



## **“The Patch” Brings Life, Fresh Produce and Nutrition to Jurupa Valley’s Food Desert**

### **Intervention Summary**

The gathering of community members, stakeholders and support from the “Healthy Jurupa Valley” initiative linked together to establish “The Patch” produce stand. Within the City of Jurupa Valley, there is a sparse distribution of supermarkets and very few small grocery stores. Community members requested more access to fresh produce at affordable prices. The Healthy Jurupa Valley collaborative met with Jurupa Area Recreation and Parks District Board to allow the local community center as a venue for a temporary produce stand every Friday morning. The proposal was presented and accepted by the board in March of 2015, with the concession of including resident nutrition education activities (provided by NEOP-funded staff) during operating hours.

On April 16, 2015, the grand opening of “The Patch” produce stand was met with remarkable community support. Each week, the Patch flyer was published in the local city newspaper, eventually grasping the attention of the regional Press Enterprise newspaper. To date, the Patch has been successful, with an average of 20-50 customers every Friday picking up a crop box, shopping for produce and receiving valuable nutrition information, recipes and cooking/preparation ideas for the various fruits and vegetables in season.

### **Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions**

The solution to a food desert seemed simple: provide fresh, locally-grown produce. However, immediate barriers surfaced: finding a location zoned to allow for a produce stand, negotiating a reasonable cost for use of property and insurance, finding a grower/vendor that would take a risk in a new area, attracting and retaining customers, building a marketing strategy, and developing a delivery system option.

Customers were delighted about having a new produce stand available in their area; they enjoyed visiting and choosing from the selection of fresh produce. However,

marketing and promotion efforts such as signage and physical location of the stand came into question. Initially, the Patch had a few regular customers visiting, and ideas about moving the location emerged because many people had trouble finding the location, since it wasn't readily visible when driving by. With permission of Jurupa Recreation and Park District, we were allowed to move the stand onto their sidewalk property, adjacent to the main road. The visibility of the Patch was attracting new customers, together with hand painted fruit and vegetable illustrations which had been placed on the sidewalk to direct community members to the patch.

It was recorded in the weekly analysis that the Patch received more foot traffic and new customers. The fruit and vegetable marketing signs were a success. However, the city notified them that the sidewalk area was not permitted. Although the sidewalk location attracted more customers, the Patch moved back into the park to comply with city ordinance. The fruit and vegetable illustrations are still visible from the street.

Traditional NEOP education needed to adapt to the outdoor produce stand environment. Providing relevant nutrition information on weekly produce selections is a challenge, as the farmer often decides which produce is ready to sell the night before or even the same morning of the Patch. Also, the produce stand is not currently certified, and is not eligible to accept CalFresh or WIC at this time, which is a deterrent to the residents we intended to serve.

## **Future Directions/Sustainable Success**

### Short-Term Goals:

- Find a way to attract low-income participants and drive greater sales through improved marketing. Stakeholders such as Reach Out, Healthy Jurupa Valley Gardens and Markets Action Team, Recreation and Parks District help to promote the Patch and conduct regular community outreach.
- Compile a farmer vendor toolbox with a wide variety of nutrition messages, recipes, and shopping/cooking tips that can be displayed or inserted into the produce boxes to match the seasonality and variety of produce and include Harvest of the Month, Produce Quick Tips and other retail program materials.
- Establishing a list of supplementary vendors to meet cultural and seasonal needs to match resident requests for specific produce.

### Long-Term Goals:

- Make the Patch mobile. Work with Jurupa Unified School District, the city's Planning Commission, the Recreation and Parks District, and Environmental Health to take the Patch to communities with the highest need.
- Ultimately replicating the Patch in multiple low-income or low-access locations.
- Meet criteria to become a Certified Farmers Market, and apply for EBT/CalFresh and WIC.

## Contact information about this Narrative

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