

# Bijou Garden Grows Community

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## SUMMARY

During the summer of 2018, the Family Resource Center (FRC) of South Lake Tahoe was busy with the 9th year of Parabajitos, an early intervention and prevention program that aims to engage youth and strengthen their connection with their community. For 8 weeks, 70 kids studied art, literature, environmental science, and more. The University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) CalFresh nutrition education program taught regular garden-enhanced nutrition education lessons, which let the children learn about and experience healthy foods in a hands-on way. At the end of the summer the program hosted an intergenerational celebration that brought together the kids, their families, and local independent senior residents, all of whom got to experience the joy of a community garden together.

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## BACKGROUND

The Family Resource Center (FRC) has long been a stronghold for South Lake Tahoe, providing necessary life services to community members in need, such as the Parabajitos program and healthy living classes. The FRC is also home to the Bijou Community Garden, which uses permaculture techniques to demonstrate how to sustainably grow vegetables. The garden is important because producing food can be difficult in the area's short and harsh growing season, and many people eat less than the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables. The site also serves as a learning garden for children from Bijou Community School located next door.

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## SOLUTION

The FRC's garden shows how anyone can grow food that is healthy and nutritious, including children in the Parabajitos program. For 8 weeks the Parabajitos kids studied art, literature, environmental science, and more. The UCCE CalFresh nutrition education program taught regular garden-enhanced nutrition education lessons, which let the children learn about and experience healthy foods in a hands-on way. As summer went on, the kids also harvested and cared for the different fruits and vegetables from the garden, such as bok choy, snow peas, and squash flowers.

At the end of the summer, nutrition educators and the FRC hosted an intergenerational celebration for the participants' friends and families to acknowledge their achievements. They also welcomed local independent senior residents who had been concurrently involved in garden-enhanced nutrition lessons of their own. The



*Cesar Diaz, grade 7, teaches his younger peers about transplanting cilantro in the Bijou Community Garden.*

children led a tour of the garden, and the guests shared the harvest from their own hydroponic herb garden. Finally, all participants were able to share a meal with some of the ingredients coming straight from the garden.

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## OUTCOME

In experiencing the garden from seed to meal, participants learned about plants' nutritive values and gained an appreciation for the hard work that goes into growing and preparing food. This knowledge, and the sense of community that was built throughout the program, will help participants make healthier choices.

*"Our ninth annual summer "Parabajitos" program was a huge success. Upwards of 70 children were engaged in meaningful programming that allowed them to learn and grow in a nurturing environment. It really does take a community to make positive changes occur and we are forever grateful."*

*-Bill Martinez, FRC Executive Director*

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For more information or to get involved, contact Hector Ochoa, Nutrition Education Program Manager for the University of California Cooperative Extension in the Central Sierra: (530) 543-2319 x1112 or [hcochoa@ucanr.edu](mailto:hcochoa@ucanr.edu).