

Teens Making a Difference in Amador County

SUMMARY

CalFresh Healthy Living-UC and UC 4-H have partnered in Amador County to provide youth development opportunities for teens at Independence High School and garden-enhanced nutrition education for 3rd grade students at Jackson Elementary School. Teens learned to increase their professional skills and served as positive role models, while younger students learned about healthy eating and food literacy.

BACKGROUND

In small, rural Amador County, opportunities for students to develop their leadership potential and professional skills are critical. Particularly at the local continuation high school, teachers have expressed interest in programming that offers opportunities for their students to develop leadership and presentation skills. As staff time to support a project of this scale is beyond what either program could accomplish alone, this project was also a great opportunity to develop a partnership between the UCCE CalFresh Healthy Living and 4-H programs in Amador County, combining resources to accomplish the project goals.

SOLUTION

UCCE staff from the CalFresh Healthy Living and 4-H programs partnered to promote the Teens as Teachers project to connect local schools and provide opportunities for high school students to serve as role models for younger elementary students. The principal at Independence High School saw value in the project and offered community service or class credits to students who participated in the project. High school students were recruited by teachers, and then UCCE staff trained four teens to teach the Learn, Grow, Eat, Go, curriculum. Once training was complete, the teens spent 10 weeks delivering nutrition and garden lessons to a class of 24 3rd grade students at Jackson Elementary School. The teen teachers were also able to participate in a wellness fair in neighboring El Dorado county to promote healthy living to the wider community.

"My 10th and 11th grade students really enjoyed being part of a team and teaching the 3rd graders. The students thought it was cool how the kids got so attached to them and looked forward to seeing them every week. They practiced the lessons so they would be prepared. I think it really opened up the students and made them more comfortable and confident. I'm looking forward to starting the program up again this year."

-Lisa Ferrar, Teacher at Independence High



Teens Jacob (Left), Rhanna (Middle), Dillan (Right) after a long day of teaching.

OUTCOME

During the project, staff witnessed the teens transform into confident presenters and competent leaders as they increased their professional skill set. Next year the program will expand to include two 3rd grade classes. Three of the teens from this past year are interested in participating next year and have already recruited another to join the group. Building strong partnerships with local youth and adults is essential to creating sustainable programming in Amador County, and UCCE hopes to continue these partnerships for many years to come.

For more information or to get involved, contact Katie Johnson, Nutrition Family and Consumer Sciences Advisor for the University of California Cooperative Extension in the Central Sierra at ckjohnson@ucanr.edu.