

# Agency Highlight

## Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles - Seeds of Hope



### Opportunities for Education and Community Building through Pop-up Produce Markets in the Pico Union Neighborhood of Los Angeles

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[Seeds of Hope](#), the food justice program of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, partners with [Food Forward](#), a food gleaning organization, to provide thousands of pounds of produce to families in the Pico Union neighborhood through the Vida Sana (Healthy Life) community health event at the [Pico Union Project](#) (PUP), a multi-faith cultural arts center and Seeds of Hope partner site. PUP works extremely hard to not only be a member of the community, but also do as much as it can to provide a safe, welcoming space where its neighbors can feel at home. In partnering with PUP and key stakeholders from the community (Instituto de Educacion Popular del Sur de California-IDEPSCA, Gil Cedillo's office, PTA moms at the adjacent school), Seeds of Hope wanted to uphold this principle, to create an event that was as close to a block party as possible, but also provide nutrition education, services information, exercise opportunities and arts activities for children. Over time we find a formula that worked.



In January 2017, we expanded our partnership with Food Forward, adding wholesale produce market recovery in addition to produce from backyard harvests and farmer's markets. This increased our ability to obtain thousands of pounds of produce weekly. Leveraging this Food Forward partnership, we brought a pallet (around 1000LBS) of fresh produce to Vida Sana, a decision that became a turning point in the history of the event. The regular participants showed up, but upon seeing the free produce, they called their friends and family, and word spread. We realized we had tapped into a demand for fresh produce in the Pico Union neighborhood. Seeing this demand, we built the Vida Sana program around it. Now, every second and fourth Thursday of the month, Vida Sana takes place. The event is focused on health for the Pico Union community, with music, arts, crafts, nutrition, and cooking offered alongside our free pop-up produce distribution. Additional services include Red Cross emergency preparedness training, LADOT

information and TAP cards, information from Gil Cedillo's office on city agencies and available services, as well as other programs and information that were never available to this community in the past.

Every Vida Sana is structured the same way, but the details change. At each Vida Sana, there is a different art activity for the children, a different recipe for parents to learn, different services offered from the county and city, and different produce that families can take at the end of the day. Participation has grown every month, word of mouth is continuing to spread, and now new faces are mixed in with community elders. It is really an amazing scene! Check out the video of our most recent Vida Sana: [Faithsgiving food distribution with Pico Union Project!](#)

