**Youth, Families and Communities Advisor, Ventura**

**Position Title:** The Youth, Families and Communities (YFC) Advisor will be working at the interface of youth development, agriculture education, nutrition, gardening, and sustainability.

**Position:** The YFC Advisor will provide academic leadership for the delivery, development and expansion of the statewide 4-H Youth Development Program at the local level and youth programming through the Hansen Agricultural Research and Extension Center (HAREC). The primary focus of this position will be to improve youth healthy living as well as agricultural and science literacy, using a holistic approach that integrates youth development, agriculture, nutrition education, gardening and sustainability. The advisor will supervise and provide leadership to the YFC Program Manager. The advisor will engage and partner with community volunteers to provide educational experiences for youth and families to increase healthy behaviors through 4-H program deliveries. Connecting 4-H, Master Gardeners, and youth outreach efforts on the HAREC the CE advisor will strengthen programming and enable the highest quality science to promote healthy citizens and thriving communities. The advisor will utilize a systems approach in their applied research activities to illustrate how a holistic youth development approach leads to improved well-being of youth, families and communities. A minimum of a Master’s degree is required in the areas of: education, human development, youth development, food science, agricultural sciences and/or other related disciplines. Experience in conducting applied research, program evaluation and education programs with diverse youth is required. Experience working with underserved populations is desirable. Strong leadership skills and experience in program and personnel management are required.

**Justification:** Ventura is the twelfth most populous California County, with nearly 200,000 youth. Latinos are by far the largest and fastest growing ethnic group comprising over 51% of the youth population in the county. Youth in Ventura County face high rates of obesity (40% of 5th graders in public schools were overweight or obese in 2015); and nearly half of all youth are eligible for free and reduced meals. Overweight/obese youth struggle with bullying (41% of 7th graders were bullied at school) and depression (32% of 9th graders reported feelings of depression). This position will consider how to improve health and wellness outcomes for youth living in Ventura County in order to improve overall community health and wellness. Ventura Unified School District has been identified as one of California’s premier farm-to-school programs and is supported by the Growers’ Collaborative of the Community Alliance with Family Farmers. The advisor will be uniquely positioned to leverage 4-H and HAREC resources with this successful farm-to-school program. Through the 4-H Community Club Program, Military Club Program and youth outreach efforts through HAREC, 4-H is reaches about 4% of the youth population in Ventura County, leaving significant potential for growth. Academic leadership is needed to help expand efforts and integrate evaluation and research into programming as this is a critical need in Ventura County.

**Extension:** Extension efforts will focus on expanding existing youth development programming to include garden-based education, farm-to-school, and youth well-being. Outreach methods will include individual consultations, presentations at partner meetings, workshops, short courses, publications, newsletters, and an appropriate mix of contemporary and emerging electronic tools such as online learning, web content systems and repositories, social media, impact and evaluation tools, along with specialized and public media outlets.

**Research**: The advisor will conduct interdisciplinary research related to healthy living, farm-to-school, and garden-based education. Potential research question are: How does a 4-H farm-to-school intervention affect health and wellness of youth participants? How can 4-H farm-to-school interventions promote community development and health? What positive youth development strategies support youth’s agency and positively impact youth, family and community health? The CE advisor will develop or adapt curricula and educational resources for use in youth programming that are aligned with statewide focus and local community needs. The CE advisor will assess 4-H and HAREC educational programs to determine outcomes and impacts on youth and adult volunteers, families and communities. Potential publication outlets for this research include ANR publications, Society of Public Health Education, Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior, Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior, and Journal of Youth Development, among others.

**ANR Network:** The advisor will collaborate with the area agriculture, natural resources, and livestock/range advisors, 4-H adult volunteers and youth members, and Master Gardener volunteers. At the statewide level, the YFC Advisor will complement and collaborate with other CE advisors and specialists including those associated with 4-H, YFC, Food Systems, Nutrition Education, Environmental Horticulture, and the Nutrition Policy Institute. Additionally, the YFC Advisor will participate on respective advisory committees, task forces, program teams, and workgroups. This position will complement the work and address a gap in all of these networks by working at the nexus of healthy living, agriculture, nutrition education, youth development and food systems. While many advisors are guiding programming in these areas, few—if any—advisors are conducting research to examine how positive youth development programming integrated with food systems can impact youth and community wellness.

**Network External to ANR:** The advisor will partner and collaborate with related networks outside of ANR. Local networks include: Healthy Ventura County, Ventura Unified School District, Farm to School Collaborative, Ventura County Health Care Agency, City of Ventura, Community Alliance of Family Farmers, Edible School Yard, City Impact, Network of Care for Foster Care, and Casa Pacifica. Potential state and national networks include the UC Davis Center for Nutrition in Schools, the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents, California Farm to School Network, California Education and the Environment Initiative, National Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences. Through these collaborations, the YFC Advisor will support local development of farm-to-school programming, youth and community wellness, as well as expand the program to underrepresented youth populations throughout the county.

**Support:** Transportation, office space, general office supplies, telephone and internet will be provided by Ventura County. Additional resources are also available for research and extension programs occurring at the HAREC. The Thelma Hansen Fund supports research that enhances Ventura County agriculture and agricultural education. Cooperative Extension Advisors are eligible to apply for grants from the Hansen Fund to support their research programs.

**Other support:** There are local foundations in Ventura County that have prioritized community health and equity for under-served populations (e.g., Ventura County Community Foundation, Kaiser Permanente Thrive, the Foundation of Ventura County Credit Union, the McCune Foundation). These foundations could provide funding to develop pilot projects and generate preliminary data for larger grant applications, such as an AFRI Grant. Research support may come from ANR competitive grants and other local grant opportunities.

**Location:** The central location of the UCCE Ventura offices and nearby programming at the HAREC provides an opportunity to deliver unique programs by collaborating with other CE and REC research and extension programs, such as Master Gardeners and Farm Advisors, Environmental Horticulture Advisors and Natural Resources and Range Science Advisors.

**Developed and proposed by:** The position justification was developed collaboratively by County Director Jim Downer, Statewide 4-H Director Horrillo, County Director and YFC Advisor Soule, Ventura County YFC Program Manager Bruzzone-Miller, with input from the Positive Youth Development Program Team Chairs (Worker and Moncloa) and Statewide NFCS Director Panarella.