

CASE STUDY

Healdsburg, CA

Movers and Shakers

Nancy May, the School Food Service Supervisor, is the main organizer behind this Farm to School project. She came to Healdsburg Junior High School at a time when the cafeteria was being renovated, and decided to change the emphasis from ordering a la carte items from windows to eating a healthy, appealing meal using a cafeteria line.

Project Description

Ms. May has instituted an eye-catching salad bar, using farm products wherever possible. This salad bar operates two days a week at one middle school and the high school. She has opened three old school kitchens – including one at an elementary school and is serving up virtually home-cooked lunches every day. The a la carte items such as burritos and tamales, are nutritious and freshly made, and have helped boost a la carte sales.

Other Components

School gardens have been organized at each school with the help of community donations. One garden fence, including the labor, was donated by a local gardening group. Materials for raised beds were donated by a local home and garden business. Ms. May aggressively markets the farm to school project, by actions such as serving school lunches at school board meetings. She has also hosted the state Superintendent of Schools to visit the school garden.

Students and parents also help with the menu planning and Ms. May holds occasional product tastings to help determine students' preferences.

Funding

Ms. May has received \$30,000 from a Shaping Health as Partners in Education (SHAPE) grant that has been used to help develop nutrition education, teacher training, and to purchase equipment such as the salad bars and a portable cooking cart for classrooms. She received a second SHAPE grant for \$50,000 that was used for developing the school garden, establishing links between the garden and farm to school project, and for supporting an agriculture curricula.

Labor

The bulk of the organizing work has been done by Ms. May. She has incorporated student workers in the cafeteria to help with food preparation and food serving. Students over 13 years old can work up to 6 hours per week.

Farmers/Crops

The district buys from three local farmers who were located by Nancy May at the local farmers' market and through word-of-mouth. The crops they provided on a seasonal

basis include: tomatoes, cucumbers, apples, pears, herbs, peppers, onions, and lettuces. Ms. May buys organic produce whenever possible.

Product Delivery

The farmers deliver directly to the district on Monday mornings for the salad bar that operates twice a week at both the junior high and high school.

Price

The farmers charge a fair price that is generally comparable to the wholesale price.

School Food Service Support

This program was organized by the school food service staff. However, staff is working to garner further administrative support to expand the existing program.

Kitchen Facilities

When Ms. May came to the district three years ago, she began reopening three old kitchens so that meals could be freshly prepared instead of reheating prepackaged frozen meals. Both the kitchens at the elementary schools have been renovated within the last three years. The high school kitchen is also being renovated. Despite these improvements, more space is needed for food preparation and storage.

Sustainability

While this program is sustainable, additional funding would help to expand and improve what currently exists. Funding would be used for storage and refrigeration facilities, additional serving tables and utensils, to pay for more labor-intensive meal preparation, and for hiring a garden/farm to school coordinator.

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