

Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Success Story



Seeds of Hope Partners with the Pico Union Project to Enhance Access to Healthy Food Events

Background

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) partnered with the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles (Seeds of Hope) to implement healthy food access events in schools, parks, and other community-based settings. Seeds of Hope is a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, which seeks to cultivate wellness in their community. They focus on a diocese-wide approach to food production, distribution, and preparation to benefit the hungry and undernourished in their churches and within the broader communities throughout Los Angeles County. Seeds of Hope set out to meet the needs of the SNAP-Ed eligible Pico Union community during the Covid-19 pandemic by increasing access to healthy food events and food waste education with community-based partner, The Pico Union Project.

Body

THE NEED: Challenge

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, Seeds of Hope has continued to meet the needs of community members impacted by the pandemic by scaling efforts to increase access to healthy, nutritious food by providing fresh, surplus fruits and vegetables to families struggling with food insecurity and partnering with field experts to educate the community on food waste reduction.

THE WORK: Solution

Once Los Angeles County was determined to be safe to begin gathering outdoors in larger groups, Seeds of Hope moved to a client's choice model for produce distribution events at the Pico Union Project. This allowed for participants to pick and choose the types of produce they wanted to take home like they would at a farmers' market. This model was particularly beneficial to both the participants receiving food and in reducing food waste. It is estimated that in 2018, 81 percent of households' wasted food ended up in landfills¹. Seeds of Hope received feedback from participants that pre-bagging produce and removing the option to choose, caused them to receive produce they did not enjoy or had no idea how to prepare. Seeds of Hope immediately connected with

Mario, an enthusiastic and experienced composter at the Pico Union Project to coordinate cooking classes with their own nutrition education department. Together, they were able to provide participants with produce to take home, offer a free cooking class hosted by the Pico Union Project to guide them in the preparation of unknown items, and concluded with a composting workshop. The Seeds of Hope team distributed materials from Leah's Pantry related to reducing food waste such as "Decoding Expiration Dates", "Organize Your Fridge like a Pro", and other tips from the Food Smarts Waste Reduction curriculum as part of the nutrition education component of the events.

THE IMPACT: Results



During the pandemic, Seeds of Hope was hosting access to healthy food events at the Pico Union Project for about 400 SNAP-Ed eligible individuals monthly. Once they moved to client's choice, Seeds of Hope was able to coordinate 18 large community events to increase access to produce, nutrition education, and cooking classes, composting workshops, and free nutrition education materials like CalFresh Healthy Living recipe books. Of the estimated 400 participants per event, 40-50 participated in either a cooking class, a composting class, or both.

Through partnerships with Food Forward, a food rescue organization, an experienced composter, a Board of Supervisor's office, and members of the Pico Union Project, Seeds of Hope has been able to reach more people in the community and create a place where they can learn and receive services that will help them lead healthier lives and positively impact their environment.

Sustaining Success:

Seeds of Hope has developed a large donor network that they can continually call upon to provide goods and services to the community. They have conducted site visits and done walk-throughs with all partners to create more efficient and safe access to healthy food events for staff, volunteers, and participants. Additionally, the Pico Union Project has gained stakeholder buy-in and receives funding and donations from local companies.

Sources:

1. U.S. EPA, [2018 Wasted Food Report \(PDF\)](#), 2020.

Favorite Quote

“I didn’t know how to cook Brussel sprouts and I never imagined I would actually enjoy eating them. I learned to roast vegetables and season them so that they don’t taste bland. I’m so happy and I definitely will not be throwing these away anymore.” – Carol

Funding

California's CalFresh Healthy Living, with funding from the United States Department of Agriculture's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – USDA SNAP, produced this material. These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. For important nutrition information, visit www.CalFreshHealthyLiving.org.