoon with ongoing support from OPD, a new Safe Routes to Schools project, NS Healthy Living Council and the school community. Parents are taking on the role of recruiting other parent volunteers and scheduling coverage. The OPD will provide periodic monitoring. This has become institutionalized as part of the school's services. Over time, more and more students will walk safely to school and home.

The Bella Vista safety patrol squad is competing for the school safety award sponsored by the police department.

The Healthy Living Council will continue to support healthy eating, healthy living and will look to take on their next challenge to make their school and community healthier and more active.

For more information, please contact Diane Woloshin at diane.woloshin@acgov.org.

City and County of San Francisco Department of Public Health
Contract #: 04-35440

Walking the Talk with Workforce Development Program

City and County of San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH) have been doing classes one to two times a year for the Workforce Development Program (Welfare to Work) run by the Human Services Agency in the City and County of San Francisco for about four years

In the past four months a new employee, took over the coordination of these and has sought to integrate our nutrition education classes into the four week sessions they do for their clients. She sent City and County of San Francisco DPH the following information, telling about the impact of the classes on Workforce Development Program clients. She is referring to the September 24, 2007 class.

“I would be glad to tell you about the successful outcome of having Nutrition Services present information on health and nutrition to our JRA groups.”

“Clients stated to me after the presentation that they felt engaged and inspired by your team. I noticed a few clients making healthier choices at lunch. One client told me that she wanted to increase her energy level "by eating better." Staff asked clients to review the presentation the following week. Some of the clients who weren't in attendance at your presentation stated that they learned about nutrition from their classmates who reviewed the information and materials for them. It has been very successful to have you present to our groups. It stands out as one of the favorite activities during the 4-week JRA curriculum.”

Thanks for everything.

Only time will tell if these changes are lasting, but City and County of San Francisco DPH plan to survey class participants in November 2007 and will be able to see if the information that was shared had an effect on the behavior of Workforce Development Program clients.

City and County of San Francisco DPH are pleased to note that the Workforce Development Program wants to make the class a regular part of their program and anticipate serving other client cohorts in the upcoming contract year.

Young Women Scholars WISE Program

A couple of challenges the target audience faced, which makes making healthy food choices more difficult were 1) the availability of less healthy choices and 2) a busy student lifestyle.

In the past few years City and County of San Francisco DPH have had the pleasure of giving a nutrition presentation for the young women of WISE, which covered eating the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables, being physically active, healthier meals, healthier fast foods, and healthier snacks. This was followed by an interactive Jeopardy-like game. Staff was given a time slot during one of the regular scheduled meetings, during which the WISE Program would provide the young women with dinner.

This past year, staff were excited when they noticed a small, yet significant change, which was the dinners provided to the young women, have become much healthier compared to when they gave their first presentation. The food provided went from fast food-type Chinese food, primarily of meat, to baby carrots, fruit, salad, and more home style type of chicken. In addition, the portion sizes were larger in previous years and smaller recently.

The staff believes that they have made a positive impact, and have motivated the WISE Program facilitators to provide healthier meals for the young women.

They hope to continue to provide information and support to both the administrators as well as the youth of the Young Women Scholars, WISE Program.

For more information, please contact Laura Brainin-Rodriguez at laura.brainin-rodriquez@sfdph.org.

Changing Recreation Staff Norms

The *Network*-funded “Berkeley Be Fit” project had an opportunity this summer to conduct informal healthy eating trainings with staff at the James Kenney Recreation Center in West Berkeley. At the beginning of the project, some of the staff was very resistant to the healthy snacks that replaced their usual fare. Some of the recreation staff were even disparaging of the healthy choices in front of the kids. Department staff was surprised and concerned to hear the other staff say things like “Yuck!”, “No way would I try that food!”

As Health Department staff built relationships with the Recreation Center staff and as the staff actually tried some of the snacks brought in, the tone changed. Eventually the Director asked for technical assistance in shopping and preparing healthy snacks on a very small budget and Health Department staff was able to provide a dietitian to create a menu and shopping list for them. Now, the Recreation Center staff provides snacks from the menu every day, including fresh fruit three times a week from the Farm Fresh Choice neighborhood produce stand located next door at BAHIA, a local non-profit childcare organization. The Health Department had been trying to facilitate Recreation Center purchases from Farm Fresh Choice for many years, but until this year had been unable to overcome logistical barriers. New Health Department staff and changes in the leadership of the Recreation Department and staff created an environment more supportive of problem solving and Department staff was finally successful.

The healthy snacks have become institutionalized at the James Kenney Recreation Center. Since Farm Fresh Choice is co-located at this center (right next door to BAHIA), purchases of fresh fruit have also been institutionalized.

Health Department staff are distributing the healthy snacks menu and shopping list to all of the city recreation centers and plan to adapt it for pre-school and Head Start next year as well. Department staff will monitor the healthy snacks at the centers to ensure the changes continue over the next several years.

For more information, please contact Kate Clayton at kclayton@ci.berkeley.ca.us.

Going Beyond Salads

Nearly every week a member of the county health department nutrition team enters a neighborhood, laden with cartons and carts brimming with colorful vegetables and fruits or exercise items to share with residents who attend a six week workshop series that encourages a healthier lifestyle through better eating and being active. “People say that they learn a lot and want to eat healthier,” states one of the workshop leaders. The question is – do they? Contra Costa Health Services wanted to find out if people are able to follow the advice given during the month and a half of instruction and if they *are* able to make lifestyle changes.

The *Network for a Healthy California* allowed us to take a look at the types of changes that people reported taking place within their families. An evaluation team led by a research specialist helped design a brief survey form that workshop participants completed before and after attending at least five of the six workshops. Each time the groups met, three consistent messages were emphasized 1) prepare, serve and eat vegetables and fruit more often, 2) add more minutes to your day being active, 3) increase your food buying power by participating in the food stamp program. Each week instructors offered additional nutrition information through group discussion, interactive presentations, physical activity demonstrations and tasting new foods and recipes. Participants went home with recipe booklets, cutting boards, pedometers, stretch bands, and information they could refer to often. Instruction and hands on activities taught them how to read labels on food packaging, what a recommended serving of food looks like, where and what time of the year to shop for the best food prices and quality, how to fit more activity into their day and how to reduce stress by planning ahead and serving time-saving yet healthy meals.

The survey results showed a positive and significant change in knowledge about food shopping, preparation and frequency of serving vegetables and fruits, as well as an increase in the amount of vegetables and fruits eaten daily by those who participated in five hours of nutrition education. “My family eats more fruits and vegetables because they have more vitamins,” and “Thank you for the nutrition information, now I cook different[ly],” states two of the mothers. Although knowledgeable about the need to increase physical activity in their lives, a large number of participants did not feel confident enough to do so and consequently answered that physical activity did not increase to the same degree that dietary changes did.

Nutrition team members immediately went to work revising elements of the workshops to include ideas and ways that are culturally appealing to our audiences to help them be more active. They plan to bring information about local and affordable opportunities for physical activity within their own communities and ask already active people to share how they are able to do so.

One of the nutrition instructors summarizes our thoughts by stating, “It [survey findings] provided me and the staff [with] information about the importance of a continuous intervention to the target group in the communities. The changed behaviors and knowledge are remarkable.”

For more information, please contact Donna Coit at dcoit@hsd.cccounty.us.

Discovering a Healthy Eating Ambassador

A woman picked up a flyer at her physician's office about a monthly Cardiovascular Disease Prevention session. She had been told her cholesterol level was elevated and had diabetes. She was also concerned about her family's health. She attended the session with her husband. The couple was very enthusiastic and they left promising to disseminate the information about the session.

The following month, the same couple returned along with their daughter. The woman was disappointed to see that none of her co-workers had attended; she had been very persistent to invite them. *Network* staff offered to go to her office to conduct the session and she provided the name of her supervisor who was very enthusiastic to provide the information to her staff. The session is being planned for the fall of 2007. In the mean time, the couple took nutrition and physical activity information to their worksite.

The couple not only learned and made changes to their eating habits, but also were great ambassadors for healthy eating and physical activity within their family and work place.

The Imperial County Public Health Department will provide training at the workplace and utilize the dynamism generated by this couple to energize local efforts. It is a good idea to utilize community members to help promote healthy eating and physical activity.

For more information, please contact Yoli Viviana Sanchez at yolivivianasanchez@imperialcounty.net.

Planting the Seed for Healthy Choices Earlier in Life

Trying to decide what success story and challenge to tell is a challenge in itself for County of Marin, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) program. It is like trying to pick out a favorite child and telling one success story that represents that child. They have five subcontracts they work with that are all doing amazing projects and that they feel have begun to make a difference in lifestyle behavior in their pre-school, their elementary school, middle/high school and in the larger community of people that they reach.

Teachers and parents lament about the unhealthy food consumed by youngsters and even the lack of nutritious food in the home. Often times *Network* staff hear how students are coming to the school hungry and not paying attention in class and not getting enough physical activity due to unsafe neighborhoods and the impact of the computer and video games. The Nutrition Education Coordinator at North Bay Children's Center also points out "the challenges we face are common to all educators- we live and operate in obesogenic community environments where we compete for busy parent's time and attention."

Studies show that just presenting facts and figures to youngsters does not change lifestyle behaviors by itself. *Network* staff has to change the community one class, one school, and one organization at a time until they have lasting, sustainable changes in their community. This cannot be accomplished in one year. An overall challenge to them, as a public health program, is trying to integrate nutrition education curriculum into their projects, be it pre-school, school, teen center or community organization. Staff and teachers are hard put just to squeeze in the academic curriculum that they must meet each school year. Add to that, funding constraints and the lack of awareness and knowledge of the importance of eating healthy and being physically active, by staff, youth and low income families.

The *Network* staff thinks that if they had to choose an undercurrent of success in their five subcontracts, they would be around having a garden and cooking as a venue to teach. What began with a planter box and some donated seeds in one elementary school has caught fire and become a centerpiece of nutrition education in many of their projects. Learning about where food comes from and how delectable it tastes, especially when it is planted, nurtured and harvested with the help of children themselves is never forgotten. You have only to visit the Kindergarten class at Bahia Vista Elementary School, San Pedro Elementary, or the "Garden of Eatin'" pre-school project, as the children learn to help "harvest" greens and veggies in their garden and bring them into the classroom to wash and prepare a special "salad." A teacher may use "nutrition theme" music and point out why each ingredient is so special for their growth and health. At San Geronimo Community Collaborative, low income food stamp families enjoy the fruits of the garden and learn how to prepare food bank donations with recipe ideas that are demonstrated in "family cooking nights."

Only because of *Network* funding are Network staff able to support nutrition education with a garden/cooking concept. At Bay Area Community Resources' Teen Center, low-income teens are learning how to use culinary skills to make healthy food taste delicious and learning lifetime as well as future professional skills.

The project's success is reflected in the *Network* staff's ability to train the taste buds of children to appreciate fresh fruits and vegetables in their natural state without a lot of added sugar or fat. As was told to them by North Bay's "Garden of Eatin'" Nutrition Education Coordinator, "What you do here will stay with the children the rest of their lives." And staff would like to add, that they find it encouraging that in some cases, the children are teaching and influencing their parent's behaviors. As one parent stated at Bahia Vista Elementary School, "my child is now asking me for tangerines instead of hot cheetos as a snack!"

Up till now the focus at their schools and child care centers has been on training teachers, and staff, as well as the children and incorporating both garden and cooking experiences. This next year they will be to discover better ways to engage parents and teens in activities that will link them to be mentors and achieve lasting positive lifestyle changes.

For more information, please contact Linda Armstrong at larmstrong@co.marin.ca.us.

Monterey County Health Department
Contract #: 04-35453

Elkhorn Elects Physical Activity

Monterey County Health Department staff noticed when they were working at Elkhorn Elementary School that the students did not have any access to or interest in physical activity. Elkhorn School is located in a rural area that is remote, hilly and dark. There is no soccer league or any other organized sports. They also noticed that the students were noticeably more overweight than many of the students in other schools.

With the help of the students, teachers and the principal, they decided to organize and schedule a *Spring Into Health* fitness day where students have the option to participate in difference activities: jump rope, hula hoop, jogging, volleyball, soccer and basketball.

After the event they noticed an increased desire to have more opportunities for physical activities. In fact they were surprised to find out that the students expressed an interest to have more physical activity oriented events scheduled at regular intervals during the year.

The *Spring Into Health* event proved to be such a big success for the students that this year the students and teachers organized their own event without the help of *Network* staff. They are now confident that when students have the opportunity to participate in a physical activity of their own choice, they will find that sports are fun and will want to make physical activity part of their lives.

For more information, please contact Christine Moss at moss@d.co.monterey.ca.us.

Bringing Nutrition Education and More to Apartment Complexes

Families residing in large low-income housing complexes need nutrition education because most have limited food budgets and few opportunities for physical activity. Project Access, a non-profit organization, helps these residents by providing them with onsite services in education, health and social services. Project Access and Health Care Agency (HCA) *Network* staff joined efforts to bring nutrition education classes to youth at the after school programs at two sites. The Fullerton and the Anaheim sites each have approximately 400 apartment units and reside in Food Stamp Nutrition Education qualifying census tracts. Most of the youth were 6-12 years old and speak Spanish as their primary language.

Youth at both apartment complexes received nutrition education classes along with food demonstrations once a month for five months. The classes were about 1-hour long and well attended with 10-28 youth at each class.

- 1st Class: "MyPyramid" and prepared a fruit and yogurt parfait.
- 2nd Class: "Fruits & Vegetables, Eat the Rainbow" and prepared salsa on whole-wheat pita.
- 3rd Class: "What's on a Label?" and prepared apples with fruit dip.
- 4th Class: "Your Fast Food Order" and prepared "Healthy Banana Splits."
- 5th Class: "What's in Your Drink?" and prepared smoothies.

The youth, families and staff at the Project Access sites made positive changes. Most youth stated they asked their parents to buy fruits and vegetables at the grocery store and tried to make the taste test recipes at home, especially the smoothies. In addition, the younger children gained confidence in their food preparation skills.

Prior to the classes, the youth did not think much about nutrition. During and after the course, they became more aware of what they were eating and began asking questions, moving along the stages of change continuum.

As a result of the classes, the Fullerton service coordinator began thinking of ways to provide healthier foods and snacks to the youth and improve the vending machines options. The taste tests helped the staff realize that youth would eat healthy foods and she plans to do additional healthy food demonstrations.

The project expanded to include two grocery store tours. Both children and parents walked from the Fullerton site to a nearby store where they received a 1-½ hour tour given by the Albertson's corporate dietitian. These events were informative and a huge success.

Several of the youth who attended the nutrition classes had the confidence to staff a booth at the Fullerton Project Access annual health and resource fair. Their nutrition and physical activity booth was a great success and the most popular booth at the fair. The youth enjoyed leading the beanbag toss, jumping rope, playing Frisbee, reading fruit and vegetable riddles and distributing nutrition information.

As a result of the nutrition classes at these Project Access sites, service coordinators and regional managers requested classes and services at other sites for youth, parents and staff.

For more information, please contact Maridet Ibañez at MIbanez@ochca.com.

Adelante (Moving forward) with healthier menu

For the past 13 years the Adelante Mujer Latina Conference has served as a college, career, and personal development resource conference for young Latinas, their mothers and mentors. Professional Latina women plan, coordinate and implement this very successful conference reaching approximately 2,000 young women from throughout Los Angeles County through keynote speakers, exhibits, and a variety of workshops. Traditionally conference organizers relied on food donations or looked for inexpensive options to feed participants.

Since our agency has become part of the planning committee three years ago, subtle changes have been made throughout this time. The first year, no soda or punch were served at lunch time, and participants were given water to drink. The second year, apples were introduced as dessert instead of the traditional Pan Dulce or cookies of the past. The third year, one staff person was asked to Chair the Hospitality and Food Committee. They were instrumental in assuring funds were allocated for food options. To say the least the menu was completely changed, a balanced nutritious breakfast and lunch was served including correct portion sizes. Menus were posted along with the new USDA MyPyramid showing the different food groups of each meal and serving size being served. The conference evaluations showed a very positive response to the healthier food choices.

Once again the same staff person had been asked to Chair this very important committee for the 2008 14th Annual Adelante Mujer Latina Conference, Saturday, April 26, 2008. Menus will be planned once again following the MyPyramid.

The staff person would like to be able to confer or train others to take the steps for healthier food choices while in workplace meetings or conferences. They are already giving input to menu choices for the division meetings and the other staff trusts them to know they will be getting refreshments, snacks or lunches that will be nutritious, low in fat and delicious.

For more information, please contact Mary Urtecho-Garcia at mugarcia@cityofpasadena.net.

Healthy Active Long Beach Week

Over the past few years while implementing the program City of Long Beach, Department of Public Health (DPH) have heard community members and providers express the need for skill-based education opportunities that will enable them to make healthy lifestyle changes. Although Department staff offer nutrition education classes that provide this, staff recognize that not everyone is able and/or willing to commit to a series of classes and that it is necessary to offer alternative opportunities to develop these skills.

During this reporting period staff developed and implemented the first annual “Healthy Active Long Beach Week” to provide skill-based education opportunities for both kids and adults in their eligible neighborhoods. The week took place August 6 through August 11 with the theme of “Fun with Food and Play” and included activities at each of the Healthy Active Long Beach Park’s (each day at a different site). On Friday staff hosted an event in conjunction with the Downtown Farmers’ Market. Each day families had the opportunity to participate in hands-on learning activities such as healthy cooking and physical activity demonstrations and food tasting. Participants attended nutrition education workshops and were provided with cookbooks, nutrition education material and NERI. During Friday’s event, participants could also have their BMI and glucose levels screened (non *Network*-funded) and meet with USDA’s Power Panther.

Although no impact evaluation was conducted for these events staff had several success stories that support the activities and indicate that they had a positive affect on those that attended. There were over 550 participants at all days combined and reached many more through press releases, articles in the Press Telegram and a Proclamation signed by the Mayor and presented at the Friday event. Throughout the week staff had many adults and children try fruits and vegetables that they stated they either had never tried or never liked before. Many kids requested copies of recipe cards so that they could have their Mom or Dads make it for them again. Staff also heard that several people who participated in Kid Tribe’s “hoop-a-palooza” demonstrations purchased hoola hoops and has seen staff in the community share that they had been using them at home with their kids. Perhaps one of the best success stories was a child from Chavez Park who showed up on Friday to participate in the physical activity demonstration led by Kid Tribe. He came up and hugged the staff and stated that he came because. “ He had so much fun and knew that he could play with us and no one would laugh at him.” He explained that he rarely plays any of the games because he feels like people will make fun of him because he is so big but that he had so much fun when staff came to the park that he plans to start trying different sports with the group.

This first annual event was definitely a success and staff is already planning for next year's and hopes to make it even bigger with perhaps adding a community walk event on Saturday or Sunday.

For more information, please contact Lara Turnbull at lara_turnbull@longbeach.gov.

A Change in a Community

The Hispanic community in Lincoln, California is an insulated group. Many of the participants in the Hispanic Women's support group have never had an opportunity to meet together with women who live outside of the village where they came from. Many have never had the opportunity to speak freely in a supportive environment outside of their family. Many of the women have recently come to live in Lincoln. Many do not speak English and have very limited education. Most of the women do not know how much they can trust the outside community.

The health educator, Maria Cordova, has been facilitating the Hispanic Women's Support group in Lincoln for over 5 years. Recently, she has had a major breakthrough with her current group. As she was teaching the fruits and vegetables class, one of the participants started to discuss her concerns about her children's weight. As Maria was discussing the issues of nutrition and health with fruits and vegetables, the mother asked if the two were really connected. From that discussion, the other mothers started to ask Maria more questions about nutrition and most importantly, how they could make their children's diets healthier! At the end of the sessions, the group had a potluck. Each woman had taken a family recipe and made it low-fat and included more vegetables. For dessert, they had fresh fruit!

As Maria was relaying the story, she shared her strong belief that these women were moving to a new level of confidence. Maria felt that many members of the group would take this experience and relate it to other parts of their family's life. She felt that they not only understood the relationship of diet to their children's health, they were committed to working on other areas to keep their children healthy. One woman had been reluctant to take her children for physical exams. After experiencing this group, she took her children to the doctor. This mother also committed to cooking healthier meals, and although she could not read much English, she asked Maria to help her translate many of the recipes she had found in English. She also asked Maria to help her learn to measure foods with a measuring cup (something she had never done!) Maria was very excited to see the growth in this mother and with the entire group.

Maria will continue to work with the Hispanic women to increase all of their skills. Most important, she is working to build a support network so that these women can rely on each other and learn from each other. As more and more mothers in this group are committed to healthier diets for their families, together they will change the lives of their families and all of the families involved with the support group.

For more information, please contact Vicki Spannagel at vspannag@placer.ca.gov.

TRY IT, YOU MIGHT LIKE IT

Children choose to eat foods they are familiar to them. Unfortunately, foods that are familiar to them are often not the healthiest foods. Like at many schools, Riverside County Community Health Agency see the children at Jefferson Elementary eating hot Cheetos, chips, candy and other unhealthy snacks during recess. At lunchtime, they continue to eat familiar foods, such as corndogs, tator tots and fruit cocktail. They are not exposed to a wide range of foods, including many types of fruits and vegetables.

By implementing Harvest of the Month (HOTM) and a new salad bar, the students had a unique opportunity to expand their palates. Once a month, a sample of a fruit or vegetable was offered during recess. At first students peered at the produce leerily, some sniffed and many afraid of the unknown turned away. But, a few brave souls made the leap to try the fruit or vegetable. By the end of the school year, the students no longer peered leerily, but excitedly swarmed our table to try something new.

At the beginning of the year, children fearfully asked, "What's that?" By the end of the year, that common question changed to, "Will this be on the salad bar, today?" and "Can I have seconds?" Their interest is reflected in the number of students participating in the survey: it doubled and tripled by the end of the year. The salad bar is a hit, too with an average of 35 percent of the students choosing it for lunch.

HOTM and the salad bar are expanding to other schools in the district. Since starting at Jefferson Elementary in 2005, HOTM is now at two additional schools. The salad bar will be implemented at more than 50% of the schools by the end of the current school year.

For more information, please contact Durreen Qureshi at dqureshi@co.riverside.ca.us.

Finding a Healthier Route

Imagine yourself training for a new career. One that promises decent pay and plenty of job opportunities once your licensed. There's just one catch. You've chosen a field notorious for creating poor health among its members. Welcome to the world of commercial truck driving

Every six weeks, thirty-five or so men and women enroll in truck driver training classes at Foodlink, Sacramento's largest food bank. The group is diverse in every sense—age, ethnic background, life experience. Some are young and just starting out; even more are starting over. Several years ago, Sacramento County's Healthy Eating Living Partnership (HELP) program received an invitation from the course instructor. Given the terrible health odds these newly minted drivers would be facing—this is an industry noted for obesity, hypertension and lack of exercise—could the HELP program provide them with some preventive nutrition education? Intrigued by the idea of teaching truckers, *Network* staff began with a one-class session. Today, staff spends five hours in the classroom promoting the USDA message of healthy eating with increased physical activity, and they end each series with a tasting of some unfamiliar fruits and vegetables.

From the outset, the staff's goal was to make the classes' fun and engaging. They cover topics ranging from selecting and preparing fruits and vegetables to reading a nutrition label, and they brainstorm ways to stay healthy and active "on the road." Staff invites each person to take stock of his or her current eating and activity habits and to identify individual changes they can make. Almost immediately, a spirit of competition takes hold. The students vie with each other to see who can tell the most impressive story of change. Hands shoot up at the start of each class session. "You know how Jim was talking about chard last week? I went to the farmer's market this weekend and tried some". "Hey! I packed my lunch today and it has carrots, an apple, AND a banana!" "That's true! I saw him eating the banana!" The stories are met with applause and laughter. Staff rewards every good deed with a t-shirt or ball cap promoting healthy eating. Staff also encourages the group to learn from each other and they do—swapping recipes, gardening ideas, and tips for where to get the best buys on produce.

A few years ago, *Network* staff began a formal process to evaluate the impact these nutrition classes were having. They administered a pre-and post-test to measure knowledge, preferences and consumption of fruits and vegetables. The results consistently showed a positive change in all three measures. After completing the nutrition classes, the truckers-in-training are adding significantly more fruit and vegetable servings to their daily diets and have appreciably increased their knowledge of healthy eating.

Staff then added a control group (who showed no changes) to confirm the reliability of our results. Mention nutrition education and truckers in the same breath and you have the start of a good story! But there is a moral to this particular story of success. The *Network* staff learned that individuals already committed to learning something new—be it truck driving or parenting or language skills—may be the very people most open to making changes in how they eat. And this knowledge now guides their efforts to partner with other community organizations serving low-income residents in Sacramento County.

For more information, please contact Kathy Abbott at abbottk@saccounty.net.

From Nutrition Education to a Lifetime Change!

When targeting low-income residents living in the poorest area of San Bernardino, barriers to healthy eating and physical activity is clearly evident.

Many people are not cognizant of what constitutes a healthy choice, lack the finances to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, or do not have access to fruits and vegetables at their local neighborhood stores. Barriers to physical activity include: neighborhood safety issues, lack of finances to join a gym or participate in classes at community centers, or lack of awareness regarding available resources in their community.

One of County of San Bernardino, Department of Public Health's (DPH) Network activities was to expand nutrition education/physical activity promotion outreach to children and/or parents of school age children in underserved communities and/or low resource schools. In order to accomplish this goal, they promote nutrition and physical activity through active nutrition classes where participants get an opportunity to learn through hands-on activities that reinforce nutrition and physical activity behaviors. A variety of nutrition and physical activity topics are presented. Food demonstrations allow participants to learn how to make simple, tasty and healthy recipes; participants are encouraged to engage in physical activity and are motivated to continue doing so, for their own benefits. All lessons and demonstrations include handouts and resources that support the presentation.

Many community members participating in the classes have made major changes in their lives to be healthier! They have successfully traded their old eating habits and sedentary behaviors for a healthier and more active lifestyle! At the conclusion of the *Network* classes, participants have decided on their own to create neighborhood walking groups. Interest in regular aerobic classes allowed *Network* staff to train community women to conduct the classes; they have been meeting weekly to exercise together ever since! Those who cannot attend the aerobic classes or meet with the walking group have opted to attend Parks and Recreation exercise sessions. Everyone is "walking" his or her "talk."

County of San Bernardino's DPH aims to keep the momentum rolling so that these women continue to embrace healthy eating, physical activity and to promote these messages to those in their families and communities. *Network* staff will work with these women to encourage them to become "Champions for Change," and as such propel the movement for a supportive, healthy environment for all.

For more information, please contact Jeanne Silberstein at jsilberstein@dph.sbcounty.gov.

San Joaquin County Public Health Services
Contract #: 06-55114

Harvest of the Month at Manteca Unified School District

Manteca Unified School District (MUSD) worked with its foodservice department staff to provide healthier food choices to their students, such as drinking 100% juice, water, and milk in all district elementary schools. During breakfast, the staff served fresh fruits, granola bars, cereals and oatmeal so students can eat and try healthful items.

Over the years, the district is known for their excellent “salad bar” project. The school Food Service Director for MUSD has taken every opportunity to involve teachers, administrators, school board members, and parents in school food service programs, mostly through nutrition education projects. She felt that their support has been extremely beneficial to their district and she has taken every opportunity to do that. Before a class plans a menu for the district, she takes the time to go into the classroom to explain what goes into the school lunch, including the nutritional standards.

The *Network for a Healthy California* of San Joaquin County partnered with the Nutrition Food Services Department at MUSD. The current program includes a subcontract with MUSD to provide nutrition education at three schools with eligible student populations.

In October 2006, the Food Service Director requested the Harvest of the Month (HOTM) program to be implemented to their selected schools in MUSD. The Program Assistant and Community Outreach Worker met with the Food Service Director and Recreational Leader to coordinate the program. From October 2006 – December 2006, Public Health Services (PHS) staff formed a planning committee team (i.e., Food Service Director, Recreational Leader, and PHS staff) that will seek to improve students’ awareness and behavior in making healthy food choices.

The centerpiece of this program is the HOTM curriculum. One of their *Network* activities was to coordinate the nutrition lessons at three schools in MUSD. The district has a long relationship with their SHAPE Program.

The PHS staff collaborated with the Food Services Department to implement the nutrition activities which include:

- School-Based Health Fairs/Events;
- PHS staff participated in “Walk to School Day” at Sequoia Elementary School, Shasta Elementary School, and Lathrop Elementary School;
- The Program Assistant and Community Outreach Worker attended quarterly meetings with the planning committee to improve students’ awareness and behavior in making healthy food choices;
- Thirty six (36) teachers provided nutrition education to 1,172 children on HOTM nutrition lessons;
- The Program Assistant coordinated with Recreational Leader about nutrition promotion and awareness with Walk to School Day, Spring Into Health, Back to School Night, Nutrition Olympics, HOTM, and *Children’s Power Play Campaign*;
- The Program Assistant and Community Outreach Worker provided nutrition education posters in the selected school sites at MUSD’s school cafeteria, such as HOTM and *Power Play*;
- The PHS staff provided In-Service Training to thirty-six (36) teachers about HOTM. In the training, the PHS staff provided the HOTM tool kit, *Network* brochures, and NERI promotional items, such as cutting boards and aprons to support the teachers in providing nutrition education to their students. Three selected schools in MUSD participated in the program, such as Sequoia Elementary School, Shasta Elementary School, and Lathrop Elementary School; and
- The planning committee was looking to increase teacher’s interest and participation in the changing norms of students around the behavior of making healthy food choices.

Keys to this agency’s success include the Program Assistant and the Community Outreach Worker sustaining a solid relationship with the Food Service Department at MUSD, the PHS staff and food services staff partnering to coordinate HOTM in three selected school sites, there is a mutual support from the school board, administration, and school food services staff at MUSD, and generous parent groups in three elementary schools in MUSD: such as Shasta Elementary School, Lathrop Elementary School, and Sequoia Elementary School.

With support from parents, teachers, administrators, and the community, the selected schools established a school health committee to review current nutrition practices and make changes as necessary.

Currently, as she walked through one of the school campus, some students recognized her as the “Nutrition Lady.” During the “Walk to School Day” event in October 2006, she noticed how organized the food services staff was in preparing the students’ breakfast program. The Recreational Leader and Food Service Director dedicated their time and effort to provide healthier food choices for their students so they can be aware of making healthy nutrition choices. The teachers at the three school sites reported that students are telling other students about the HOTM nutrition lessons, especially the taste testing activity.

The planning subcommittee team (i.e., Food Service Director, Program Assistant, Recreational Leader and Community Outreach Worker) at MUSD will be busy planning their next HOTM nutrition education lessons. San Joaquin County Public Health Services Nutrition Program staff will provide on-going training and technical support for teachers at the selected school sites. One of their priorities is to meet quarterly with the Food Service Director and Recreational Leader and be a supportive partner to improve students’ awareness and behavior in making healthy food choices. In addition, they are hoping to increase teacher’s interest in the changing norms of students around their behavior of making better choices of eating healthy foods in their school and at home. One of their primary goals is to firmly establish HOTM in Manteca as a priority for district funding and support.

**“Walk to School Day”
Manteca Unified School District (MUSD)**

On October 4, 2007, MUSD Nutrition Services participated in the annual International Walk to School event at August Knodt Elementary. The event, which teaches children about the value of healthy nutrition and fitness, served over 650 students. The students, SHAPE parents and Nutrition Services staff designed fun, innovative, and informative decor to captivate the interest of the children. To date, about 3,000 students have taken part in the Walk to School at 9 different sites.

For more information, please contact Shene Bowie at sbowie@sjcphs.org.

Children Working as Undercover Agents of Change

Nutrition information alone will not motivate most people to change. Motivation is the real key to changing lives through nutrition and exercise. Most individuals know that they need to eat vegetables and that it is good to drink water, however they are not motivated to prepare vegetables and drink water when soda is cheaper, tastes good and vegetables require preparation and are not as tasty as the choices they are now making. What will motivate parents to change? The love and “cariño” for their children.

San Mateo County Public Health Department’s (PHD) Mother’s Day Spas capitalize on the natural instinct of Mothers to nurture and protect their children—staff uses this powerful motive to motivate them to make dietary changes. It is a strong incentive to model good dietary and life style habits.

On Mother’s Day 2007, 4000 mothers received handwritten letters nominating them as “Mother of the Year” from their children. The letters expressed appreciation for all the things they do—taking care of them, cooking, and helping with homework, etc. The mothers also received a letter from San Mateo County PHD acknowledging how important they are to their children and encouraging them to take care of themselves. With this letter came an invitation to the Mother’s Day Spa (Nutrition Class). The children urged their mothers to attend. After all, they were awarded the invitation to the spa because of their efforts in submitting a nomination. Many of the children even took the initiative of calling San Mateo County PHD staff to sign up their mothers for these two hours of nurturing and learning. Many of the children came with their mothers to read their letters out loud. Good example of the “nag factor” working in our favor.

The motivation for making the dietary changes such as eating more fruits and vegetables and being more active is now being generated (fueled) by the love for their children and wanting to be a good example for their children. The phone survey indicated that since attending the spa, most of them had made some of the recommended changes. The mother’s devotion to their children inspired lifestyle changes.

San Mateo County PHD is now developing a similar program for men “My Hero.” Staff is hoping to generate the support of the men in the community to model healthy behavior. The children again will nominate their “Hero” and they will be honored along with a nutrition program that encourages eating vegetables and fruits and activity.

For more information, please contact Lydia Guzman at lguzman@co.sanmateo.ca.us.

Santa Clarita Valley School Food Services Agency
Contract #: 04-35462

NAC-In-The-Box” Helps Nurture Nutrition Education

Santa Clarita Valley School Food Services Agency Nutrition Advisory Councils (NACs) at Newhall and Canyon Springs were wonderful models of nutrition education. So much so, that they wanted to expand NACs to two additional schools this year (Wiley Canyon and Cedar creek). However, one of their challenges with NACs has been the communication between the NAC students and the general student body. They needed to improve the line of communication so that ALL students at the schools could benefit from the knowledge that NAC students were receiving.

They now have NACs at four schools, each meeting every other week, offering many opportunities for students to learn and share with their peers.

Based on teacher and student feedback from the previous year, they instituted “NAC in the Box” as a means to improve communications between the NAC students and their classrooms. After each NAC lesson/activity, the NAC students take back a box containing a brief review of the lesson/activity and talking points for the student to share with their class. There is also a mini-poster for teachers to post in the “nutrition nook” of their classroom. Sometimes the box also contains a tasting sample of a recipe the NAC students prepared and tasted, along with the recipe, so teachers can duplicate the lesson in class. We have asked teachers to allow time for the NAC students to share this information. Initially, results were mixed—some students were too shy to present, some teachers did not allow time for sharing. As they worked through the year, they streamlined messages and gave the NAC students a chance to practice what they would present. Preparation has made a huge difference. Teachers are more willing for the students to present, and the NAC students felt more comfortable as the nutrition “leader”. Communication of nutrition and physical activity messages has expanded.

NAC students are seen as leaders on campus. Assisting them to develop public speaking skills via the “NAC in a Box” fits right in with 4/5th grade curriculum. It offers them the opportunity to develop confidence in their presentation skills, along with the knowledge they gain and share regarding healthful food and activity choices. As the program has grown over the years, former NAC students have stayed involved as NAC alumni, assisting with school-wide events and promoting NAC to the new group of 4th or 5th graders each fall.

The Nutrition Educator includes an opportunity for teachers to provide feedback on each NAC lesson/activity and uses the information received to adjust and revise lessons/activities and the way they are shared. Santa Clarita Valley School Food Services Agency also hopes to expand to one more school site in the next year, using their improved NAC model.

For more information, please contact Tracy Fiscella at tfiscella@scvfsa.org.

Best Practices

During this reporting period, staff continued to use the *“Helping Children Eat Well”* curriculum by Ellen Satter and Associates. The implementation of this curriculum was well received and considered successful. Staff provided pre-developed Power Point presentations on nutrition education and physical activities with enhancements of food demonstrations, taste testing and provided parents with lesson plans to incorporate at home. Staff provided “Best Practices” strategies when implementing curriculum and incentives that include NERI items to preschool teachers, parents, children, and community groups. Feedback from participants was very positive. Preschool program providers have increased the number of nutrition education and physical activities as an integrated component to their center’s curriculum. Parents have progressively increased at least one fruit, one vegetable to their meals and one daily physical activity to their busy schedule. Parents have appreciated presentations and become conscious of choosing healthy foods for their families.

This year Healthy Pathways participated in 41 nutrition education classes and reached a total of three hundred twenty-one (321) participants, as well as two hundred and seven (207) providers (some providers may have been duplicated contacts), and two hundred ninety-five (295) preschool children in nutrition and physical activity education.

Staff implemented a matrix evaluation system for providers to determine utilization of physical and nutritional activities. In addition, staff conducted a needs assessment with parents to determine what their common practices at home included. Further, Staff also conducted pre and post tests to determine changes in behavior as it related to the nutrition and physical activities series. The results of the evaluation determined that parents increased the rate of healthy lifestyles choices. Parents became more aware of the benefits of incorporating healthy lifestyle choices that can contribute to an overall healthier life span; thus, reducing the rate or incidence of chronic illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, cholesterol, and low /high blood pressure. In addition, parents learned to shop for food that will benefit the whole family and became aware of portion size and portion control. The various evaluation components determined that program participants were positively impacted by the numerous presentations offered.

The success of the nutrition and physical activities classes has led preschools and providers to implement “best practices” to parents on physical activities such as walking to school, children and parents biking to school, and children incorporating fruits and vegetables in their meal choices at school. In addition, program staff has received many community–based referrals for services, and plans to provide on a limited basis.

For more information, please contact Ofelia Toledo-Prieto at ofeliap@sanbenitoco.org.

Mandarins Command the Lead

Santa Barbara County Public Health Department staff work with a low-income junior high school that was in serious danger of closing because of “white flight”, low test scores, a group of disgruntled teachers, and dropping enrollment. In 2004-05, the school had three different principals, with the third one finally staying on for over two years, now. Grade 7-8 students are also at a difficult age of shifting emotions, rapid growth and development and are often resistant to the unfamiliar, such as fruits and veggies that are new to them. Strong peer pressure at this age means one student saying yuck can influence a whole class. The new principal, while excellent on many levels, is not a healthy role model. She smokes, is overweight, and eats high-sugar and high-fat foods. The school has entrenched practices of using candy for rewards and fundraisers. Lastly, the teachers are stressed about taking time away from academics related to state testing. Asking for time for Harvest of the Month (HOTM) was dicey.

When *Network* staff took HOTM to the school, they were fortunate to already know the Assistant Principal from previous work. Then two Science, one Health/Science, and one Art teacher were willing to give it a try. It helped that the HOTM materials from *Network* were excellent and that *Network* staff did all the work to bring taste testing to the classrooms for about 350 students. Staff always consulted with the teachers on preparing the lesson and on what worked and didn't work. Another ingredient for success was that making and bringing a dish from a HOTM recipe for the Administration/staff/teachers was a hit. The principal said at the end of both the first and the second year of HOTM, “I LOVE Harvest of the Month.” Staff thinks she has seen the benefits and wants to contribute to student health in this way. This is starting the third year of HOTM at this junior high and now all four Science teachers and the Art teacher with about 470 students are participating.

Network staff did an evaluation survey of this year's HOTM in April 2007. Although it was not a formal impact evaluation (and their LIA is too small to be required to do impact evaluation), it did answer their questions about preferences for specific Harvest products, and what students liked and didn't like about the HOTM lessons. 148 students completed the survey.

Staff found out that the most popular were mandarins and dried fruit and the least popular was asparagus, although even with asparagus, 30% of the students liked it. The results were very positive. Most students looked forward to HOTM (74%). The most popular part of the lesson was taste testing (90%). Among the 130 comments, only nine were negative.

The overwhelmingly positive responses contained these three quotes on “What was the best thing about Harvest of the Month this year?”

“Trying a new fruit-persimmon-for the first time! We bought persimmons after Harvest of the Month.”

“I have learned a lot and new things about vegetables that I never knew about.”

“Harvest of the Month was great. It was fascinating to learn about fruits and vegetables and eating them too.”

These responses express exactly why staff does this!

The *Network* staff plan to continue HOTM activities with the larger number of classes/students and maintain high standards. They want to learn more about taste preferences and the incidence of adventurous or sensitive eaters, in order to better understand student reaction to HOTM produce. For the least popular products, they will try ways to make them more appealing (next year, 08-09 will probably be back to the cycle that was evaluated in the survey).

For more information, please contact Anne Patterson at anne.patterson@sbcphd.org.

Santa Clara County Public Health Department
Contract #: 04-35461

WIC Recipe Contest

WIC moms are faced with the challenge of providing healthy, low cost meals to their families while dealing with busy schedules

Santa Clara County WIC, in partnership with the *Network*, held a recipe contest for WIC moms and WIC staff. The purpose of the contest was 1) to encourage moms to develop and share healthy, low fat recipes that promoted fruits and vegetables, 2) to celebrate moms who are “Champions for Change,” and 3) to encourage staff to promote healthy eating. Recipe contest guidelines were distributed in English and Spanish at six Santa Clara County WIC sites. Participants were encouraged to submit their recipes to celebrate healthy eating and win prizes. Roy Avila, of the “Roy Avila Q&A Show” on KICU Channel 36 Cable 6, enthusiastically agreed to promote the contest on not just one of his shows, but on two different segments. Nutrition and Wellness staff was invited to come and promote WIC and the *Network* on the first show. On this segment, the top three recipes were prepared and displayed on the show. During the second show, Susan Rojas, the First Place Winner, was invited to the show to share her recipe “Chicken with Asparagus” and to share how she incorporates healthy eating and active living into her family’s lifestyle.

The thrill of winning the contest was evident in Susan; winning this contest and appearing on a TV show not only boosts her self-esteem, but proves to other WIC moms that you do not need to be health expert to play a crucial role in maintaining a healthy lifestyle for your family and being a role model for your children. As the mother of six children and the grandmother of five, Susan’s efforts to avoid fast food and serve lots of fresh fruits and vegetables demonstrates the Champion for Change commitment to her family’s health. In addition, the viewers of the Roy Avila Q & A Show (25,380 impressions <\$25,000 income level) can see Susan as a role model.

The WIC Recipe Contest is a perfect example of successful collaboration between two programs. The contest promoted participation in the WIC program and promoted the Champions for Change campaign in California, but more importantly, empowered a WIC mom to continue her heroic efforts and fortified the efforts of other WIC moms trying to do the same. The contest will be written up in *WIC Watch*, the state newsletter, and posters are being created by WIC to further promote Susan’s achievement.

For more information, please contact Bonnie Broderick at bonnie.broderick@hhs.co.scl.ca.us.

Taming the School Wellness Policy

The federal law passed in January 2005 requiring school districts that participate in the National School Lunch Program to create a local school wellness policy by July 2006, posed many challenges for school districts already operating with limited fiscal and personnel resources and other mandated priorities. Some of the major challenges imposed by this mandate included rallying support and interest from school boards, administrators, staff, and parents; prioritizing time to develop the policy; and identifying the designee to oversee implementation of the policy.

Shasta County Public Health (SCPH) staff has provided nutrition education and physical activity promotion trainings, technical assistance, and resources to several school districts throughout Shasta County to support and assist them with implementing these components of their school wellness policies. Their activities are provided through the *Network* contract and the grant programs including, Project LEAN, The California Endowment Healthy Eating Active Communities (HEAL), and SCPH community grants. SCPH also works collaboratively with several other county agencies that serve the schools such as the Shasta County Office of Education *Network* local incentive awardee and the University of California Cooperative Extension Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program.

One approach SCPH staff used to assist schools in building on their school wellness successes from previous years was meeting with key school staff to identify their needs to move forward. SCPH staff met with school superintendents in November 2006 and convened a meeting with principal's in January 2007 to discuss success and challenges with incorporating healthy eating and physical activity into their school sites and to have them identify their needs. Based on the input received from school administrators and principals, SCPH Network program provided several district wide trainings including Nutrition for the PE Teacher, Brains & Bodies (nutrition education and physical activity lessons linked to content standards), the Cafeteria Bottomline, Flourishing Fundraisers, and Sports, Play and Active Recreation for Kids! (SPARK) with Integrated Nutrition Education.

Highlights of some lasting SPARK impacts and changes made in Shasta County School districts include:

Many school districts began Implementing Senate Bill (SB) 12 and SB 965 restrictions before they were required to and continue to comply with the restrictions of these laws.

Two high schools installed filtered, cold water stations for students and staff to access free throughout the school day.

Many schools have included healthy classroom rewards and parties as part of their wellness policies.

Many schools have implemented healthy fundraisers.

Many schools have extended the restrictions of the SB 12 and SB 965 restrictions to include sports and other events that occur outside of the school day.

Many schools have established thriving school gardens.

Two school districts have intramural programs.

Three Shasta County School Districts presented their wellness plan implementation and successes at the First Annual California School Wellness Conference on October 1 and 2, 2007, and another four school districts attended this conference.

SCPH will continue to provide nutrition education and physical activity promotion trainings, technical assistance, and resources to schools throughout the county by maintaining and building the working relationships with the schools and other community partners, continuing to link the trainings and resources provided to the education standards, and encouraging school districts to implement or expand the nutrition education and physical activity components of their school wellness policies.

For more information, please contact Michelle Sabol at msabol@co.shasta.ca.us.

Coordination and Collaboration of Services for Food Stamp Eligible Clients

Some of the challenges that have occurred during the year is that it was very difficult to get approval to do recipe taste testing in the Food Stamp offices because Administration was concerned about food being dropped on the floor and did not want our table to hinder a safe exit in case of an emergency. Solano County Health and Social Services staff worked with the Safety Coordinator and after several meetings they were finally allowed to conduct the recipe taste testing in Food Stamp offices. They were not allowed to conduct recipe taste testing in the Vacaville Food Stamp office because the waiting room is too small and General Services felt that in case of an emergency they would block the exit doors. Once they started conducting the recipe taste testing, Environmental Health found out and wanted the staff conducting the recipe taste testing to take a Safe Food Handling course to be certified food handlers. They found a course in Napa for a reasonable price. Two Network funded staff successfully completed the course and two more will take the course in November.

The partnership of the Food and Nutrition Network (FANS) of Solano County has been in existence since 2003 and has become the County Nutrition Action Plan (CNAP) council. The purpose of CNAP is to coordinate the delivery of nutrition education to food stamp eligible Solano County residents. Partners include staff that work in WIC, Solano Network, Food Bank, Food Stamps, UC Cooperative Extension and Agriculture. Nutrition education is coordinated through a Healthy Eating Active Living campaign that promotes one nutrition message in a three month period through client newsletters, bulletin boards in waiting rooms, newsletters for staff that provide services for FSNE clients, recipe bulletin boards, lesson plan topics in WIC classes, recipe taste testing in Food Stamp and WIC offices, recipes included in the Food for Children box of food, nutrition workshops for volunteers that work in food pantries, Nutrition and Fitness Challenge in WIC and the development of the *Guide to Access Healthful Food and Ways to Be Physically Active*.

A successful event is the Nutrition and Fitness Challenge that is conducted for families during National Nutrition Month and 5-A-Day Week. WIC classrooms are converted into activity centers for children and adults and there is a fruit and vegetable display stations with activities for parents. The children enjoy playing simple games and often want to stay in the clinic playing all morning. Parents learn inexpensive ways to create games at home that enhance nutrition education and promote physical activity. At the Fruit and Vegetable learning station, parents choose healthy snacks, get information on budgeting, how to choose good fruits and vegetables and locations of local farmers' markets. Our satisfaction surveys are always positive and clients say they learn a lot.

The CNAP council distributed 3,598 copies of the *Guide to Access Healthful Foods and Ways to Be Physically Active* to clients over the past year.

Nineteen recipe taste testing events were conducted and 897 clients tasted recipes that promoted fruits and vegetables in season in Food Stamp and WIC offices.

For more information, please contact Denise Kirnig at ddkirnig@solanocounty.com.

WIC Participants Are Learning Healthy Eating Habits, Thanks to the New Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program.

The WIC population has difficulty making healthy food choices, as evidenced by the high obesity rates. *Network* staff knows that a lifetime of good nutrition starts at birth, with breastfeeding. If parents choose to give their babies the best start in life with optimal nutrition, breastfeeding, why not continue with healthy food choices once baby is eating solids? Local WIC data shows that amongst their 2 - 4 year olds, those who were breastfed have lower obesity rates than those who were formula fed. This is consistent with CDC guidelines that highlight breastfeeding as a significant protection against obesity.

To encourage this low-income population to breastfeed, a breastfeeding peer counselor program has been implemented. Breastfeeding peer counselor programs have been proven to be a successful strategy for WIC programs to improve their breastfeeding rates. The breastfeeding peer counselor program provides breastfeeding support to WIC mothers by other WIC mothers who have breastfed. This program, which is a collaborative with Sonoma County Indian Health Project WIC and Alliance Medical Center WIC, offers support that is not available elsewhere in the county. Peer counselors provide telephone support, home visits, weekly Breastfeeding Mothers' Groups, and are available evenings and weekends.

The feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, as evidenced by the surveys that mothers fill out after they end the program. The following are some of the comments they have received:

"It is a very good program, like all of the support we receive to be able to breastfeed longer."

"She was always there when I needed help."

"As first time mother, I didn't know anything and she helped me a lot."

"She was consistent and interested in the well-being of me and my baby, and she gave me advise so I wouldn't have problems with breastfeeding."

One of their current peer counselors, who went through the program initially as a participant, says it best: "I wouldn't be breastfeeding today if it weren't for the help I received from my peer counselor."

Their data shows that of the participants who have a peer counselor, 37% are still exclusively breastfeeding their infants at 10 months of age, as compared to only 20% of infants being exclusively breastfed who don't have a peer counselor. As mothers are able to take the first step to good nutrition and see the benefit from the excellent nutrition breastfeeding provides for them, their expectation is that they will be more likely to take other steps to implement healthy nutrition in their lives. When trying to make a lifestyle change to healthy eating, often taking the first step is the hardest. The peer counselors help to make this process easier for new mothers by providing them support in this critical time in their lives.

Some of their next steps include securing funding for health benefits for peer counselors to help with job retention.

DHS Prevention: Despite Challenges, Teachers and Administrators Committed to Nutrition Education

Sonoma County Department of Health Services' role is to administer LIA funding to five school districts, provide technical assistance, and monitor the programs. In addition, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is in place to fund a peer counseling breastfeeding program operated through Department of Health Services (DHS) WIC program, which provides service above and beyond WIC mandates and funding. The schools under contract with DHS are either in Program Improvement status or at risk of not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress. This position makes it difficult for the school districts and teachers to make nutrition education a priority. Neither the State nor the federally funded program staff is able to attend training sessions. Turn over of school and LIA program staff has amplified the program's challenges. DHS' program coordinator was on leave for over three months during the final quarter of the reporting period.

Despite many challenges, teachers and administrators are committed to nutrition education and continuing the program. The schools have been successful at integrating nutrition education into the required curricula and incorporating nutrition education into their school garden program.

The schools view nutrition education as a critical component of education and understand the link between diet and academic performance/test scores and attendance.

During the final year of the current contract period, DHS will focus on providing LIA training to new school staff and working with the schools to develop plans for sustaining their programs over time.

Bellevue Union School District, Meadow View School: Apples for Lunch!

The kindergarten teachers accompany their classes all the way through the cafeteria line, until students sit down at the dining tables. One of the teachers noticed that her students were bypassing the fruit in favor of dessert treats. This teacher asked if the nutrition educator would come into her class and do a tasting lesson with the fruit that the cafeteria was currently serving to the children (apples). So the nutrition educator conducted apple tasting in all of the kindergarten through second grade classes the next week, including discussing how apples grow. The week after the nutrition educator did the apple tasting in their classes, all of the kindergarten teachers noticed their students choosing apples as part of their lunch.

Now that the children are learning about fruits and vegetables from the nutrition educator coming into the class, they are choosing to eat these healthy foods more often. Several students have said that they tried a fruit or vegetable at home that they had never tried before the lesson in their class. A third grade student remarked that he had asked his mom to buy winter squash from the store, and they both enjoyed something new for dinner.

These results are very encouraging and highlight the importance of having a nutrition educator come into the class to do tasting and nutrition lessons. Doing tasting requires a lot more time than most teachers can put in on their own, so it is essential to continue making a nutrition educator available to the school. This is why it would be very helpful to provide more hours for nutrition educators.

Guerneville School: Students Love Nutrition Ed in the Garden!

Guerneville School is situated on 5.7 acres of riparian wetland in the Fife Creek watershed of the Russian River complex. The land contains the remnants of an old orchard of Rome Beauty apples and Anjou pears as well as other varieties. The huge trees produce an abundant crop of fruit, and Network staff spends the first months of every school year picking and tasting, cooking, and developing new ideas. In 2005, the school started a garden in the orchard and began growing vegetables to implement a school wide nutrition program. The garden is now in its third year and includes 15,000 square feet of growing space: three raised beds, 13 in ground growing beds, an outdoor kitchen, storage shed, and watering system. Curriculum activities in the garden are available to all students and include all aspects of food growing, plant science, cooking, and nutrition as well as lots of physical exercise. Additional gardening opportunities are provided in the after school Garden Club.

The success of this program is due to the enthusiasm of the students and their families in supporting it. The students love their nutrition education in the garden. They know there is always something growing to munch on. Even in late October, they are eating fresh apples and raspberries, making salad with arugula and tomatoes, harvesting dried beans for soup, and planning their winter garden of kale, spinach, radishes, and lettuce.

For many students it is their third year in the garden and they have seen several cycles of planting and harvesting come and go. They have grown and tasted many things for the first time and have created simple recipes. This year, with the addition of a cooking area and purchase of cooking equipment, students are learning basic food preparation skills: how to work safely with knives, how to make a basic soup stock, and how to plan a healthy meal using the food groups. The Garden Club after school has grown to 15 students this year, and the Garden elective for 6th, 7th, and 8th grade is packed with about 35 students!

The support of the Guerneville community has been very encouraging. The Garden and Nutrition Program was recognized this year by EcoRing and was granted the first ever EcoHero award for our outstanding program. In addition this program has been featured in the Russian River Monthly, a local newspaper.

The Bridge radio station invited the program staff for an hour on air to talk about the program, and the Russian River Food and Wine Festival honored them this year for promoting cooking, nutrition, and growing food locally with students.

Monte Rio Union School District: “Wow! It’s a Real Carrot!”

Monte Rio Union School has a population of 120 students. The majority of them are from low income families. The town of Monte Rio is 20 miles from Santa Rosa, and although many parents commute Santa Rosa to work, there is a feeling of isolation and independence from city life. There is a strong connection to the Russian River and its various moods. Many of the children live in financially impoverished situations. Some children do have gardens, but most families do not. The initial challenge for the nutrition educator was raising awareness of the value of a balanced diet and of eating fresh fruits and vegetables every day. The challenge was to teach good nutrition without turning kids off to it, by giving them plenty of opportunities to prepare and taste fresh healthy food.

There were so many small successes along the way. The look on students’ faces when they would pull up a carrot (“Wow.... It’s a real carrot!”), or dig up a potato. First and second graders were completely enthralled by the crop of Dinosaur Kale. It was an edible prehistoric relic growing right there in the little garden! Their fascination made them obliged to eat it, not constant reminders of how high in vitamins kale is. Another success was the enthusiasm the students had for the monthly salad bar and the willingness each class had to participate in it. After so much talking about nutritional values in vegetables that they had had very little contact with, they were very ready to try them—such vegetables as fresh beets, tomatillos, patty pan squash, parsley, and collards and whole grains like brown rice, polenta, and barley.

The impact of this program is that, as a school, they are continuing to encourage kids to make healthy food choices. Children are discovering the importance of using less sugar, less salt, and less fat, and those choices are carrying over to their families. The impact shows itself when kids choose to eat fresh vegetables. Then you know they have made the connection between planting, harvesting, preparing, and eating them.

The program must continue to impact the lives of the children and continue to find ways to communicate the need for healthy eating to their families. A next step would be to work with school lunch programs, so their budgets can accommodate fresh, unprocessed food, and more interesting, well-balanced meals.

Santa Rosa City Schools, Helen Lehman School: Breakfast Is Where It's At!

The challenge at Helen Lehman School is how to make a significant healthy difference in the homes of their students. The school population is composed of more than 75% students on free or reduced lunch. Rather than focusing on eating three balanced meals a day (although that is very important), they have put the emphasis on eating a healthy breakfast at home daily.

They believe they have helped the families of their students by participating in the following nutrition education activities, thanks to the *Network*. They have an after school garden-based nutrition education class as well as a one-day-a-week garden-based nutrition education teacher. They also produced several nutrition newsletters for the families. Their after school student and parent cooking classes teach the participants how to cook healthy meals at home, particularly breakfast. At Back-to-School Night, more than 300 families who attended received a donated box of healthy cereal and a flyer about "5 Important Reasons Your Child Should Eat Breakfast."

This school has been a part of this program for five years. Recently, a breakfast survey has shown the upper grade (5th and 6th) teachers that more of the students are eating breakfast at home and/or taking part in the breakfast program at school. They believe, that this is one of the reasons our API scores have risen from 592 to last year's high of 756.

The *Network* activities indeed have had a positive affect on the atmosphere at this school. They believe, however, they still have a ways to go. This year they hope to produce and distribute more nutrition newsletters and organize evening nutrition forums for the students, parents, and community.

Windsor Unified School District, Cali Calmecac School: Teachers Embrace Nutrition Education

At Cali Calmecac Charter School in the Windsor Unified School District students' did not have regular access to nutrition education prior to the creation of a Nutrition Education program. Considering the school has a large number of students eligible for the free-lunch program and food stamps, such a program greatly benefits the students. Before the Nutrition Education program at Cali Calmecac began, resources had not been developed to enable teachers to add nutrition education to the curriculum on a regular basis so that students would have the opportunity to try a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables and learn about healthy food choices and then bring what they tried at school into their home life.

With the Cali Nutrition Education Program now in its third year, it is evident teachers have embraced the Nutrition Ed Program and the resources it offers. When the 2007-08 school year began, *Network* staff asked teachers if they would want nutrition education in their classes; because of the success of the program in prior school years, 95% of the teachers signed up. They seek opportunities to incorporate garden-based nutrition education into a school curriculum that emphasizes math and English and Spanish language arts. Some examples include: defining words staff routinely use to describe what they are cooking (“fragrant,” “herb,” “smooth,” “variety”); learning cooking abbreviations; using fractions to explain how to use measuring spoons and cups; reading nutritional labels and teaching “percentages” as they learned about healthy and unhealthy food components). Teachers are also reinforcing nutrition education in the classroom after “cooking class” has ended, and staff have sent food and seeds home with the students to share with their families.

The lasting result has been the continued enthusiasm of the students for nutrition education. At least one student per class says they made one of the classroom recipes at home. The children really relate to the class; they remain engaged, asking thoughtful questions and following directions while trying new fruits and veggies, or “retrying” ones they had previously decided they did not like. The best experience is when a student comes back for seconds!

Network staff will continue to work with teachers to incorporate nutrition education lessons into their curriculum at all the grade levels (K-8). Since K-3 has a well established nutrition education curriculum, they have been focusing this year on supporting nutrition education resources in the upper grades.

For more information, please contact Lynn Walton at lwalton@sonoma-county.org.

Local Champions Determined to Make a Change

Providing a basic nutrition presentation at Wakefield Elementary School Readiness program for their monthly parent meeting, a staff person could not help but notice the assortment of sweet bread, coffee and nachos being offered to participants. After providing the nutrition lesson many parents shared their eagerness to learn about healthier options while pointing at the delicious but not so healthy treats they were consuming. Many also made reference to “hot cheeto frenzy” going on at their children’s schools.

Shortly after this presentation the staff person attended the annual California Conference of Local Health Department Nutritionists (CCLHDN) in Monterey. During the best practice sharing session of the conference, Tulare County presented a 10-week curriculum titled “Family Challenge”. In matter of moments they knew it would be a perfect fit for the Wakefield parents. Shortly after the conference they contacted Wakefield Elementary to present the idea and without a second thought the coordinator agreed to pilot test at her site.

Flyers went out immediately to the parents of children at the Wakefield, Osborne and Cunningham schools inviting them to come and learn about important nutrition related topics for the entire family. There was also mention of fun prizes such as vegetable steamers, cutting boards and recipe books for those who participated. Staff hoped for 15 committed parents and before they knew it they had 25 registered, with a wait list. Participation maintained at 17-20 parents per session and ended with a graduation style celebration to highlight their success in making healthier lifestyle choices.

After the 10 weeks changes were noted in fruit and vegetable consumption, increase in water intake, changes from whole milk to either 2% or 1%, and increase in fiber rich foods (e.g. whole wheat tortillas, and wheat bread with over 3g fiber) and some weight loss. Staff also had the opportunity to follow up with a few of participants and they granted us permission to share their quotes.

“My family and I continue to eat fruits and vegetables. It is something that we plan to implement forever in our household”.

“Fruit consumption continues to be simple, vegetables are a little difficult. I try to add vegetables into what ever I prepare for every meal. I have not gained a single pound since the program ended on 2/14/07 and I always remember the 5/20 rule when reading food labels”. She ended by stating that 5 women continue getting together on a weekly basis to prepare recipes or simply go for a walk.

The second series has been completed and a third series will be commencing in October. The second proved to be successful and as a result several partners will be looking at ways to get additional funds to bring a promotora model into the area in hopes of a more sustainable program.

For more information, please contact Robert Presto at prestor@stancounty.com.

The Family Challenge Impacts New Target Markets

The Tulare County LIA is a unique, multi-organizational partnership of public agencies and community based organizations focused on activities that promote healthy eating, physical activity and food security. Primary activities include: the maintenance and expansion of the Tulare County Nutrition Collaborative that promotes *Network* program goals, The Family Challenge Program and Nutrition on the Go.

The primary target audience is low-income, food stamp eligible residents throughout Tulare County. The secondary target audience is staff and volunteers of organizations providing services to the primary target audience.

Tulare County has completed five years of the grant. They continue to market The Family Challenge Program in new areas and agencies in order to sustain this very viable and needed program in our communities. This Federal Fiscal Year they have been able to impact two new agencies/schools of Tulare County. In Porterville, the Health Education Assistant was able to begin a class in the Leadership Class at Porterville High School. The majority of the students are graduating seniors. Teens are a tough nut to crack at times but they have been very enthusiastic during each Family Challenge class. These teens seem to be especially receptive to the physical activity part of the class. Time is allowed at each class for physical activity. The students in this class, young men and women, think jumping rope is a blast. None of the students have been reluctant to give any activity a try.

The second new market for The Family Challenge has been a group home for pregnant/new mothers with infants who are recovering from the use of drugs and alcohol. The girls range in age from 14 to 18 years of age. This is court ordered placement so many are habitual users and are placed in Visalia from counties throughout the State. At first the girls thought the class was going to be boring. During week #2 of the class they started warming up and now their favorite day is Thursdays when the educator comes to teach the class. It has been amazing to see how very little these young women know about food preparation in general. They have no idea how to cut fruits and vegetables and have not been exposed to eating vegetables raw. It is clear that these girls have been raised with little or no cooking time with their mothers.

Network staff has been thrilled with the growth of The Family Challenge Program. They are proud to announce that The Family Challenge Program is going to be accessible to County employees. A Wellness Committee has been formed within the County to develop a Worksite Wellness Program. This program will be rolled out in January 2008. Family Challenge classes and the American Cancer Society (ACS) worksite wellness program will begin shortly after the New Year. Family Challenge will be the nutrition piece and the ACS will be the physical activity piece. This will give employees a choice in programs that best fits their needs.

The lasting impacts have come through their collaboration with the three entities of the grant; WIC, FoodLink and the Health Promotion Unit of Tulare County. As new activities are taken on by the Tulare County Nutrition Collaborative, they have found it easy to see how this collaborative has been able to build upon each others programs and activities. The Family Challenge students become volunteers for FoodLink's Nutrition on the Go program. FoodLink has been generous in providing health snacks for the Health Promotion Unit and WIC activities. FoodLink has also made fruits and vegetables available at schools during parent conference days. WIC has been receptive to occasionally partnering with the Farmers Market Planning Committee to bring WIC outreach and referral out to some of the market communities, in addition to the Farmer's Market Nutrition Program.

The next step for The Family Challenge will be to begin preparing for the next printing of the toolkit. After four years the toolkit has continued to be, for the most part, up to date. It would be an asset to change some of the recipes and provide new nutrition/physical activity tips. The major area to be re-done is the Food Pyramid. The educator inserts an Internet replica of the new pyramid in each toolkit. Of course, Tulare County will also have to look for funding for the printing that is about \$25,000 to \$30,000 for the entire kit.

For more information, please contact Peggy Redfern at predfern@tularehhsa.org.

Our Hero

As you go from class series to class series you meet amazing people (mostly Moms), who due to their financial situation, struggle with wanting to give their families healthy foods, vs. the \$0.99 cent specials at their local fast food outlets. T.V commercials do not help with their efforts, because their children prefer to eat a bean and cheese burrito from Taco Bell, rather than the healthy beans and veggies burrito made at home.

Ventura County Public Health Department (VCPHD) staff found their very own “Hero Mom” in one of their classes. Not only is she already making changes in her diet and that of her family (such as eating foods low in fat and sodium, plus adding more fruits and vegetables to their daily intake), but she’s active with her children – plays games, goes for walks, and attends aerobic classes provided in the City of Santa Paula by the Ventura County Chronic Disease Prevention Program. Due to her exceptional qualities, she was chosen as one of the *Network for a Healthy California’s (Network)* “Hero Moms.”

As *Network* staff continue to interact with their low-income population (such as the workers from a recent health fair), where the champion ‘Hero Mom’ was in attendance – you hear comments such as “I’m so glad that someone from our community is representing us” and “We’re also eating more fruits and Veggies, and my kids are too”.

Having their very own “Hero Mom” empowers VCPHD staff as educators. They are able to relate her story with their current class participants, and discuss the many ways others can do the same. The pride on the other faces is priceless. Some say, “Someone we can identify with is representing our community.”

For more information, please contact Alicia Villicana at alicia.villicana@ventura.org.

Yolo County Health Department
Contract #: 06-55125

Fruit and Veggie Baby Carnivals

Both the Yolo County Office of Education (YCOE) and the Yolo County Health Department (YCHD) Head Start/Early Head Start Program, had concerns regarding overweight and at risk preschoolers. Partnering to combat the over weight epidemic, YCOE and YCHD designed an innovative approach to nutrition education with the preschool population and their families.

YCHD met with YCOE Head Start administration to schedule Fruit and Veggie Carnivals during September 2006 (National Fruit & Veggie Month), October 2006 (National Walk to School Month) and March 2007 (National Nutrition Month). Activities began with interactive story telling, consisting of physically active fruits and vegetables, with an emphasis on the benefits of eating fruits and veggies. Then the audience was asked to name fruits and vegetables they enjoyed most. To reinforce this, students were asked to participate in tossing a fruit and veggie salad. This activity focused on the importance of being physically active. Teachers were asked to demonstrate and model physical activity by hula hooping. YCHD staff then solicited 6 preschoolers from the audience to join them. To finalize the event, each student received a goodie bag consisting of a nutrition activity book, jump rope, and a locally grown fruit (donated by local growers).

Due to the success and acceptance of the interactive Fruit and Veggie Carnivals among students, families, preschoolers and staff, the YCHD and YCOE have expanded nutrition education efforts. For the 2007-2008 school year, staff will implement the Harvest of the Month (HOTM) curriculum. The YCHD will train YCOE staff on the curriculum, providing them with the opportunity to carry the curriculum forward in subsequent years.

The goals and objectives for the 2007-08 school year include the following activities and events:

- Implementation of HOTM, Cycle 1 curriculum,
- Nutrition education teacher trainings,
- Staff/Family Service Worker trainings,
- Classroom taste testing/activities,
- Supporting statewide initiatives,
- Cooking demonstrations at parent meetings, including HOTM newsletters, and
- Include at least 5 months of HOTM fruits and vegetables on lunch menus.

For more information, please contact Charlene Shon, MPH, R.D., at charlene.shon@yolocounty.org

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Summer Crop – Growing a Healthy Summer Lunch Program Where Kids will Thrive

Twenty-one thousand low-income children in Sonoma County rely on the school nutrition program to provide healthy meals during the school year, but what happens when summer vacation begins? Many of these children are latch key kids with both parents working just to survive. Five years ago, CBOs (community-based organizations) provided 2,400 summer meals in our county. For the past four years, Redwood Empire Food Bank (REFB) through its *Every Child, Every Day – Summer Hunger Initiative* has worked to increase the number of sites and opportunities for low-income children to receive healthy meals while having something constructive to do. Last year, we set our goals high – to serve over 50,000 meals through strong community involvement, and an Activity Pilot Program to encourage more children to attend sites, eat a healthy meal, while engaging in physical, nutritional, and enrichment activities.

Fifty-three thousand meals were served at 37 REFB sites throughout Sonoma County. For the first time, breakfast was served and a part-time Activity Coordinator was hired to develop and facilitate an exciting program with strong community involvement. Activities included visits from Wildlife Rescue and the Assistance Dog Institute, the Imagine Bus packed with arts and crafts projects, Fruit Tastings, the Red Cross Master of Disaster Program, and the Marin/Sonoma County Vector Control. Yes, mosquito abatement was a big hit with the kids believe it or not, and a fun way to encourage exploration of the natural world. But of all the activities, Bike Rodeos were by far their favorite activity. Bike “licenses” and helmets were issued to 275 children who learned how to safely navigate an obstacle course set up in the parking lot of their housing complexes. This was a great way to encourage children to ride their bikes, wear their helmets, and obey the rules of the road.

Instilling good nutrition, encouraging children to eat more healthily and play more actively are all results of the *Every Child, Every Day – Summer Hunger Initiative's* Summer Crop. Our Activity Pilot Program was well received and we had excellent positive feedback from site coordinators and community volunteers. Parents especially felt more comfortable allowing their children to ride their bikes on city streets and bike paths. Volunteer Thomas Molina, who ran one of our new sites said it best, “I didn’t realize that serving lunch would have so many other benefits. It brought this community together. Now we all interact in a positive way rather than one group challenging another.”

For more information, please contact Jessica Bartholow at jessica@cafoodbanks.org.

Ecology Center
Contract #: 06-55105

Toward Nourishment

Our community is hungry for nourishment. Much of the food that is “convenient” in our neighborhoods lacks vital nutrients, but most agree that it’s better than nothing. These foods have affected our sense of taste, and it is sometimes a stretch for someone to accept a fresh apple sample.

Our produce stands, which are located at a few subsidized after-school childcare facilities, serve as a place to share with community. Not only are we providing convenient and affordable access to high-energy fresh foods; we are also sharing fresh and prepared food samples, recipes, tips, ideas, and our deep passion for reclaiming our optimal health. The energy emitted from our staff and the colorful food reels people in to the space— sometimes only to have a taste or say Hello. We are excited to reflect upon a shift that we observe at our stands. We invite everyone that comes by our stand to taste fruit, nuts, and juice. There are even some curious ones who try raw veggies...

We are observing excitement in the energy of many of the youth who come to try fruit. A few of the teachers at B.A.H.I.A. notice that the kids eat less junk food and save their appetite for fruit, even if it’s just a few samples. It used to be common to see all the youth run out to the ice cream man and buy candy, but we haven’t seen that in months. The ice cream man just continues on his path.

These kids gravitate more to fresh fruit than ever before. They are requesting fruit in their daily snack at the school. Now we have kids that invite their parents to try a piece of fruit. It is apparent: we have a new team of kids who are advocating for fresh food. We don’t bombard them with information, but they are very savvy and know more than we at times expect. They know it tastes better, and they are surely picking up on the value it has for their bodies. They are learning that they can play with more energy, and even avoid health complications that they commonly see in their families.

We are excited that we are bringing fresh food that can fulfill the needs of our growing bodies and learning minds. Slowly, we are having a profound impact on the way our community relates with food. Food sampling is such a simple educational tool that can have an immeasurable impact on someone. Our goal is that we influence bodies and minds to seek out nourishing foods by any means necessary. We are strengthening relationships with our community and building trust.

Our next steps are to further collaboration and alliance building with groups that are a part of the community we are trying to serve. We will do that by continuing to provide nutrition education classes and presentations at the sites that deepen our connection to one another and provide the space to exchange ideas with the community.

For more information, please contact Martin Bourque at martin@ecologycenter.org.

PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENTS

City of Duarte Parks and Recreation Department
Contract #: 05-45506

2007 Summer Health Camps

Prior to enrolling in the summer health camp, many of the participants had no desire to eat healthy. One of the mothers commented that she had attempted to get her daughter to eat healthy prior to attending the camp, but had failed.

In August, the City of Duarte's Healthy Choice conducted two week-long health camps at Beardslee Elementary School for children ages 5-14. The goal of the camp was to encourage the children to make a healthy lifestyle change.

During the week long camp, participants were exposed to different aspects of nutrition and physical activity including the MyPyramid, the food groups, serving size, the positives and negatives of fat, and the benefits of regular physical activity. Students also had the opportunity to work hands-on with various foods like tomatoes, onions, cilantro, and a mix of fruits and berries.

Upon completion of the camp, the mother who had such a hard time getting her daughter to eat healthy approached the Program Coordinator and thanked her for reinvigorating her daughter's interest in eating healthy. She also stated that because of encouragement from her daughter, she was shopping differently at the grocery store. Also, the entire family had incorporated physical activity into their daily routine.

One parent stated that prior to participating in the camp, her daughter would not eat a sandwich. Now, the daughter is a big fan of sandwiches. Finally, a pair of sisters who participated in the class utilized the cookbook they received at camp, "Healthy Latino Recipes" to make dinner with their mom.

Not only were these families learning to eat right and be physically active, they were coming together for a good cause.

The City of Duarte plans to continue to offer summer health camps to children in the community in hopes that there will be results similar to those obtained this past summer.

For more information, please contact Donna Georgino at georginod@accessduarte.com.

City of San Bernardino Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department
Contract #: 06-55112

Westside Steppers

While working with the Westside Stepper Phase II project a *Network* staff person noticed that there were a group of mother's that stayed during the meetings and practices. They expressed their interest in learning about making healthy food choices and being more physically active. They said that all the information about the different diets and workouts was confusing.

One of City of San Bernardino Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department's *Network* activities was to conduct nutrition education classes. The Department held a focus group with the mothers to determine what their needs were. The Department decided to start offering health education classes for adults at the same time as Phase II.

Although the parents have just started the classes you can see their enthusiasm. They come to the classes ready to learn. Network staff has had parents ask for Network recipe books and come back and tell them that their kids loved it.

The Department will continue these classes and hopefully increase the attendance.

For more information, please contact Glenda Martin-Robinson at robinson_gl@ci.san-bernardino.ca.us.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Farm Stand

Every day students at Burbank Elementary rush out of school to meet their parents. On their way out, some students stop and see what the Student Council is selling. In the past, it was soda, chips, candy, pickles, popcorn, etc. It was frustrating to watch parents give their children money to purchase items that were clearly not good for their child's health. Teachers felt the school was sending mixed messages by selling unhealthy items, and wanted to replace these snacks with healthy items. At one of the teacher trainings, a teacher stated that students learned that eating healthy was good, but had limited access to fruits and vegetables. The teachers wanted to start a program where students could buy healthy items that included fruits and vegetables rather than foods that were high in fat and sugar.

Meetings were held with the principal and teachers on how to start a Farm Stand at the school. Sixth grade students were a natural fit because money they raised could go towards their sixth grade camp. The students were educated on the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables daily. They were also trained on the importance of food safety as well as operational procedures of selling produce after school. Letters were sent to parents explaining the benefits of consuming locally grown, organic produce and asked them to support the Farm Stand by purchasing an after school snack for their child.

ABC Unified School District (USD) *Network for a Healthy California* staff supported the Farm Stand by providing nutrition education in the classroom regarding the benefits of consuming a variety of colorful and crisp fruits and vegetables daily. All students received taste tests of produce items that would be sold at the Farm Stand and encouraged students to purchase California grown produce.

Students were enthusiastic to be a part of the solution. They knew that eating unhealthy foods was not beneficial for their health and were excited that they were in charge of selling nutritious items to their school. They proudly wore their fruit and vegetable t-shirts while running the Farm Stand. Younger students looked up to them and looked forward to working in the Farm Stand when they were older.

Revenue generated from the Farm Stand helped raise money for sixth grade camp. In addition, Burbank Elementary received a \$3,000 grant from the camp itself to commend them for creative fundraising. Parents and teachers were thankful for the opportunity to raise funds without compromising student health.

Students at Burbank Elementary now enjoy eating fresh fruit after school. Other popular items were "Banana Boats," which consists of a banana, two tablespoons of peanut butter, and granola, as well as "Persimmon Sunset," which was a cut up persimmon with a strawberry in the middle.

Based on the Harvest of the Month evaluation, significant changes in preference were observed in apples, oranges, persimmons, strawberries, and tangerines, which were all sold at the Farm Stand after school. Changes in preference for these items were not seen in a school where there was no Farm Stand.

As a result of SB 12, schools will no longer be allowed to sell unhealthy items after school and will have to think of creative ways to raise money without compromising students' health. Many other *Network* schools at ABC USD are requesting assistance in starting Farm Stands for their schools. Currently ABC USD is looking for teachers and students to be "change agents" in starting similar programs in interested schools.

For more information, please contact Dipa Shah at Dipa.Shah@abcusd.k12.ca.us.

Raising the Bar

Schools are constantly faced with strategies for improving academic performance and test scores. Breakfast is encouraged during testing; with emphasis placed on structured classroom instruction void of extracurricular activities. Not an uncommon told story. Nutrition education is weaved into classroom instruction. Students are taught to make healthy lifestyle choices; yet the total responsibility cannot be left to the school alone. These messages and daily habits must also take place in the home. Language barriers can account for the break in communication; English, Chinese, Spanish, Vietnamese, Cambodian – all languages common among the school environment. These are all constant challenges we all face. What's a *Network* program to do if we want to create Champions of Change? Let's accept the challenge to raising the bar. Let's make everyone we can touch with our messages to take personal responsibility for being their own champion.

Alhambra Unified School District (USD) *Network* promotes healthy lifestyle habits with students, teachers and parents. Classrooms are taught about making food choices utilizing MyPyramid, trying new foods, reach for the rainbow of colorful fruits and veggies, and sharing these messages with the families. Alhambra's *Network* staff teach families shopping and meal preparation tips utilizing MyPyramid, encourage family mealtimes and keeping the family involved in meals. Many of Alhambra's *Network* staff lives within the local cities that they serve and are always a visual reminder for their target population. Alhambra's *Network* staff runs into their students in supermarket, local restaurants and city events. Not only are Alhambra *Network* staff a role model; but they too are the success stories; as they often see what impact they have on students food choices! One evening at a local restaurant, one student and her family were dining. Alhambra *Network* staff recalls hearing the conversation of the student to her parents, "We need to vary our veggies – we need to order vegetables with our dinner!" On another occasion, a mother and son was grocery shopping. As the son placed chips and cookies into the shopping cart; his mother was quick to remove these packages. "No, son, we should include 100% juices and snack on something with less sugar and fat – let's go through the cookie aisle again and pick out something with more whole grain!" This is quite a wonderful site to see and hear! Yes, the *Network* is definitely raising the bar!

Each year Alhambra *Network* staff asks the teachers to complete a year end evaluation form. The results are quick enlightening and encouraging hearing that their programs have made a difference. When asked if they have noticed any behavior changes in their students regarding healthy eating choices, here's what was noted:

- Students automatically expect healthier options, i.e., 100% fruit juice instead of sodas at gatherings.
- Students are more open to sampling new fruits and vegetables now, especially since they get an opportunity to prepare them.

- Field trip lunches include carrot sticks. With the increased awareness of eating fruits/vegetables, more students are eating them; where before the carrot sticks were always dumped!

Alhambra USD wants to continue to raise the bar and hope to recognize more “Champions of Change.” They plan to continue working with the students; most importantly finding additional strategies to get the messages out to parents and getting them more involved.

For more information, please contact Judy Huffaker at huffaker_judy@alhambra.k12.ca.us.

Alisal Union School District
Contract #: 06-55068

Michael, the Champion

Michael as a fourth grade student, in 2004, was more than chubby for his height and age. He usually brought a 'calorie dense' lunch, loaded with empty calories, including chips and cookies, but hardly any fruit or vegetables. Michael was headed towards an unhealthy, overweight future.

Once the EAT FRUITS & VEGETABLES message made sense to Michael, he asked questions, and began to take the message seriously. He realized, as many students do, that it was up to him.

In fifth grade, he changed his eating habits. What influenced him? The *Network for a Healthy California* lessons. Some students heard, for the first time, the importance of eating a well-balanced breakfast, including fruits, whole grains. Michael had been a breakfast skipper. He changed habits when he understood the value of 'breaking' the fast.

Michael also experienced lessons focused on the value of reading nutrition labels, and portion size. Another lesson addressed drinking water rather than sodas, and sports drinks. Michael mentioned that he enjoyed the taste of water more than soda. After that, Michael said he only ate chips, once or twice a week, not everyday.

Michael was taught games during the physical activity unit last spring. He participated with enthusiasm. He said he liked playing Krazy Kickball the most. He liked that everyone got to run together, and work like a team.

Michael, a sixth grader now, has switched to a healthier lunch, which includes fruits, like apples, oranges, and kiwi instead of chips and cookies. Sometimes he brings a mid-morning snack to school. He joined the Health & Garden Club. Recently he stated how much he enjoys 'playing' with plants, seeds, and soil. He also said that he enjoys playing more than he used to, and now he rides his bike to school most of the time.

Alisal Union School District (USD) sees a person happy with the changes they have made. Alisal USD sees a confident student; who feels good about himself. It would seem nutrition education intervened with a positive end. His success may remind others that changing habits takes time, but can be done.

Michael and his classmates have heard this message over the last three years: eat fruits and veggies, get at least sixty minutes of physical activity each day, drink lots of water, get plenty of sleep, eat a good breakfast, limit snacks, junk foods, and 'calorie dense' fast foods!

Had he had not bought in to the healthy eating message offered by our nutrition program Alisal USD would not be writing about him. Truly, Michael is a champion for changing!

For more information, please contact Petra Martinez at Petra.martinez@alisal.org.

Cooking Up Recipes for Health

At Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD), when students bring hot chips and sodas for lunch, teachers are continually reminded that the home and neighborhood environments are factors that influence our students' eating habits. Whether it's the mass media marketing fast foods or the lack of access to fruits and vegetables, the barriers to promoting healthy eating to students and families beyond the school walls can often seem insurmountable.

This past year, as a way to both model healthy eating habits and reach out to parents, the BUSD *Network* garden and cooking program joined forces with Nutrition Services to implement a new Harvest of the Month (HOTM) component, featuring one shared HOTM recipe per month. Every month, *Network* cooking instructors taught every student in the school how to make the HOTM recipe, while Nutrition Services staff cooked and served the HOTM recipe in the cafeteria. Every parent at *Network*-eligible school sites received copies of the HOTM recipes in a beautifully designed HOTM lunch menu calendar distributed at the beginning of the school year. The goal was to reinforce the hands-on nutrition education garden and cooking classes through the school lunch program and to encourage parents to make the recipe at home. Based on last year's *Network* evaluation, the HOTM interventions had very positive impacts on the eating and food preparation habits of students' families.

The impact evaluation included a survey of 327 families of fourth and fifth-graders at seven *Network*-funded intervention sites. 195 families returned completed surveys, for a 60% response rate. Here are some of the highlights:

- Families are preparing HOTM recipes together at home, as well as other recipes sent home by cooking instructors. Half of responding families (50%) reported that they have cooked at home with recipes from their child's cooking classes, and the mean number of times families have cooked recipes at home together is three (3) times.
- Students are bringing the program home in other ways, such as introducing their families to new foods and encouraging them to buy and prepare fruits and vegetables that they learn about in school. 53% of families reported that their child asked them to buy or prepare fruits and vegetables in the past seven months that they don't usually have at home.
- 41% of families reported that their child introduced them to new fruits and vegetables in the past seven months.

Quotes from parents illustrate the impact of the HOTM interventions on family nutrition:

"Dinosaur kale, I'd never cooked that before. I grew up in the South and greens were always on the stove for five hours with a lot of bacon grease."

When I went back to Texas, I cooked dinosaur kale and chard the way the [cooking instructor] cooks it.”

“My kid did eat asparagus for the first time as a result of this program and was extremely proud.... It’s like Harvest of the Month is more like a miracle of the month.”

“When we go into the store it’s like an educational thing. We spend maybe an hour or so; we discuss whatever we see. He’ll say, ‘Oh yeah I saw this in cooking class.”

Such positive feedback illustrates how the Network-funded garden and cooking program not only teaches students about healthy eating habits, but also influences parents by encouraging them to shop for and cook healthy recipes in the home environment. As a result such impacts, BUSD’s Network program plans to launch a pilot parent nutrition education class at three Network-funded schools to provide parents and caregivers engaging hands-on opportunities to learn about healthy eating and physical activity habits.

For more information, please contact Travis Smith at travis_smith@berkeley.k12.ca.us

Growing Healthy Habits

Calistoga is a small rural city in the relatively affluent Napa Valley. Two-thirds of students and families are Hispanic and a large majority is recent immigrants who speak little English. Calistoga Elementary School is a Program Improvement School under the No Child Left Behind Act, and the intense focus on core academics leaves little room in the school day for 'extras', including the Nutrition Education Program. Despite these challenges, almost every student enjoyed time in our 'outdoor classroom' – the School Gardens – growing and tasting a wide variety of delicious vegetables, fruits and herbs.

Through use of the Harvest of the Month tastings, garden-enhanced nutrition classes, and cooking with students the food they helped to grow, students are eager to try new fruits and vegetables. Their smiling faces and hugs when Nutrition Education staff enter their classroom or encounter us anywhere on campus communicate the joy students are finding in growing and consuming fresh produce. Students frequently ask, "When are we going to cook or garden with you?" or "When will we taste again?" or best of all, "May I have some more?" whenever their small taste is gone.

Students as young as Kindergarten are developing knowledge of healthy eating habits and exhibit eagerness to eat a variety of vegetables and fruits. Parents are clamoring for more nutrition and healthy cooking classes (per principal's report from PTA and other parent groups). Teachers report that the Nutrition Education Program is making a huge difference in student health and positive attitude towards healthy habits. Administrators highlight the Nutrition Education Program when discussing and promoting the excellent education offered at Calistoga schools. Strong partnerships with Food Services, after-school programs and the Calistoga Family Resource Center ensure that student and family eating and physical activity habits will continue to improve.

Creating a sustainable Nutrition Education Program is essential to maintain the momentum developed in the first few years of the program. Accumulating guidelines for Nutrition Education programming, scope and sequence for the grade levels and efficient sharing of resources with teachers and families to strengthen classroom and home-based nutrition education will be emphasized during the final year of our current LIA contract.

For more information, please contact Michele Treuscorff at mtreuscorff@calistoga.k12.ca.us.

Power to the Parents

Two years ago when the program coordinator came into the office declaring, "I don't believe the junk some parents give their children for breakfast, especially when the school provides breakfast at NO CHARGE." She had seen a parent bringing a child to school who was happily enjoying his/her breakfast of cheese flavored corn snacks. "Ooh, please tell me you didn't say anything to a Compton mom about her child eating snacks for breakfast. Please tell me you didn't." But if you know the program coordinator you know she didn't hold her tongue on that mom.

Compton Unified School District (USD) projected to educate up to 400 parents. District staff was providing a basic nutrition class that just wasn't having the desired effect. Parents didn't seem empowered and motivated to make a change. So staff decided to come up with a three step plan which included basic nutrition, label reading, and an 8 week cooking series.

The cooking class became the talk of the district. Health advocates were trying to schedule the cooking classes at their schools. Parent center coordinators wanted the classes at the District Parent Center. Parents wanted it for more than 8 weeks. The demand was high and the workers were few. The cafeteria staff came to the rescue and began to provide demonstrations during parent conferences and substituting when there was a conflict in the schedule.

The classes went into hiatus during the testing period but eager beavers began calling during the summer to schedule for the upcoming year. Compton USD staff has started 3 - 6 week classes. Last week the community liaison for Bunche Elementary was unable to attend the Planning Healthy Meals session because of a sick child. She stopped in to check on them and found the parents dicing tomatoes, onion, cilantro, steaming broccoli and rice. The room smelled delicious. She left with regrets. Wednesday night while working on the report the phone rang. It was the parent. She had purchased the ingredients and wanted a step by step on how to make the salsa chicken. *Someone was actually using the recipes from class for their family!* This wasn't, "Ooh my family loved it!" or "I made it last week" but, "**I have the stuff. Now what!**"

Staff felt they were accomplishing their goal because the recipes, knowledge and support that they are giving the parents of Compton were being used to change the eating habits of the families. That mom could have gone to a fast food restaurant but she didn't. She called for help.

The next steps include field trips to the local farmer's market as well as visiting farmers' markets in other communities. Staff will be participating in the District Parent Involvement Conference.

Parents that have completed the 6 week class will be piloting the “Loving your Family” Program from USDA. In Compton they are giving the power to the parents ... one recipe at a time.

For more information, please contact Tracie L. Thomas at trthomas@compton.k12.ca.us.

Let's Celebrate!

One of the many challenges Del Norte Unified School District (USD) face in their school district is encouraging students and their families to continue their efforts of promoting the consumption of fruits and vegetables at home or at times when families can contribute to their child's classroom activities. The nutrition staff spends many hours educating staff, students and their families on the benefits of eating healthy, to include consuming a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables, yet they routinely would see the traditional high sugar, high fat content foods being brought in from home for classroom parties/celebrations. Their challenge was to come up with a way to influence their staff, students and their families to have healthier parties/celebrations.

With Valentines Day around the corner, the Nutrition Staff decided to throw out a challenge to all the teachers to host a Valentine "Be Good to Your Heart" Party! The *Network* challenged all classrooms to come up with creative valentine's party plans that included healthy snack ideas using red, white and pink fruits and vegetables. Teachers and their students put on their thinking caps and came up with some wonderful ideas that included: strawberries, watermelon, red grapes, pink and red apples, blood/moro oranges, red grapes and strawberries rolled in coconut, pink grapefruit juice, veggie pizzas with tomato, red pepper, white cheese, salsa, veggie platters to include red pepper strips, jicama slices, cauliflower, radishes, pickled beets, baked red and white potatoes, etc. Numerous teachers and their classrooms took them up on the challenge and even sent letters home with their students asking for parent support in the menu's they came up with.

With the success of the first Party Challenge staff feels that they have begun to get the message to the classroom teachers, students and parents who participated in the first healthy party/celebration challenge. They have a lot more work to do to educate their staff and parents that it is ok to celebrate with healthy fruits and vegetables and that the students, when given the opportunity, can plan and choose a celebration around healthier foods. This challenge also is great way in which they can reinforce the District's Wellness Policy and commitment to providing school environments that promote and protect children's health, well being and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity.

The Nutrition staff is already busy with the most recent party challenge, "Halloween – Be Good to Your Heart". Plans for several more challenges are in the works, to include Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentines, Birthdays and Preferred Activity Time Parties. Nutrition Staff will continue to encourage and support healthy classroom celebrations and educate their staff, students and families as to the importance of providing healthy foods, any time of the year. Additionally, they may challenge classrooms to add a physical activity to their party!

Their goal is to see that the students are provided with healthy foods at all times and their goal will have been achieved when they no longer have to challenge!

For more information, please contact Helga Burns at hburns@delnorte.k12.ca.us.

Season of Change

During the first years the *Network* was introduced to the district, administrators and students were interested in the program, but most comments about program outcome referred to the increased obtainment of knowledge among students. Even last year, evaluation were very positive, but in retrospect, mostly related to increased nutrition knowledge. However, this year, there's a season of change. Yes, increasing knowledge is essential, but now Downey Unified School District (USD) is experiencing changes in student attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyles.

How do I know? What data do I have to back up this awesome claim? It was a seemingly simple question asked to teachers on a year-end evaluation, "Please comment on any changes you have seen in the behavior of your students or changes within the school that would suggest a more healthful environment." After reading the comments written by teachers addressing this question, one can never underestimate the power of a persistent, deliberate, positive message about eating more fruits and vegetables and being physically active

It is impossible to innumerate the positive comments by teachers in this short forum, but comments like the following are reiterated over and over by teachers from all *Network* schools:

"Healthier snacks brought from home."

"I have even had parents comment on their children being willing to eat more fruits and vegetables at home."

"For class snacks and celebrations they (students) ask for fruits and veggies."

"I see my students choosing healthy food at lunch."

"Students talk about buying more fruit and vegetables at home."

"I am happy to see a salad/fruit bar made available at our school. It is even better to see that the students are enjoying and taking advantage of the salad/fruit bar."

Keep it going! We would encourage all schools to have an evaluation tool that allows teachers to write what they are observing. Although we hear many positive comments, without this evaluation tool, we would never have known the degree to which this program has positively impacted the attitudes, behaviors and lifestyles of our students.

For more information, please contact Colleen Anderson at cmanderson@dusd.net.

El Monte City School District
Contract #: 06-55084

Harvest of the Month Guest Chef

Although the *Network for a Healthy California* at the El Monte City School District has been actively working with the community for several years at increasing awareness and consumption of fruits and vegetables and adopting healthy lifestyle behaviors, it has faced some difficult challenges. In general, the large Latino community that reside in the area have been faced with an environment with less opportunities to take advantage of healthy food options coupled with lower amount of discretionary income to purchase these type of healthy foods. This challenge has led to decreased nutritional diets and increases in overweight and obesity.

Despite the challenges previously described, it is believed that the *Network* activities that have been incorporated within the El Monte City School District and the surrounding community have assisted in creating a healthy mindset within the eyes of the community. The following activity helps to describe just a small fraction of the successes that the *Network* has prided itself in attaining.

One of the most popular and innovative programs within the *Network* is undoubtedly the Harvest of the Month (HOTM) Guest Chef program. Throughout the year, Guest Chefs conducted over 300 nutrition education and food preparation lessons in classrooms featuring the HOTM fruit or vegetable. Students learned about the history and agricultural origin of the fruit or vegetable and tasted it in a featured recipe. Students and parents alike have raved about our Guest Chefs and impact they have had in their personal lives.

Even though the surrounding community may be faced with geographical, environmental, and economic challenges, staff was splendidly surprised to discover the positive impact that the Guest Chef program created within the community. A general questionnaire conducted on 30 parents attending a nutrition education lesson revealed that approximately 75% of them had known that their children had been exposed to the Guest Chef program. Also, not only had over 70% of these attempted the recipes taught by the Guest Chefs at home, but all of these reported offering more healthy options since the implementation of the Guest Chef recipe.

After learning about these great results coupled with personal confessionals from parents and students, staff believes that more healthy recipes and HOTM materials should be disseminated to the community. It is for this reason that many parent education programs/workshops will be increasing in scope and consistency. El Monte City School District has implemented more HOTM produce boxes to increase fruit and vegetable sampling opportunities within the students.

Last, but of course not least, staff also expect to increased the number of Guest Chef and Farmer in the Classroom program visits.

For more information, please contact Wanda Grant at wgrant@emcsd.org.

Elk Grove Unified School District
Contract #: 06-55085

NAC Students Educate Entire District

One of Elk Grove Unified School District (USD) activities this year was to form a Nutrition Advisory Council (NAC) at a secondary school and use those students to help influence and educate their peers on the importance of eating more fruit and vegetables and being physically active. The challenge with this activity was finding a way for a group of 30 students to impact the entire school campus.

On Friday, May 18, 2007, 1,800 high school students, 50 teachers and staff, 150 community members and 250 district employees received information on the importance of eating more fruit and vegetables and being physically active. But the real successes didn't happen just on May 18. For months prior to the event, the students studied current health issues, selected the topics that they felt were the most important for their peers to know about and designed handouts, signage and a booth for each subject area. This became part of their course work in Health. The students wrote letters asking for community partners so that adults could have a variety of health screenings completed while at the event. The NAC students marketed the event with posters around school and fliers sent home and to district employees. Nutrition education and an awareness of the importance of being physically active was alive and well on the Valley High School campus all year thanks to 30 NAC students.

The NAC students created an environment of learning outside the classroom and were successful in sharing nutrition and fitness knowledge with their fellow students. Community members including parents and district employees were motivated to make lifestyle changes by energetic students who are passionate about health.

Plans have already begun for the next school and district-wide health fair. Pictures from last years events will be used to challenge this year's students to improve upon the existing model.

For more information, please contact Anne Gaffney at agaffney@egusd.net.

Nutrition Puppet Shows

When you enter the Child Development and Education ROP class at Duncan Polytechnical High School the students are energized and focused on their high school education lessons. How do you translate nutrition content material and apply this knowledge into teaching skills for a pre-school class? Students were assigned lesson planning which involved group work to write a script on nutrition education and integrate nutrition information with early reading materials applicable for pre-school. The small group of 4 students wrote the script with puppets as the creative and delivery vehicle. The puppet show was endearing, written for preschool and experienced preschool students interacting and giving answers to the nutrition questions. The puppets were named after vegetables and the high school students were seated and accessible. The high school group leader was struggling with her grades in this class and through the teacher's wisdom she worked very hard and put in a lot of time for this lesson and demonstrated through her hard work an outstanding lesson on nutrition

The student leader was outstanding in her real world application of teaching a lesson on nutrition and working as a team leader. Preparing for the nutrition lesson as a leader advocate is a success story as it impacts so many others in education.

One facet of this impact is the success that was brought about by the high school nutrition advocates for the preschool students with Nutrition Puppet Shows. This success is moving forward as the students presented at another preschool. The Fresno Unified School District plans to have other high schools; McLane, Sunnyside, and Edison work on Nutrition Puppet Show scripts for 2007-2008.

The next steps will be to share this at the Nutrition *Network* Advisory to provide support and guidance for future puppet shows utilizing the children's literature nutrition books that have recently been purchased. Further communication with the school sites to work out scheduling is in the works.

For more information, please contact Sharon Owyang at sgowyan@fresno.k12.ca.us.

Woman to Woman

While watching their Greenfield walking group this past year continue to grow, change and get stronger, Greenfield Union School District (USD) needed to find a way to continue with helping them change their eating habits and those of their families. Before Greenfield USD started their Nutrition classes this past year they asked for comments on how they can help them introduce more fruits and vegetables into their every day meals.

The Nutrition and Healthy Cooking classes this year were a huge success and not because of the numbers that showed. They had the women participating in preparing and cooking every item that was made. The women did not want to leave after each session. Learning how to choose, clean and prepare fruit and vegetables with every meal gave them ideas that they built on and they shared with others and their families. During the portion control class, staff used the *Network* serving size poster and the women wanted to know how they could get one of those to put on their refrigerators. Everyone wanted one. Staff knew that they had a few left over that had been given to them at a CVHNN. These were given to their cafeteria staff and teachers but because of the women's interest they decided to draw names and there was such excitement just over those posters. The group really wanted to know and to be able to make changes in what they were eating and how much they were eating.

Greenfield USD also entered their walking group to the Hero Mom committee in Fresno and one woman was chosen to represent the group in Sacramento. This was a huge empowerment to the group to continue with what they are doing.

This walking group in the park across the street has grown. Even during the coldest or hottest days you will see them out there walking. They now meet on their own once a week to share healthy recipes. They have a member who does cardio exercises with them three times a week (staff saw them this morning with a large group working out in the park). They bring a fruit or vegetable everyday to share as a snack. They asked staff to add a Salsa Making Contest to their Annual Health Fair and staff had good community participation. Others come in the office and ask what is going on in the park. Using their skills as women helping and reaching out to other women they get a lot of attention and are great encouragers for each other to remain healthy and keep their families healthy. They show staff their commitment every day with the healthy snacks, watching them walk and exercise, hearing about what changes they are making, sharing recipes and inviting the staff to join them when they have prepared a special lunch in the park with healthy recipes. The staff cannot help but be impressed with their drive to continue and encourage others to join them.

This year they would like to get involved in making changes with the school. Greenfield USD staff has talked about working with the Director of Nutrition Services and the Nutrition Advisory Council that she will be starting at several school sites. They have made changes in the park to make it safer. There are new lights, graffiti removal and lost dogs being picked up. They have been to the Bakersfield City Council meetings, have met with the mayor, and want to work with the city to bring a sidewalk around the park so that they can walk easier. The staff will continue to use them for advice on how they can help them to make changes in using more fruits and vegetables in their family diets. Staff continues to support them in making healthy choices in ways that they can reach out to their neighbors to encourage them to make changes.

For more information, please contact Liz Meridith at meridithl@gfusd.k12.ca.us.

Sowing the Seeds and Thickening the Roots of “Harvest of the Month”

In the Hawthorne School District, (HSD) the Harvest of the Month (HOTM) program is highly regarded. HSD received compliments from parents and community leaders, district students, teachers, administrators, and Superintendents. They consistently “gone the extra mile” with their partners and their effort shows in the relationships they’ve built and strive to maintain.

The HOTM program is the foundational piece for much of what they do. Their 3-C’s – Cafeteria, Classroom, and Community – are all impacted by HOTM. In the cafeteria, students sample HOTM produce during lunch. In the classroom, students sample HOTM produce in conjunction with nutrition education, and teachers receive training on incorporating nutrition education into numerous subject areas. In the community, adult education programs, special events, and media outreach all claim HOTM as a key educational piece of our program.

In the summer of 2006, HSD conducted a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) of our entire program. Almost immediately they recognized a glaring area in need of improvement: the potential for HOTM in the classroom was not being realized. At the end of the 2005-06 school year, approximately 60% of teachers were utilizing HOTM in the classroom. This meant that 40% of district teachers were not utilizing this fantastic resource. Furthermore, they felt that some key components of HOTM, most notably the educator newsletters, were not being used properly due to factors that were seemingly beyond their control – most notably, pressures put on teachers to do more with less time.

Given the importance of HOTM to the program and pressures put on classroom teachers, how could they expand HOTM while maintaining the level of program consistency and excellence that district students, parents, teachers, and administrators had come to expect?

The team began to brainstorm solutions to this problem. After careful consideration of many different options, they decided to make several changes which would alter the face of our HOTM program. First, they changed produce vendors, opting to utilize Ripple-Riley Thomas’ boxed HOTM produce. The fruits and vegetables were of high quality, but what ultimately sold them was the presentation and packaging. Each classroom would receive their own individual box that looked more like a professional gift pack than HOTM. Plus, boxed delivery meant that the burden of counting out and bagging produce for individual classrooms would be lifted.

Next, HSD took the liberty of ordering HOTM produce for every teacher in the district for the first month of the school year. Doing so would expose every teacher to the program, and those who had not signed up in the past would see how great (and easy) the program is. But this move also involved some risk. Given their time constraints, how would teachers react to receiving something they hadn't expressed interest in previously? What if the new produce vendor somehow dropped the ball and delivered the produce late or to the wrong school sites? What if the delivered pears –the first HOTM produce item of the year – were moldy...or rock hard?

Finally staff vowed to meet face-to-face with every teacher in the district. If they could buy into staff as people, they might buy into the program. The staff each took several schools and asked to be included on a school-site staff meeting agenda prior to the first HOTM delivery. At this meeting, staff provided every teacher a 3-ring binder that included all the HOTM newsletters for the year, taste testing information, and a contact list for the program. Staff also provided a cutting board, apron, and other basic equipment required for conducting a classroom taste test.

The staff held their breath as the first boxes of pears were delivered to classrooms in October.

The risks HSD took paid off. They were, to put it mildly, the toast of the district. The boxed produce was so well received; they had teachers asking for more. One teacher wrote, "Just so you know how well your program is working, my daughter is in the dual immersion program at Ramona, and she tasted the pears yesterday in her class. After school she couldn't wait to tell me how delicious they were...parents of picky eaters like me really appreciate you introducing food they would never try at home."

Another teacher was not as detailed, though equally enthusiastic. "All I can say is AWESOME," he wrote, "to you and the rest of the Nutrition *Network*." At a district office meeting, an assistant Superintendent took me aside. "I hear nothing but good things about your program. Thank you for what you're doing."

After offering the program to every HSD teacher, 80% of them elected to receive HOTM in their classroom. This exposed 87.2% of HSD students to HOTM produce for the remainder of the school year (note: the percentages are different due to class size differences in middle and elementary schools).

This year HSD continued with the face-to-face meetings, and again ordered the first month of HOTM for every teacher. The response has continued to be superb.

The next challenge will be how to keep this momentum going, while thinking of ways to capture that last 20% of teachers (and therefore the final 13% of students) that still find it difficult to implement HOTM in their classroom. HSD is revising the way they conduct teacher trainings, as well as the way they communicate with teachers. Monthly emails and references to teacher support materials on our website is one idea.

Another idea is to integrate the staff into school based, grade-specific meetings, as a way to further connect with teachers and understand their needs.

HSD's goal is to have 100% of students and teachers participating in HOTM, and they will not rest until that goal is accomplished.

For more information, please contact Steve Baldwin, MS, RD, at stbaldwin@hawthorne.k12.ca.us.

Yes, Literature Promotes Fruits and Vegetables

The challenges teenagers face with making healthy food choices and/or being more physically active are their social and cultural influences. Socially, teens are subjected to limited time, limited funds, and a lack of nutrition knowledge. Culturally, teens are subjected to family traditions that may or may not include a variety of fruits and vegetables. These teens are making food choices independently on a daily basis which creates a strong need to provide them with tools on how to make healthier choices.

Several English teachers at Westminster High School are successfully incorporating literature and nutrition education. Students in four classes were assigned to read, *Esperanza Rising*, written by Pam Munoz Ryan. It's a story of a young Mexican girl who experiences triumph, tragedy, and the unfair treatment of farmers during the 1930's. The author creatively links Esperanza's life to the harvest cycle by weaving a fruit and vegetable into each chapter. By taking captions from the book that mention fruits and vegetables, staff were able to integrate the nutritional benefit related to that fruit or vegetable. In the classrooms, a display of the featured fruits or vegetables (i.e., guavas, grapes, and asparagus) was presented to students to see, touch, and feel. They discovered asparagus grows from an underground crown and can have a 10-week window to harvest. They also learned that it is packed with vitamin A, C, and five B vitamins and nine minerals.

Integrating nutrition education with literature has made an impact. An English teacher confesses that learning about fresh produce has encouraged her to eat healthy. "Introducing fruits and vegetables in a different way might help to get students to start eating them," she exclaimed. Based on the number of questions after the classroom presentation, the students were intrigued with the impact fruits and vegetables had on Esperanza's life.

Due to the positive responses by students and teachers, staff will continue to explore other literature that includes fruits and vegetables. Staff is currently working on linking cultural eating and nutrition by using the novel, "Joy Luck Club." The staff is excited about researching other methods to integrate nutrition education into the high school curriculum for various subjects.

For more information, please contact Nancy Wikes at nwikes@hbuhsd.org.

Kernville Union School District
Contract #: 05-45515

Start Healthy, Stay Healthy

Child obesity, children developing type 2 diabetes and many other child health related issues are completely preventable and yet thrive in our community. Kern River Valley families suffer from low income and the absence of choices when it comes to making better choices for their families. If you owe rent and utilities, you'll go for the cheapest food items at the market which are notoriously high in fat and sugar. Kids eating high fat and sugary foods are listless and spend more time indoors sedentary than outside being physically active.

Key strategies are an annual Nutrition Olympics, intense nutrition education in our after school programs, nutrition/cooking classes, Health & Nutrition Fairs, and promotions on school sites, in-home visits, and weekly playgroup activities. Harvest of the Month (HOTM) food sampling occurs within all of our strategies giving low income families a chance to taste more fruits and vegetables. Standards based curriculum for teachers and nutrition educators increases awareness, knowledge and self-efficacy to choose healthier foods, eat more fruits and vegetables and engage in physical activity within the schools and the community.

Impact evaluation efforts have shown a statistically significant change in overall knowledge of students involved in consistent nutrition education and HOTM intervention. We also saw statistically significant change in what children choose for lunch at home which we believe is huge. Kids eating at home can pick whatever they want and when they're picking a nutritious food that's great! That also means that mom and/or dad/grandma/etc. is learning and purchasing more nutritious foods for their families to eat.

We would like to increase nutrition education and HOTM opportunities in the regular school day. We're working on creating more of a link between HOTM and the school cafeteria so they would serve the featured produce more than once a week on the school menu. We'd like to see more teachers using the school site gardens to further nutrition education and are promoting all areas of increased physical activity and nutrition education in the regular school day. We'd like to use students from the after school program to promote our programs to the school board and regular school day staff.

For more information, please contact Alisa Hinkle at alhinkl@zeus.kern.org.

Lamont Elementary School District
Contract #: 04-35447

Harvest of the Month at Lamont Elementary School District

Students in the Lamont School District do not eat very healthy and do not consume enough fruits and vegetables. Parents and students report they only eat very familiar fruits and vegetables and are very hesitant to try new foods. Because of this, they are not consuming the recommended amounts of fruit and vegetable servings.

One of the nutrition education sites is the after school program at Mt. View Middle School. The nutrition educator uses the Eat Fit curriculum and very frequently prepares healthy meals and snacks along with her class. She then shares the recipe and has the class write it down to take it home to share with their parents. During an evening presentation about the program one of the parents approached me to tell me the Nutrition Education Program at Mt. View had impacted her son very much. She said that since taking the class, he would want to go food shopping with her, would ask if he could help prepare some of the recipes with her for dinner, and would even ask if he could offer their guests some of the smoothies he learned how to make in the nutrition class! She also said that because of that, the family now consumes more fruits and vegetables and has many more ideas on how to prepare them. All of the students try new fruits and vegetables every month using the Harvest of the Month (HOTM) activities and taste testing ideas.

During the community events like the Health Fair and the Kinder Registration, parents report that their children attending the After School Program (ASP) have brought home a recipe or a handout about healthy snacks, healthy eating, or about HOTM encouraging them to eat more fruits and vegetables and to try healthier snacks. Sometimes the children are even reminding the parent about what they should be eating. Parents report they have become more conscious about the snacks they allow their children to have, and about buying and offering more fruits and vegetables at home.

Offering more cooking in the classroom allows children to explore more fruits and vegetables and they are more willing to try new foods they have not been exposed to before. In planning the lessons for the ASP we will be incorporating more taste testing, more recipes, and more activities using HOTM so that children can try new fruits/vegetables and take home the messages about healthy eating. We can also plan activities when the parents are invited to attend like the Day to Explore the Arts and Sciences. During a food art activity many of the children tried eating the pears and found out they actually liked them even though they reported never trying them before!

For more information, please contact Yolanda Romero at yromero@lesd.us.

Fitting In Skills-Based Nutrition Education

Teachers continually face the challenge of providing nutrition education within an impacted teaching day that focuses on language arts and math. They express a desire to provide appropriate nutrition education and request assistance in “fitting everything in”. They know that students need to learn how to choose healthy foods and be active; they know that students who choose healthy foods and are active can learn more.

During the course of the year, Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) *Network*-funded Health Educator and Child Nutrition Specialist (RD) provided 35 trainings to 639 teachers. Schools could schedule any of the five teacher trainings offered: Basic Nutrition, Nutrition Education Linked to Literature, Cooking in the Classroom, Gardening and Nutrition, and Nutrition Activities; each of these trainings provides current information with focus on health skills (accessing information, analyzing influences, decision-making, goal-setting, interpersonal communication, self-management, and/or advocacy). Trainings are held at the school site, with compensation for the teachers’ time outside their contract day, and instructional resources and lesson plans are provided to all teachers who attend.

Teachers report their intent to provide an enhanced nutrition education program upon the completion of the training. More importantly, three months after the training teachers report they did provide enhanced nutrition education, that they feel their students have increased their knowledge about nutrition and activity, and that their students have expressed intent to increase their consumption of fruits/vegetables and involvement in physical activity. Teachers report that the materials provided “fit in” with their classroom focus on language arts and math, focus on skill-based nutrition education, and provide a sequence for instruction so that students build their knowledge and skill competency. They express appreciation for the lesson plans and materials that are easy to use, of high interest for students, and support the English language development of many of LBUSD’s students. They report that nutrition education has become a regular part of their instructional program with focus, rather than a provision of haphazard activities, and complement the many other nutrition education activities that take place on their campuses.

LBUSD *Network*-funded staff will continue to work with teachers to identify additional needs (content, instructional materials) and strategies to support a planned, sequential skills-based nutrition education program.

For more information, please contact Robin Sinks at rsinks@lbusd.k12.ca.us.

Get Healthy! Join the Club – the LAUSD NAC Way!

The *Network for a Healthy California* –Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) strives to reach students and parents of students at schools with 50% or more students receiving free/reduced price meals. The main challenge LAUSD face is in directly impacting their students and parents to make healthy food choices and in being more active physically. As a staff they are limited in personnel and resources, so it is very difficult for them to have direct contact with their students and parents at every school they service.

One way LAUSD can impact a greater number of students and parents is through their Nutrition Advisory Councils (NACs). NAC is a program that empowers youth to be peer leaders of nutrition education on their school campus. One way in which LAUSD staff train their NACs is by holding a NAC Symposium. On September 25, 2007, approximately one hundred students and their NAC advisors from three elementary schools in the district convened at The California Endowment in Los Angeles. The Symposium was organized by staff from the *Network* and was also sponsored by Blue Cross and the American Cancer Society who provided healthy tasting and sampling at breakfast and lunch and a t-shirt for each participant.

The three main sessions of the day were:

- A charge, challenge, and healthy reminders from Valery Ortiz of Nickelodeon fame and Lori Corbin, Food Coach on ABC7.
- An “Iron Chef Contest” between the three schools using apples as the secret ingredient.
- A rotation of three leadership training break-out sessions on: How to set up a produce stand; Start a Walking Club, and developing a Harvest of the Month Book Club.

While at the NAC Symposium, students were not only given opportunities to “Find the Fun in Being Healthy” but were also given tools to help them carry out the nutrition education and physical activity message to their peers. As LAUSD have learned from their past symposiums, their staff knows that these students will take the messages they have learned from this training and use it with their peers and parents. Through this event LAUSD have multiplied the message and efforts through the NACs to reach more students than they themselves could personally touch.

For more information, please contact Roberta Acantilado at Roberta.acantilado@lausd.net.

Madera Unified School District
Contract #: 05-45518

Nutrition Education at Madera Unified School District

Madera Unified School District is approximately 77 percent Hispanic. Many of their families are not only migrant, but also very poor. Supermarkets are not available in the poorest section of town, and often the cheapest food is not the best choice in a healthy lifestyle.

Participation in the *Network* has had benefits. It has allowed the school district to hire more teachers to teach nutrition and to promote physical activity.

The nutrition education is working to make the students more aware of what healthy eating is and activities that make up a healthy lifestyle. The teachers also act as positive role models, which are lacking in some students' lives.

The district continues to support the importance of good nutrition by being proactive in adopting current regulations as well as by mandating increased physical education time every day. This will support the message that students take home with them. Hopefully it will also affect decisions made at home regarding eating and activity.

For more information, please contact Rosie Garcia at Garcia_R@madera.k12.ca.us.

Cookin' Up Champions for Change

Sensing the need to broaden the teaching of foundational nutrition skills that would enable students to develop healthier lifestyles and provide behavior change, Monrovia Unified School District decided to target our English as a Second Language (ESL) parent education classes at our preschool. The elementary students demonstrated excellent nutrition knowledge, but had limited application to their lives (i.e., behavioral change). Therefore, the challenge of targeting parents of pre-school aged children to influence this change became a new goal as an intervention for future influence.

During the course of the ESL parent education classes, pre-school parents became aware of their lack of nutrition knowledge. As our nutrition specialist conducted classes and taste testing's on a regular basis to include background information about food groups to assist with a balanced diet, correct portion sizes for their families, and reading food labels to facilitate making informed, nutritious choices, the parents became more and more interested in practical application. As an example of the interest about portion size information, one parent responded "We are supposed to eat only that much?" As these three major nutrition concepts: *Making Meals Matter* with MyPyramid, portion sizes, and food labels, were presented with our taste testing recipes, the parents began to look at their own family meals and recipes and asked how they could change their recipes. They were even motivated to compile our taste testing recipes with their own class-modified recipes to create their own cookbook.

The statement "May we bring in our own recipes so you can help us make them healthier?" tells the story of the impact of this class to a lasting improvement for a healthier lifestyle in our families. The participants in these classes were so committed to making lasting changes that they created and distributed a cookbook to share among themselves and their friends. These families have made changes at the very core of their family structure, and we expect these changes to permeate into the culture of Monrovia schools as these children become our next elementary-aged children. The response of this one ESL parent education class has motivated us to continue our efforts to reach our ESL pre-school parents as well as to persevere with all of our parent education classes. These results affected our work by providing encouragement and motivation to continue to improve and manifest ourselves into "Champions for Change."

We look forward to a continued alliance of parents, teachers and students modeling healthier lifestyles throughout the population of Monrovia as we continue the nutrition message throughout the Monrovia Unified School District.

For more information, please contact Valerie Parsons at vparsons@monrovia.k12.ca.us.

Student Groups Have a NAC for Nutrition

School Nutrition Advisory Councils (NAC) at intermediate and high schools are designed as peer advocacy and educational groups aimed to raise awareness and understanding of (school) nutrition issues. These groups must meet, develop campaigns/goals and implement activities with the oversight of a faculty and Nutrition Services Advisor. The NACs at different school sites have varying degrees of experience. The advisors come and go and consistency is a challenge. In addition, membership is voluntary to conduct activities in addition to the rigors of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and other academic responsibilities. Finally, insuring accuracy of nutrition content is a top priority, including when the students convey the details to others. Students come from a place where low nutrition foods are often “staples” in their diets, and early resistance to change or even acceptance that good nutrition tastes good as well needs to be overcome.

Structured NAC groups are overseen by a NAC Coordinator, who is a former (retired) Nutrition Services Supervisor. She led NAC groups when she was at a school site. NAC groups attended Back to School Night at a middle and high school, supporting the school meals' operations as well as educating families on nutrition topics such as fat content or sugar content of foods and beverages. The students also conducted taste tests of soda alternative beverages combining seltzer water and fruit juice. This was done to encourage healthier beverage consumption with less added sugar. Disseminating a binder of suggested activities for a few years helps jump-start ideas. NACs also assembled “kits” with fat and sugar content of foods, accompanied by lesson plans to provide students/teachers with an informal script ensure content integrity is maintained.

NACs are now part of intermediate and most all high school campuses. As the groups become more institutionalized, their presence and mission become more solidified and supported. The students remain enthusiastic and rejoin the NAC at their school while they attend. Students and teachers alike grow more sophisticated in their knowledge and ability to communicate nutrition information to a wide variety of audiences. These groups also help reinforce the board policies related to healthy-food fundraising and a more nutrition friendly campus. Maintaining support through lesson materials and manipulatives such as the sugar/fat kits and marketing to kid's kits helps a great deal.

These NAC groups may be poised to assist with the new “Family Nutrition Night” events. This event was very successful, but very time intensive. It would provide students a chance to educate families on nutrition in an exciting, “festival” type atmosphere that is less formal, less intimidating and gives them a chance to speak to families in their own way. As a way to solidify the activities and involvement among all 9 NACs, the advisors commit to 2 or more years at a stretch.

Our coordinator continues to work on this, and this year involved our operations managers as a way to encourage the Nutrition Services staff to engage even more with NAC commitments. Continuing to carefully scrutinize the nutrition messages and content ensures accuracy and understanding. If there are NAC nutrition education materials that the *Network* has, Montebello Unified School District would love to see additional strategies.

For more information, please contact Piper Mattson at mattson_piper@montebello.k12.ca.us.

Mt. Diablo Unified School District
Contract #: 05-45523

Farm to Kids Pilot Program – A BIG Success!

Mt. Diablo Unified School District (USD) has become increasingly aware of the issues of childhood obesity and the challenges that face poor families relating to access to fresh fruits and vegetables and the impact their limited income has on their ability to purchase it.

After meeting with the local Food Bank, Contra Costa Solano, the newest program, Farm to Kids, was started. This fall, Farm to Kids expanded from 5 sites in Bay Point to over 20 sites in Bay Point, Concord, Fairfield, Pittsburg and Vacaville. The successful pilot in Bay Point partnering with the CARES after school program and the Mt Diablo USD was exciting and timely, given concerns about childhood obesity. Other after school programs expressed an interest. Farm to Kids has many benefits for the children, the after school program and the Food Bank. School children have access to fruits and vegetables. They learn that fruit and vegetables come in a variety of sizes that you don't see at the supermarket. The students are able to eat produce as snacks and get to take a three to five pound bag of one or two produce items home. The after school program has a concrete way of teaching children about the importance of fruits and vegetables. The produce can be used in cooking classes and supports curriculums that teach increased fruit and vegetable consumption and more physical activity. The Food Bank benefits by having a weekly outlet for the bounty of produce that is brought in from Central Valley and Arizona. The fruits and vegetables can be distributed within a few days and a regular variety of produce is handled confidently.

It is the Food Banks dream to make this program available to all after school programs in low income schools in their service area by marketing the program and creating partnerships. Training is needed to motivate other after school programs to take on the extra work involved in bagging and distributing the produce as well as funding for necessary staff, fuel, boxes and more produce.

This is a huge opportunity to expand access to fresh produce for children who need it.

For more information, please contact Debra Mason at ambrose31@hotmail.com.

Reading the Label!

One of the challenges faced by many of the Newport Mesa Unified School District (USD) families is their lack of understanding of basic nutrition, especially understanding and utilizing the information found on food labels. Adding to this challenge is the fact that many of the target audience parents do not speak or read English very well. Even if you are fluent in English, trying to decipher a food fact label is a daunting task. As part of our parent nutrition education program, a class was taught with the aid of a translator.

Last year, the class was taught to a group of parents from our Adult Education program with the help of a new translator that had previously worked with the *Network* in a different school district. The translator had experience teaching a similar class so she was able to provide additional information that was appropriate for the Spanish-speaking parents. There were lots of actual food packages and labels for all sorts of foods and beverages that the parents used as part of the class. When the parents were told that the nutrition facts were based on the listed portion size, it was like a collective light bulb lit up over everyone's head. All of a sudden, they got it! The parents suddenly realized that they were giving their children way too many calories, especially with snack foods. The other important breakthrough came when the parents read labels from many different types of milk and saw that they could easily reduce the amount of fat and cholesterol by changing the kind of milk they purchased. At the next class, many parents told the instructor and translator that they had made some changes in how they gave snacks to their children. Instead of giving their kids a large bag of chips, they began to give their kids only a small portion of what was in the big bag. Parents also said they were convinced to serve their kids more fruit and vegetable snacks using the ideas given to them.

The response of the parents demonstrated that the class was a success. In previous years, the same class was taught but the results were never as dramatic. "What was different about this year's class?" The difference was that the translator had prior experience teaching this information to parents and injected lots of information that was tailored to the comprehension level of this particular group.

In past years, the translators were often hastily chosen, sometimes at the last minute. Some of these translators were not able to grasp the subject matter for themselves which made it harder for them to translate the information to the parents. Since it will not be possible to always use this translator with parent nutrition education experience, the instructor will now meet with and train the other translators so they will understand and be more effective at presenting the subject matter.

For more information, please contact Geoff Ianniello at gianniello@nmusd.us.

Orange Unified School District
Contract #: 05-44527

Follow the Leader with a *Twist*

Palmyra Elementary School has been a *Network* participating school for the past 4 years. A 6th grade Palmyra teacher had developed a program over 10 years ago where she would take her 6th grade students out for physical education (PE) and have them lead 1st and 2nd graders in PE activities. Orange Unified School District (OUSD) *Network* collaborated with this teacher and helped remodel the program with nutrition education as one of its core components. OUSD *Network* approached two other *Network* school sites, California and Esplanade Elementary schools, along with Palmyra to pilot the newly revised program with a new name "Follow the Leader." After the initial pilot, evaluation reports showed an increase in knowledge and behavior related to fruit and vegetable consumption. In addition, physical activity increased at all three schools.

For the 2007-08 school year, more than four other *Network* schools have requested to start the Follow the Leader program at their school site!

The *Network* schools who are implementing Follow the Leader at their sites are doing so without much *Network* support. This program has become sustainable with out lasting funding from the *Network* and OUSD *Network* developed a training module for both students and teachers to implement on their own as new participants continue the program.

Next steps include improving program modules and increasing nutrition education activities in the program. Also continuing to incorporate teacher evaluation suggestions at the end of the year in the program.

For more information, please contact Katryn Soltanmorad at ksoltanmorad@orangeusd.org.

Pasadena Unified School District
Contract #: 05-45528

Pasadena Farmers Market Talent Show

The challenge has been that due to a short fall of staffing, Pasadena Unified School District has been unable to work on getting the talent show performance completed. This year even with the staffing issue they did complete this activity successfully with their summer school after school program.

The performance was taped by KLRN district TV channel. They will be distributing copies of the performance to all elementary school sites later this year. The peers' presentation could further empower their students in adopting healthier behavior through eating more fruit and vegetable.

For more information, please contact Katia Ahmed at kahmed@pusd.us.

Rosemead School District
Contact #: 05-45531

ABC 7 – Kid Healthy “Steps to Healthy Living Campaign”

Rosemead School District (SD) had 3 out of 4 elementary schools that participated in the *ABC 7 – Kid Healthy “Steps to Healthy Living Campaign”* in March 2007. The campaign started with teachers distributing pedometers to students and teaching them how to use it. The students tracked their daily “Steps” for two weeks. At the end of each school day, students and teachers recorded the number of steps and intake of fruits and vegetables (in cups) on a classroom chart (provided by the Campaign). In conjunction with this activity, teachers received the *Power Play!* School Idea and Resource Kit (SIRK) and was required to teach at least 5 out of the 10 lessons. There was a variety of lessons in the workbook which included both nutrition and physical activity. At the end of the two weeks, teachers completed an evaluation sheet to check off which lessons were conducted and provided feedback on the campaign. Some challenges that came from this campaign were: 1) A few students lost or broke their pedometers; 2) Some teachers mentioned that March is a hectic month to participate in the campaign and suggested to have the campaign in October or May instead. Extra pedometers were made available for students that lost or broke their pedometers. Suggestion for conducting the campaign earlier in the school year was given to the “Steps Campaign” coordinator.

Approximately 670 students and 23 teachers were reached. Teachers and students completed the campaign in April 2007. Incentives and certificates were distributed in May 2007 to the teachers and the students by the “Steps Campaign” and Rosemead SD. All three schools were qualified to be in a raffle to receive P.E. equipment prize pack for their 100% participation. One of the elementary won the raffle prize out of the 10 school district that participated.

22 out of 23 teachers reported that they would use the *Power Play!* materials again. Teachers also reported that they would participate in “Steps to Healthy Living Campaign” again. 5 teachers completed more than 5 lessons. “We spent about ½ hour daily on nutrition. It was painless. The students are now very aware of their eating habits” – stated by a 4th grade teacher at Shuey Elementary. This was a successful campaign as noted by the positive feedback received from the teachers. Teachers reported that students were bringing fruits and vegetables for snacks instead of chips and going to the salad bar to eat more fruits and vegetables.

Rosemead SD will participate in the campaign again for the 2007-2008 school year and will aim to have all 4 elementary schools participate in the campaign.

For more information, please contact Diane Ezzo at dezzo@rosemead.k12.ca.us.

Come to School on Time for Breakfast Club!

The last few minutes before the bell rang at the start of school at Flynn Elementary there was a frantic scramble to the lunch room. *Network* staff would see students, racing to the cafeteria to try to grab a quick breakfast while the lunchroom supervisor was shooing the students to class. Teachers saw the results in their classrooms—students hungry from the first moment they entered the classroom, or by mid morning many were unfocused or falling asleep at their desks, either from having skipped breakfast or from having consumed a bag of hot chips or a cookie in lieu of something more nutritious.

In addition, office staff and teachers were seeing too many students who were regularly tardy or truant. The Nutrition Wellness Team, made up of a *Network* staff person, a teacher, a couple of parents, and the school social worker met to come up with a solution. They came with a decision to start a Breakfast Club to tackle both the nutrition and tardiness issues.

The Breakfast Club goals are to encourage students to be physically active, consume fruits and vegetables, and to arrive at school on time to be able to eat the school breakfast. The Nutrition Wellness Team wanted a program that was simple and repeatable. They designed 3 stations that students would rotate through, once they had finished the School Breakfast:

- Physical Activity Station (i.e. individual jumping rope, dancing to nutrition songs, student led callisthenic)
- Nutrition Education Station (pencil/paper activities, favorite fruit and vegetable mural)
- Fruit and Vegetable Tasting Station—highlighting one fruit or vegetable per week

They obtained a list of truant/persistently tardy students from the office and targeted 4 students from each classroom, chosen on consultation with classroom teachers. They sent invitations directly to targeted students and their families. They identified students from the list and matched them with students from the same classroom, to be helpers for Breakfast Club.

The Team was thrilled to see the excitement that was created amongst the students, and soon they had over 50 students attending, once a week. The real success was seeing students from the truancy/tardy list enjoying a healthy breakfast with their peers.

As the weeks went on they saw targeted students arriving on time even when there was no Breakfast Club. Staff was thrilled to have organized activities before school. And *Network* staff was thrilled to see students learning about healthy eating and physical activity at a time that used to be so problematic. The successes have been many: breakfasts are calmer; teachers have reported that students seem to be more focused in the morning; more classrooms are discussing the importance of a healthy breakfast; teachers plan on handing out healthy breakfast fliers at parent/teacher conferences. When *Network* staff walk through the school students ask when the next Breakfast Club is going to be. And they want to know if they can be helpers.

As time goes on the Nutrition Wellness Team hopes to reduce the number of Breakfast Clubs to 2 a month and then perhaps once a month. For the first time recently they have had a couple of parent volunteers who lead activities with the students.

Their next step will be to get the school buses to arrive on time so students have time enough to eat breakfast!

For more information, please contact Mark Elkin at elkinm@sfusd.edu.

Parents Take the Lead

Santa Ana Unified School District (USD) is comprised of approximately 54,000 students. It can be quite difficult for them to reach the families of their students. As they visited schools and met with administrators they realized that the need for parent education was vital to reaching the goals of their program. Their belief was if they could get parents involved and empower them with meaningful nutrition education experiences, that they would take the lead.

They knew that students were learning about new fruits and vegetables. They delivered approximately 20,000 taste tests of the Harvest of the Month (HOTM) produce each month to students. They believed that if they reached the parents with a similar experience, this would be a powerful way to create healthier lifestyles for their students.

Therefore, Santa Ana USD decided to develop a pilot HOTM Parent Cooking Class. Their goals were to increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables and for parents to demonstrate a positive attitude towards healthy eating. They started their pilot in October 2006. They invited two parents from five schools. The focus of the class was the upcoming HOTM produce. The parents learned two recipes featuring the HOTM produce. The parents learned nutrition facts, and the health benefits of the produce. Santa Ana USD also provided food safety and sanitation training.

The parents returned to their schools and demonstrated one of the recipes at their next parent meeting. They discussed nutrition facts, including vitamin and mineral content, serving sizes, and varieties of the produce. Each month as parents returned to the cooking class, they were excited to share their experiences with the class. They looked forward to learning about the upcoming HOTM and taste testing the new recipes.

The HOTM Parent Cooking Class proved to be a huge success. Some schools reported a double in parent attendance at monthly meetings. Parents who participated enjoyed not only the learning experience, but also sharing the information with other parents. This confirms Santa Ana USD belief that parents will listen more and are willing to make positive changes when the information comes from their own peers. Today Santa Ana USD has 12 schools participating in the HOTM Parent Cooking Class. They estimate that the parents they trained reached approximately 2,750 parents through monthly school meetings.

Parents have taken the lead by increasing their involvement in these schools. They are now organizing parent volunteers to assist in the monthly meetings. Some are creating HOTM Parent Volunteers to assist in the classrooms. More importantly, parents are reporting about changes they are making at home. They are making healthier choices and living a more active lifestyle.

For more information, please contact Jennifer Crawford at jennifer.crawford@sausd.us.

Santa Cruz City Schools
Contract #: 05-45535

Gardens Foster Healthy Changes

Many students at Gault and Bay View Elementary Schools did not know much about how fruits and vegetables grow. Students also favored processed foods for snacks and school lunch rather than whole foods.

All K-5 students came to the school Life Lab garden every other week for garden nutrition and cooking classes. Planting pea seeds, observing the vines grow, harvesting, and finally tasting peas got the kids excited and transformed their understanding of food. Kids were also involved in harvesting produce from the garden for the cafeteria salad bar. In the salad bar line, we heard excited students and teachers exclaim “That lettuce is from the Life Lab garden!”

The cafeteria worker reported that students take more fresh vegetables from the salad bar when they know they are from the school garden. The Food Service director reported that she sees more fresh fruits and vegetables consumed from the salad bar at the schools with the garden nutrition program - Bay View and Gault – than at the other elementary schools in the district. Kids come into the garden during recess and ask “Can I please harvest a pea?”, “Can I harvest a strawberry?” More teachers than ever are using our Harvest of the Month (HOTM) tasting kits featuring produce from local farms.

The staff plans to continue the K-5 garden nutrition and cooking classes. At teacher request, staff developed bilingual farmer profiles for the HOTM tasting kits. Staff will continue to involve students in providing fresh school garden produce to the salad bar. This year, students will take vegetable seed packets home so that they can share their learning with their families.

For more information, please contact Jessica Silverman Curcio at jcurcio@sccs.santacruz.k12.ca.us.

Ukiah Unified School District
Contract #: 05-45541

High School Teachers and Students Like Harvest of the Month

Fort Bragg and Ukiah High Schools have been minimally involved with the *Network for a Healthy California* project. This last year, we wanted to include both high schools in the Harvest of the Month (HOTM) program.

There were two nutrition leaders one at each high school. They were able to convince 30 teachers at Ukiah High and 15 teachers at Fort Bragg High to join the HOTM for at least one of their classes. The nutrition educator at Fort Bragg High has had remarkable success in getting students excited about HOTM, as well as changing staff and teacher attitudes about eating more fruits and vegetables. At Ukiah High, one of the science teachers was able to convince twice the number of teachers to join the HOTM as before.

The lasting impact and change comes in when you see how many students are being exposed to fresh fruits and vegetables in their classrooms. At Fort Bragg High, it is over 300 students. At Ukiah High, there are over 1,200 students participating in HOTM. The reason for the change is two fold. There are an increasing number of teacher staff participants in our Mendocino County *Network for a Healthy California* program, as well as tripling the number of students who are trying fruits and vegetables and indicating that they enjoy the HOTM in their classrooms and see it as a “fun” part of learning about nutrition.

We will continue to work on including more high schools in HOTM throughout Mendocino County.

For more information, please contact Terry Nieves at tnieves@uusd.net.

SNAC at Vaughn

At Vaughn Next Century Learning Center, the secondary students would go through the lunch lines and generally would not select any of the fresh fruits or vegetables (cooked or fresh) for their meals. The teaching staff, cafeteria staff and *Network* staff were frustrated as everyone tried to encourage the students to add these selections to their lunch trays. All staff felt like they were fighting an uphill battle.

One of the *Network* activities was to develop a Student Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC). The SNAC group met and discussed this food selection problem. They concluded that what the group needed to do was to teach their peers why they should eat more fruits and vegetables in a fun way so that the students themselves can change their behaviors (what they eat) instead of people telling them what to eat. So, SNAC planned taste testing and cooking demonstration activities during student nutrition and lunch periods. As they conducted these activities, they informally shared the nutrition knowledge they learned during their SNAC meetings. The SNAC group also sponsored cooking competitions. For the secondary competition, the recipe requirements were that the recipes had to highlight the use of fruits or vegetables, it needed to be a healthy preparation and that students could easily replicate it at home. The SNAC group was slightly disappointed because they felt that they should have received more than the twenty four entries. The competition was held, the auditorium was filled with students, the entrants themselves were given the opportunity to share the “whys” of their healthy recipes and winners were selected and celebrated.

Staff now sees more and more of our secondary students putting selections of fruits and vegetables on their meal trays. The SNAC students reported that their peers have told them how because of the taste testing and cooking demonstrations, they are starting to enjoy the various fruits and vegetables that they choose to eat at school and that they also prepare foods that are healthier for them. Also, more students have told them how they can't wait for next year's cooking competition because they would also like to enter and share what they know. This is a very rewarding outcome.

The SNAC group will continue with their work as they plan the new year's activities. Teachers and students are having more discussions about making healthy nutritious choices and the idea of healthy choices is coming from the students themselves. The road will be easier to travel but the SNAC group feels that they have many more people to communicate with and much more work to do and they are having fun doing it.

For more information, please contact Suzanne Llamas at sllamas@vaughncharter.com.

Ventura Unified School District
Contract #: 05-45544

NAC at Ventura USD

Students in the after school program at EP Foster School in Ventura had the opportunity to sign up for the Nutrition Action Club (NAC). Like most children their age, they have relatively little experience in choosing healthy food products, thus, they often chose things that merely looked or tasted good.

An enthusiastic group who wanted to learn about nutrition signed up with a Nutrition Educator and NAC teacher. They lead off with a lesson on juice. The students helped squeeze oranges to make a cup of 100% orange juice. Next, the leaders made a recipe for a juice drink which had one-half cup of water, one-fourth cup of sugar, only one tablespoon of orange juice, plus some artificial coloring and flavoring. The students were amazed at how little juice was in the drink. Next they learned how to read labels on juice drink containers. Their amazement grew when they saw that some products have very little or no juice at all! They also learned what an appropriate serving size of juice is, since excess juice can contribute to childhood overweight. They were so fascinated by this activity that they decided every student at their school should know about juice. On another afternoon they developed a demonstration with teams of two to three students to do the juice lesson. A schedule was made to reach every class at the school during a three day period. The students made sure that they could be on the team to visit their own class. The three days were busy with classes coming to Room 22 to get a lesson from their peers. These students were proud to share valuable information and pledged to take the lesson home to their parents also. They won't be fooled by tricky claims and colorful pictures now!

After more than 20 presentations on juice, the NAC group decided to develop some skits to teach more lessons on nutrition. Several brainstorming sessions resulted in 4 skits related to choosing healthy snacks, selecting a healthy breakfast cereal, and physical activity ideas for a rainy day. The students rehearsed until they were ready to present their skits to their fellow students. It was rewarding to see children interested in healthy eating and using their creativity to share their knowledge with their peers. The lead teacher used the stipend she earned to buy a bicycle which she rides to school. This is a great way to model incorporating physical activity into one's daily life. Another result of the NAC activity is that our nutrition educators shared the juice lesson with all the third grade classes at *Network* schools this fall.

The next steps will be to encourage student groups in other schools to develop nutrition skits or demonstrations to teach their fellow students.

For more information, please contact Sandy Curwood at Sandy.Curwood@venturausd.org.

Visalia Unified School District
Contract #: 05-45545

California Grown Food Tour

At the elementary schools during recess time and after school some students are actively playing while many others stand around talking and eating cheese flavored corn snacks. After school, many students go home and watch television or play video games, sometimes because their parents are not comfortable with them playing outside. The student might also choose their own snack, many times a soda and other high fat or sugar content snack.

Visalia Unified School District (VUSD) with *Network* support and funding developed a nutrition education and physical activity challenge event to encourage students to be active during recess breaks and learn about foods from each part of MyPyramid, called California Grown Food Tour. Students walk or run on a quarter mile track marked on the school campus. The students earn mileage as a class to “travel” to five different counties in California. As they reach each new county the students learn about a food grown there. This program was so successful that it received the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports gold medal in the event category.

VUSD hope that students and staff continue to be more active during recess and breaks. Also, teachers could see that students are interested and willing to taste and eat healthy foods and that those would be incorporated more often in the classroom for such things as parties and treats. Another hope is that students would be willing to make healthier food chosen when given the option.

American Cancer Society has adopted this program as their State-wide project. VUSD are working together to expand the nutrition information included in the event and then to field test the materials. The materials would then be provided to other schools and districts free of charge. The Governor’s award also included a cash gift to expand or create a new event to address these same issues.

For more information, please contact Neva Wright at nwright@visalia.k12.ca.us.

West Contra Costa Unified School District
Contract #: 06-55124

Nutritional Physical Activity Promotion at West Contra Costa USD

This is the last year contracting with *Network for A Healthy California (Network)* and West Contra Costa Unified School District (USD) would like to sincerely thank the ongoing support from the Program Manager, Nutrition Education Coordinator of ACOE, local agencies, *PowerPlay!*, as well the school staff here at West Contra Costa. Despite the fact that Nystrom is no longer participating in this partnership, Verde, Dover, and the Food Services Department have made efforts on following the Scope of Work and the *Network* guidelines in the remaining period of time.

With the assistance from *PowerPlay!* and UC Cooperative Extension-Youth Nutrition Ed Program, California Department of Education (CDE) approved curriculums are now widely used by school staff as part of their lesson plan. During this contract year, school staff has received professional trainings from the said agencies on teaching techniques and updated nutritional information. More students receive science-based education on nutrition and physical activity.

In addition, nutrition and wellness provider trainings for Food Service Staff and other district were significantly increased during the year of 2007. The biggest Nutrition, Health, & Fitness Festival, which involved 1300 students and staff, was held at Helms Middle School in May 2007. The involvement of both students and school staff has raised the awareness of nutrition and physical activities in the district.

Some of the lasting impacts and changes have been an:

- Increased use of CDE approved nutrition education curriculums
- Increased number of staff wellness workshops (aka provider training)
- Increased the involvement of students and staff on nutrition education events;
- Increased the awareness of the District's Wellness Policy

West Contra Costa USD will continue to promote nutrition and physical activities with the ongoing partnership with the local agencies.

For more information, please contact Barbara Jellison at bjellison@wccusd.net.

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA COOPERATIVE
EXTENSIONS**

The Regents of the University of California, Cooperative Extension of Alameda County
Contract #: 05-45543

Building a Healthy Foundation at Home, at School, and in the Community

Working closely with Early Childhood teachers in Oakland Unified School District, staff constantly hear about the lack of healthy and fresh options of food delivered to early childhood sites and children eating powdered donuts for breakfast. Although *Network* staff teaches and provides nutrition education resources to teachers and parents of preschoolers, they are faced with environmental factors such as unsafe communities, no access to fresh fruits and vegetables and poverty, which contribute to their decisions and what is a priority for them. It is alarming to know that young children are part of the obesity epidemic and that they are at risk for chronic disease earlier in their lives.

One of University of California Cooperative Extension *Network* activities was to involve Early Childhood parents in the promotion of fruits and vegetables at Early Childhood Education (ECE) sites. Two parents, the *Network* staff has closely been working with were nominated as “Hero Moms” for the “Champions for Change” Campaign. Since then, they and their families have become more physically active and now make healthier choices when it comes to cooking and eating food. Patricia, while cooking, turns on the radio and dances with her kids. When cooking, she no longer uses “manteca,” and instead now uses olive oil. Jamilia lost 20 pounds and is on her college basketball team. At home, she cooks different recipes using a variety of vegetables and no longer buys fast food for her kids. Their “Hero Mom” titles have led to radio and television interviews where they shared what changes they have made in their personal lives and for their families in addition to sharing personal recipes that incorporate fresh fruits and vegetables.

One of the parents that work with the program said that her daughter no longer requests or craves to go to fast food restaurants. Teachers claim to have made changes in their own personal food choices and the children who are in their classrooms have noticed. One of their students asked, “Why aren’t you having your soda for the day?” Because healthy messages are reinforced at home and at school, preschool children are now asking, “When is the Nutritional Education Training Academy program coming back to give us strawberries and those things that taste like raisins (dried figs)?”

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Building Healthy Food Behaviors One Family at A Time

The University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Food Stamp Nutrition Education and Outreach targets underserved families in low-income housing units and the surrounding communities. The UCCE try to improve family food behaviors: daily fruit and vegetable intake, healthy eating and lifestyle practices, safe food handling, and food resource management. Historically, these low-income housing complexes are built in blighted areas.

The community outreach and nutrition education worker has walked door to door on the streets of this community for more years than she cares to remember. She lives in this community. Yet at times she wonders if she will be received. She has seen one housing complex torn down and rebuilt. The families she worked with were scattered over the Bay area and many could not come back when the new housing were built. Sometimes she may not feel safe in some areas, but she takes nutrition and food stamp information to neighborhood churches, libraries, community centers, schools, and etc. She wonders if she will be invited to return to conduct nutrition education to the families. **The big challenge - to make a difference!** She goes over the routine in her head: find the families, Food Behavior Checklist (FBC) pretest, teach them good nutrition stressing fruits and vegetables, food safety, money management, promote family meals; and collect shopping surveys and FBC post tests. She goes back to find the families after 3 months or more to do a follow-up (FBC) to determine behavior change and the shopping survey to find out where they spend their food dollars.

Her personal success story as a community outreach and nutrition education worker is **keeping a positive attitude!** She just keeps trying to change food behaviors one family at a time. Did she make a difference? The 62 families that she taught this year said they learned how to eat healthier and spend their money more wisely. So she went back one, two, and more times to get the follow-up data to evaluate impact. At the end of the day she found and completed follow-up on **42** of the **62** families. These families showed 10 to 12 percentage point improvement in desirable healthy eating practices and money management, but desirable food safety practices were unchanged.

Families reported eating **4-5** servings of fruits and vegetables improved from **47.6%** at baseline to **64.3%** at 3 month posttest. Follow-up FBCs on 102 families (12 months or more) after receiving nutrition education showed families reporting **5** serving of fruits and vegetables per day improved from a baseline of **16%** to a follow-up rate of **70%**. **Family members benefiting – 587.**

The follow-up FBC (collected after about 12 months) on 102 food stamp eligible families who had received nutrition education showed desirable practices in nutrition, food safety, and money management improved from a baseline of **8% to 57%**. Families reporting 5 servings of fruits and vegetable in particular, improved by from **16%** at

baseline to **70%** at follow-up. This year 15 of the eligible families applied for Food Stamps. Also, from the 102 families surveyed, **40%** of the food stamp families reported sometimes they shopped at farmers' markets and **24%** shopped there most of the times.

UCCE promote food stamps as a nutrition education program and support the family unit as the place where healthy attitudes and practices can be nurtured and passed on to the next generation. The community outreach and nutrition education worker feels a sense of accomplishment and renewed energy. She will go right back to knocking on doors, visiting groups in the communities, spreading the word about healthy lifestyle and eating practices -- particularly fruits and vegetables. She will promote family meals, using food stamps to stretch food dollars, and help improve future healthy attitudes and practices in the home one family at a time.

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