

# 4-H SNAC Clubs Demonstrate Positive Outcomes in Predominately Latino Communities

*"It can be especially difficult for low-income families to find healthy foods and to make time for beneficial physical activity. In a 2016 health assessment of Santa Barbara County, 28 percent of surveyed adults said they were obese, and 24 percent rated their health as being fair to very poor. The 4-H Student Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC) Clubs are providing local students with healthy food tastings, nutritional presentations, and gardening lessons so those kids can in turn teach their classmates and families about healthy choices."*

*~ Kasey Bubnash, Santa Maria Sun News Reporter*



*4-H SNAC Club Members & Leader*

## 4-H SNAC CLUB OVERVIEW

4-H Student Nutrition Advisory Councils (4-H SNAC Clubs) were designed using the social-ecological model, recognizing the importance of improving social determinants of health in low-income communities of color. The program supports positive youth outcomes among Latino students in low-income schools. 5th and 6th grade youth at partnering elementary schools participate in 4-H SNAC Clubs throughout the academic year, meeting weekly for a minimum of one hour with adult leaders. The goals of 4-H SNAC Clubs are to 1) develop youth leaders in nutrition and physical activity in order to create healthy schools and communities, 2) establish positive youth-adult partnerships in order to improve youth outcomes related to health and academics, and 3) increase access to 4-H programming among Latino communities. 4-H SNAC Clubs are implemented in partnership between the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education funded CalFresh Healthy Living, UC Program and the California 4-H Youth Development Program in Santa Barbara & San Luis Obispo Counties.

## CONNECTING WITH LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

To improve student and community health, 4-H SNAC Clubs engage student leaders in improving local food systems to increase access to and interest in fresh fruits and vegetables. Student leaders learn how to plan, grow, maintain, and harvest vegetable gardens. Utilizing Harvest of the Month curriculum, student leaders research the nutritional benefits of local produce, develop educational marketing materials, and conduct schoolwide tastings. In partnership with school food service, student leaders have increased student participation in the school salad bar program. Additionally, student leaders have influenced families to purchase, prepare, and consume more produce.



*Students harvesting produce*

*"Liberty is so fortunate to have the 4-H SNAC club! The students who are participating are learning all about health and nutrition, getting opportunities to work in our school garden, as well as making new nutritious recipes and sharing them with students and staff on campus. These students are learning leadership and presentation skills as well, making them contributing members not only of our school community but of Santa Maria." ~ Elementary School Principal*

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## IMPROVING HEALTH & WELLBEING

Successful implementation of positive youth development strategies increase adolescents' positive social and emotional development, problem-solving, decision-making, sense of belonging, and sense of purpose, while decreasing adolescent engagement in high-risk behaviors. 4-H SNAC Clubs are a promising intervention to support health-related outcomes. Student leaders reported that as a result of participating in 4-H SNAC Clubs, they make healthier food choices (88%), eat more fruits and vegetables (74%), and eat less junk food (59%). Family outcomes were also reported by youth, including that their family has purchased (79%) and prepared (78%) healthier foods. These findings are supported by other research that educating youth can impact family behaviors (Boudet et al., 2016; Damerell et al., 2013) and that youth can serve as educators for their families when their families may be difficult to reach. Outcomes from 4-H SNAC Club participation support prevention of future risk-taking behaviors and may be protective of health into adulthood.



Learning cooking skills

## BUILDING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

4-H SNAC members had the opportunity to participate in two 6-hour trainings including the Leadership Academy and the Culinary Academy in partnership with their school district. The Leadership Academy included training in 4-H Officer positions, presentation skills, and included a mini career pathways fair. 4-H SNAC Club student leaders completed pre/post assessment of their leadership skills after participating in 4-H SNAC Clubs. Statistically significant increases ( $p=.000$  each, paired t-tests) were evident for all leadership skill measured: ability to lead group discussions, work as a team member, teach others, speak before a group, & plan programs.



Career fair at leadership training

## OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

Since implementation of the 4-H SNAC Club program, there has been a significant increase in Latino youth enrollment in 4-H in San Luis Obispo County (increased from 15 % in 12/13 to 48% in 16/17) and in Santa Barbara County (increased from 46% in 12/13 to 88% in 16/17). Overall, 4-H SNAC Club is a successful program intervention for developing student leaders to increase health, establishing youth-adult partnerships, and increasing 4-H access to Latino youth. Over the next five years, 4-H SNAC Clubs are being expanded into new communities through a multi-state grant award (Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) Sustainable Community Projects, USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture). Future research will include evaluation of policy, system, and environmental changes, as well as beginning to measure long-term health impacts for participants and their communities.



Meal preparation