



Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Success Story and Lessons Learned

Title

Planting a Container Garden to help SNAP-Ed Families to Eat Healthy and Grow Vegetables!

Intervention Summary

Funded through the California Department of Public Health's Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch (NEOPB) with funding from USDA SNAP-Ed, we are able to address food insecurity which is a major concern for all of Kern County and especially in the rural area of Kern River Valley. With a 72% Free and Reduced Meals rate at Kernville Union School District (KUSD), our SNAP-Ed families struggle to purchase nutritious food that will last the month. It was our hope that we could show our families how easy it can be to have a garden environment with little space and little cost. KUSD students were introduced to container gardening by utilizing used, clean milk cartons from KUSD cafeterias and the garden soil from the school garden area. Students in the After School Programs planted leaf lettuce, radishes, celery, and green onions and took their "crops" home for their families to enjoy. Container gardening requires less water, less time, and less cost showing our KUSD families how simple it can be to grow their own produce.

Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

The largest barrier that we encountered was convincing our families that any type of gardening was cost effective and possible. Our After School Programs sent home vegetables and herbs that were grown in the school gardens to share with students' families. In addition, NEOPB approved recipes were sent home with the corresponding vegetable or herb for each family to try. The same recipe would be sampled in the After School Programs prior to being sent home in the hopes that the students would

encourage their family to give the recipe a try. Most KUSD families have never considered gardening as a possibility to help reduce the cost of food. The majority of families do not own the homes they live in or have the ability to pay to put in any type of garden or raised beds so the ease of using containers that would normally be thrown away made the idea simple and possible.

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

We will continue to send home produce and herbs grown in the school gardens as often as possible and share seeds and plant starters from the gardens with families. Container gardening works well in any season as the containers are movable and not permanently based in just one area. We partner with the After School Program in purchasing soil, fertilizer, and plant seeds and starts to enable the project to continue beyond our NEOPB funding. Many of the plants that can be grown have the ability to reseed and/or regrow making the container garden a long term concept for SNAP-Ed families in the Kern River Valley.

Contact information about this Narrative

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Grant #: 13-20529

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This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health's Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch with funding from USDA SNAP-Ed, known in California as CalFresh. These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. CalFresh provides assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious food for better health. For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. For important nutrition information, visit www.CaChampionsForChange.net.