

Community Food Project Grant

Year 1, Quarter 3 Update

The Community Food Project Grant, "Access for All, from Field to Fork," began in August 2016, bringing together a number of organizations to: 1) increase the availability and consumption of fresh, local produce by low-income residents while deepening community connections to the local food system; 2) strengthen communities by increasing capacity for self-sufficiency in meeting food needs, producing and distributing food, and building relationships; and 3) work towards long-term economic stability for small food system entrepreneurs and farmers who contribute jobs and healthy food to the local community.

During this last quarter, the **Food Bank** distributed over 514,000 pounds of produce through its programs, including over 13,000 at Family Farmers' Markets, 37,000 at Children's Farmers' Markets (reaching 2,050 children), and 30,500 through GleanSLO. Food Bank and **Promotores** have partnered to provide nutrition education at three of the Family Farmers' Market sites. At the 5 Family Farmers' Market sites, GleanSLO has shifted from providing pre-bagged produce to allowing customers to choose. Promotores (who are Spanish speaking) are available to provide samples of the products and recipes, and give tips on how to cook and store the produce. All of these changes have encouraged more attendance at the Markets and therefore increased the amount of food being distributed. Although the long winter impacted many farmers and gardeners, GleanSLO expects to still meet their annual harvest goal of 200,000 lbs.

SLO Public Health is working to provide additional trainings for Promotores, who have been providing outreach to recipients at food bank distribution sites. The smarter lunchroom program has been started – a dietitian has been working with Shandon School District to make improvements. Public Health and their Cal Poly interns were working with Lillian Larsen Elementary School on the Harvest of the Month program, which ended in April, and they hope to start the program again next school year.

One Cool Earth has made a lot of progress towards their goals to expand garden programs at elementary schools in Shandon and Paso Robles, and have already had over 1200 student encounters, with over 650 unique students! At Winifred Pifer Elementary School (WPES) in Paso Robles, they recently hired a FoodCorps member who will work at the site twice a week beginning this summer. Additionally, 27 food tastings, 24 garden based activities, and 3 group workdays have been held at WPES. They have also formed a new partnership with Greenheart Farms in Arroyo Grande, who will be donating seasonal veggie starts a few times a year. A new garden educator was hired, and will start working at Shandon Elementary this summer. One Cool Earth estimates the cost of a weekly garden educator is \$15,000 a year,

per school. They have found that schools and local businesses are willing to contribute to the program, to help stretch grant funds, so they hope to fundraise this year to add some stability to the garden educator positions.

Central Coast Grown has continued to work with Pacific Beach Continuation High students at City Farm, this last quarter they working with 34 students. In addition to working on the farm (currently growing tomatoes and melons), students also got to hear from staff at Seed Savers Exchange and Red Barn Farms this quarter. Their produce will be sold at a farmstand on site and at the Transitions-Mental Health Association farmstand in Santa Maria, and will sell to the San Luis Coastal Unified School District.

In May, **SLO Food System Coalition** partnered with Slow Money SLO to host a gathering that showcased two farms and eight food entrepreneurs who are now able to request funding and/or mentorship from other Slow Money members. The FSC has also been active with SLO Farmers Guild, and report that a Farm-to-Buyer mixer will be held this summer. Kylie, the FSC Coordinator, hopes to continue working closely with Slow Money SLO and the Farmers Guild. Lastly, the EBT Working Group has scheduled a meeting for July 20th to develop an action plan to increase EBT acceptance at farmers markets in SLO County.

Affordable Housing Paso Robles (AHPR) has begun planning the new YouthWorks farm beds, of which there are now eight. Thirty-four of the YouthWorks students received cooking and nutrition classes, and are seeking additional cooking instructor volunteers to help with the program. So far, AHPR has worked with 40 low-income students in the YouthWorks garden, who receive stipends for their work.