

# Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Success Story



## A Healthier San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corp

### Background

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) partnered with Active San Gabriel Valley (Active SGV) to provide nutrition and physical activity education in schools, parks, and community-based settings. Active SGV is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to support a more sustainable, equitable and livable San Gabriel Valley by providing culturally sensitive programming, focusing on youth/ young adult development efforts and partnering with transit, sustainability, conservation and other community-based organizations.

Active SGV worked with the San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corp (SGVCC) program at the Jeff Seymour Family Center to deliver a series of nutrition education classes to their youth and young adult employees. The SGVCC serves as a bridge to a better life for young adults ages 18-25 by providing paid job training, support services, and a second chance to earn a high school diploma, while gaining a variety of professional experiences by delivering services to the San Gabriel community. Active SGV conducted nutrition education classes using the Nutrition 5 Class Series curriculum in an effort to help equip participants with a basic understanding of nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices by promoting the consumption of fruits and vegetables, keeping hydrated with options lower in sugar, and learning how to read nutrition facts labels. The 5-class series was held in-person at the SGVCC office in El Monte, CA with over 10 participants in each class.

### Body

#### **THE NEED: Challenge**

Active SGV was contacted by the Associate Director of the SGVCC, who had surveyed his staff to ask which topics they'd be interested in learning and how his staff could access more information regarding CalFresh. The majority of SGVCC staff were youth between the ages of 18-25 who live in low-income areas within the San Gabriel Valley.

All SGVCC staff require school credit to graduate high school or need to complete the program to receive their GED certificate. This transitional time in their life at SGVCC where they transform from student to employee, provides them with the basic understanding of job responsibilities, time management, healthy life skills and behaviors. Based on interactions and the CFHL Adult Survey pretest results, ASGV staff learned that many of the participants had never participated in a nutrition education class before and were eager to learn. Survey results indicated that nutrition was a high ranking need and interest of SGVCC staff along with yoga classes. Results also indicated that some of the participants were actively trying to integrate the 5 food groups into their daily meals and felt inspired to live a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

## THE WORK: Solution



Active SGV conducted weekly classes for the SGVCC team members between July and September of 2022. The nutrition education series began with a CFHL Adult Survey pretest, to assess their current knowledge of nutrition which staff would cover using the Nutrition 5 Class Series. Classes were led by 2 Active SGV CalFresh Healthy Living staff members, one who led the lesson, while the other health educator helped prepare class materials, administered the needed

assessments and led the food demonstrations. Assigning 2 staff at every class has proven to be an effective strategy to help conduct classes while allowing time to build rapport with participants. Classes were 1 hour in length, each with time allotted for casual conversation, questions and recipe taste testing. Some of the topics covered in the series included *MyPlate*, *Planning Healthy Meals*, *Shopping on a Budget* and *Serving Sizes*. The food demonstration recipes selected included the following: *Fruit Cups*, *3 Bean Salad* and *Chia Seed Granola Parfait*. Staff integrated engagement activities during each lesson such as the “Food Model Pop Quiz”, where individuals guessed the food group that the food belonged to, and were then tasked to build a balanced meal from the select food models. This allowed participants to share their own likes, dislikes, and ideas on how to build a complete meal with food models that were provided to them. All classes also included discussions on where healthier foods were available and local to the San Gabriel Valley and shared recipe books and handouts at every class.

## THE IMPACT: Results

Although the data collected from the CFHL Adult Surveys is still in the process of being assessed, health educators have shared that the participants were very engaged during class, asked questions and were eager to learn, which informed staff that they enjoyed each lesson and food demonstrations at the end of each class. The Associate Director at the SGVCC shared that staff have asked for more classes and look forward to hearing more about nutrition and physical activity and overall healthy living from Active SGV staff. Soon after the class series, Active SGV was invited to host food demonstrations at SGVCC events that they host throughout the San Gabriel Valley including tree planting events, community clean ups and wellness fairs at qualified sites reaching CFHL eligible participants.

### **Sustaining Success:**

Active SGV staff are committed to continue nutrition education classes in partnership with the SGVCC. According to the Associate Director, participants change on a yearly basis, and they are expected to receive about 30 new members in the upcoming year. Active SGV staff look forward to leading more classes from a different curriculum and creating a culture of learning healthy life skills for new SGVCC staff. Another request that participants highlighted was the need for stress management classes- while Active SGV's nutrition series focused on tools for healthy eating behaviors, staff hope to provide yoga at the Jeff Seymour Family Center during the next term of the CHFL grant cycle. Additionally, Active SGV and SGVCC are co-located at the Jeff Seymour Family Center and have built a great partnership where both organizations collaborate on several events throughout the year. Beyond the CFHL project, Active SGV partners with the SGVCC on the GoSGV project - where staff utilize electric bicycles for special events or personal use, to help reduce vehicles on the road and encourage others to reduce their carbon footprint in the San Gabriel Valley.

### **Favorite Quote**

"The old pyramid was so confusing and wrong, this [My]plate makes more sense" - SGVCC participant

### **Funding**

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