



UC Cooperative Extension
University of California
Agriculture & Natural Resources

The North State Picnic

UC Extension Community Nutrition and Health Update

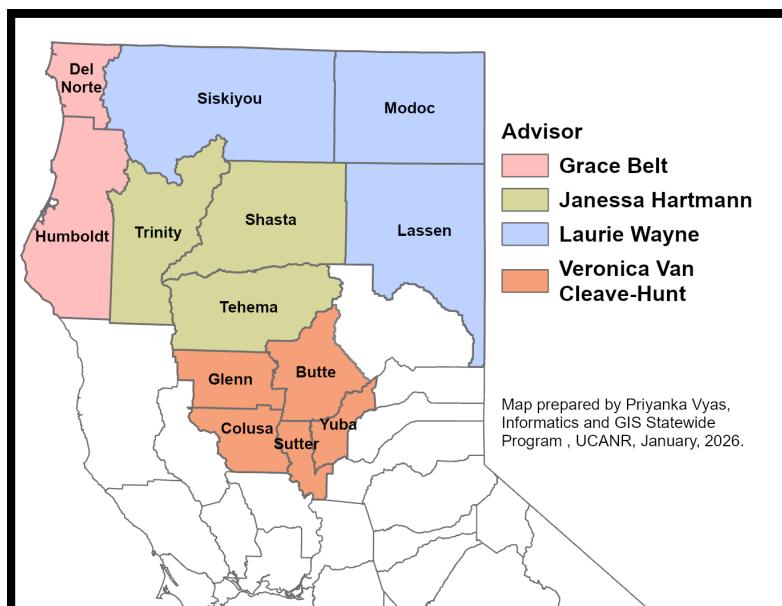
Welcome!

Welcome to another Community Nutrition and Health newsletter for the North State! Community Nutrition and Health at UC Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) is a statewide network of researchers and educators promoting holistic health and equitable communities for all Californians. We're bringing you updates on projects related to our mission to make a positive impact on the lives of the residents of our beautiful far-northern California region.

The new year is well underway and your UC Cooperative Extension Nutrition Advisors are hard at work serving you and our communities. In this issue, we welcome and introduce our colleague in Humboldt County, **Grace Belt**.

We're sharing a view into just a few of the things we're working on right now. As always, if you have any questions or just want to check in for more detail, your Advisors are here to help - our contact information is on the back page, and our doors are open! We hope you find this edition enjoyable and informative.

Janessa, Veronica, Grace, and Laurie



California's "Far North" Counties and the Advisors who serve them

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A New Face on the North Coast!

Grace Belt joined UC ANR in November 2024 as a Youth, Families, and Communities Advisor for Humboldt and Del Norte Counties. Grace promotes the health and well-being of local communities in the region through education, program development, and collaboration with community partners. She provides academic oversight of programs that support nutrition, wellness, and youth development, including the local UC 4-H Program, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), and the Master Food Preservers (MFP) program. You can contact Grace about food preservation, nutrition education, and youth programming in Humboldt or Del Norte Counties. Grace has lived in the region for six years and is eager to support the community! When she's not working, you can find her hiking outdoors or cuddling her two cats, Tuna and Penelope. Grace can be reached at kbelt@ucanr.edu or **707-445-7351**.



The Loss of “CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE” and Its Impact in the North State Counties

Veronica VanCleave-Hunt & Janessa Hartmann

On July 4, 2025, the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act” (reconciliation bill HR. 1) was signed into law, eliminating funding for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed). This is the largest nationwide nutrition education program. This program is known in California as the CalFresh Healthy Living (CFHL) Program. On October 1, 2026, the CFHL program implemented through the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) will come to an end after nearly 30 years of grant funding. The CFHL, UCCE program delivers nutrition, physical activity, and garden education and supports healthy policies, systems, and environmental (PSE) improvements that reach thousands of residents. It plays a critical role in improving nutrition security, supporting healthy behaviors, and strengthening community health across California.

Across our North State region, two program clusters exist: the first serves Shasta, Trinity, and Tehama Counties, and the second serves Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Sutter, and Yuba Counties. In 2025, these two programs together had 24 staff and brought over \$3 million in resources to the region. Last year, these programs delivered close to 6,200 hours of direct education to more than 21,300 youth and 250 hours to over 280 adults across the North State. Additionally, over 20,800 residents were reached through policy, systems, environmental initiatives, including gardening, physical activity, healthy school meals, playground stencils, farm-to-school, and school wellness policies. This work is accomplished in partnerships with over 100 schools and organizations. These efforts drive measurable improvements in community health; including increased exposure to fruits and vegetables, improved food resource management behaviors, reduced food insecurity, and healthier food systems and environments.

The Loss of CFHL (Continued)

The SNAP-Ed evaluation framework is designed to work with local partners to tailor nutrition interventions to meet our communities' needs. With the elimination of federal SNAP-Ed funding, our communities not only lose research and evidence-based programs but also the network that holds organizations and partners together to combat diet-related chronic disease. The loss is especially significant for our rural communities that often lack alternative organizations, resources, and staffing to conduct these educational efforts and healthy policies, systems, and environmental initiatives on their own. Although we are at a period of transition in community health, UCCE remains committed to our communities by supporting partners and exploring pathways to sustain this important work.

Farmers Market News

Laurie Wayne, Veronica Van Cleave-Hunt, & Janessa Hartmann

Why Don't More Markets Accept Food Assistance Benefits?

Farmers markets are an access point to the variety of fresh, local produce that is grown throughout the Sacramento Valley. Yet not all certified farmers markets currently accept food assistance programs like CalFresh and Market Match, limiting access for community members who qualify for these benefits. To better understand challenges and opportunities to accept these programs at certified farmers markets, UCCE advisors and research specialists conducted a study to understand barriers to program adoption in markets in Butte, El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Solano, Sutter, and Yolo Counties.



As part of the study, researchers visited local markets, connected with market managers, and conducted interviews to learn more about their experiences. A structured qualitative analysis of interview transcripts, along with survey findings, revealed two clear priorities for expanding access to food assistance. First, market managers emphasized the value of partnerships with community organizations to help launch and

sustain food assistance programs. Second, they identified a need for practical educational resources outlining funding and staffing models that support CalFresh acceptance. These insights highlight opportunities for increasing access to healthy, local food while strengthening the role of farmers markets in community nutrition. A manuscript detailing the study has been submitted to the California Agriculture research journal and will contribute to ongoing efforts to improve food security across the region.

Shasta Market Match Finishes Year One

The Shasta Growers Association was awarded \$54,000 from the California Department of Food and Agriculture- California Nutrition Incentive Program to increase access to California-grown fruits and vegetables for CalFresh customers at all four Shasta County certified farmers markets, three in Redding and one in Burney. This program, called Shasta Market Match, was started in April 2025, and matched CalFresh benefits up to \$15 per market trip.

In 2025, over 1,460 CalFresh transactions occurred with over **480 new customers** coming to these four farmers markets. On average, each producer received \$876 in Shasta Market Match over the past year. The Shasta Market Match program generated an additional \$60,000 in economic activity in Shasta County. Customers spent an **average of \$36 in CalFresh and Shasta Market Match** for each market visit, resulting in the purchase of over 50,000 servings of fresh fruits and vegetables. A total of 47 customers were surveyed about Shasta Market Match in 2025. Half of these customers indicated that on average they spend **\$25 of their personal funds** at the market. Taken together, these data suggest that families may be spending approximately \$60 per market visit.

Based on this customer feedback, starting in January of this year, the match will increase to \$20 per trip. Through feedback, customers highlighted their appreciation for fresh, nutritious, high-quality food that fits their budget and supports our local community. This project improves the affordability of locally grown produce, supports farms, and enhances the resilience of the regional food system by strengthening connections between producers and community members.



Shasta Market Match Flyer

New Electronic Benefits for Seniors is a Hit

The Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) provides eligible seniors with funds to use on fruit, vegetables, and honey at certified farmer's markets. For years, these benefits came in the form of paper checks. These were easy to lose, hard to use, and inconvenient for farmers. In 2025, that changed – instead of paper checks, seniors got reusable, individualized cards that helped them track and use their benefits, and made it easy for farmers to sell to them. Thanks to a project funded by the California Department of Food & Agriculture and led by UCCE Advisor Olivia Henry (Solano, Yolo, Sacramento, Placer and Nevada counties), north state market managers, patrons, and farmers received extra assistance switching to electronic benefits. A limited number of benefits cards were distributed at senior centers in counties with certified markets, resulting in **significantly** increased benefits use and streamlined payment processes for farmers. Your Advisors are looking forward to supporting more senior programs in markets, as well as a new electronic benefits card for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) participants in 2026.

Healthy Eating Starts Young

Janessa Hartmann & Veronica VanCleave-Hunt

In 2024, California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) awarded [over \\$50 million](#) across the state for Farm-to-School Incubator projects through 2026. These projects support healthy habits for families and provide direct income to California producers. Applicants applied across four project tracks: 1) early care education centers, 2) schools, 3) technical assistance providers, and 4) agricultural producers and food hubs that aggregate and distribute food. In our region, 29 projects were awarded, totaling close to \$7 million. Below are two projects supported by the University of California Cooperative Extension in 2025.

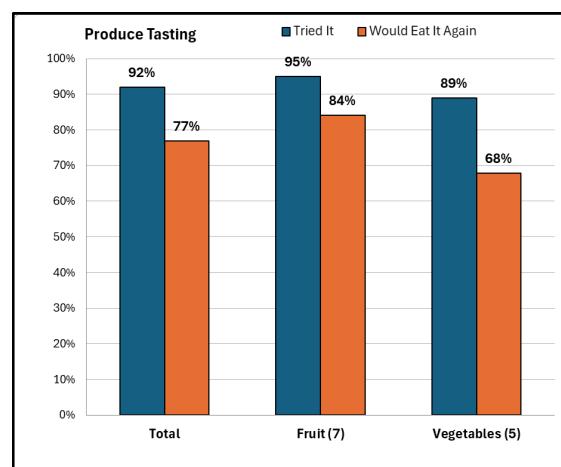
Farm to Family Childcare in Shasta County

This First 5 Shasta project purchased local fruits and vegetables, provided nutrition education to family childcare providers, young children, and their families, and supported worksite learning and professional development of Shasta College students. Fruits and vegetables are needed every day for healthy body and brain growth and development. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that children under five consume two to four cups of fruits and vegetables each day (depending on age and activity level). However, according to the CDC, half of children ages one to five do not eat a daily vegetable, and a third do not eat a daily fruit ([CDC, 2023](#)).

In 2025, this project provided education to over 130 children, most between 0 and 5 years old, and supported 12 family childcare providers in Shasta County. Childcare providers received a six-week, hands-on nutrition and gardening lesson series delivered by Shasta College interns. Each week focused on a specific fruit or vegetable. Lessons included a story reading, a hands-on activity, and a sensory exploration and tasting of a fruit or vegetable. Lessons were aligned to support early childhood education child development standards. Produce tasting included: sweet potato, persimmon, pear, melon, kiwi, broccoli, berry, spinach, squash, and stone fruit (e.g., peach). Approximately 92% of the time, children tried the offered produce, and 77% of the time, said that they would eat it again (see chart). A total of **5,300 pounds of produce** were purchased from five farms and provided free to the childcare and families.



Shasta College Intern Teaching



Produce Tasting Results

Healthy Eating Starts Young (Continued)

Farm to Family Childcares in Shasta County (Continued)

At the end of the program, a total of 63 parents (48%) completed an evaluation survey and indicated that because of this program: 94% of children talk about fruits and vegetables at home, 83% of parents noticed that their child tried new fruits and vegetables, and 71% said that they have either made changes or plan to make changes to the way they shop, cook, or eat as a family.

Overall, childcare providers have indicated that they have observed more children in their care now showing positive attitudes and behaviors towards fruits and vegetables, identifying more fruits and vegetables, are more willing to try new foods, and are choosing fruits and vegetables during snack and mealtimes. This program builds capacity among childcare providers by equipping them with resources to incorporate and teach about produce. It also connects young eaters with food through hands-on experiences that build positive eating behaviors for lifelong health.



Children Trying Watermelon and Cantaloupe

Farm to Elementary School in Butte and Colusa Counties

In Butte and Colusa, another Farm to School project led by UCCE reached six schools and over 2,000 students with fresh, local food and education. This work is made possible through the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Farm to School Incubator Grant, awarded to UCCE Butte.

The grant supports the creation of school gardens and educational experiences that strengthen the link between agriculture and healthy eating. A total of 2,000 students from Oroville City Elementary School District and Williams Upper Elementary participated in Crunch Day, a statewide celebration of farm-to-school month by biting into local apples from Noble Orchards and Redamonti in Los Molinos.

Education Specialists delivered agriculture lessons to K-6th grade classrooms about the cultural origins of certain foods and the journey food takes to school meals.

Over 300 students in Butte and Colusa counties participated in field trips to explore local farms. These experiences deepen understanding of where food comes from and foster value for local farmers. One teacher noticed, *"There has been much conversation surrounding the topic of beef, beef products and their origin as well as soil and its composition."*

For the remainder of the school year, students will participate in monthly tastings of locally grown produce, rating each item for taste, acceptability, and willingness to try it again. Meanwhile, five school gardens will be transformed into vibrant outdoor classrooms for hands-on learning.

MFP In Humboldt and Del Norte

Grace Belt

The UC Master Food Preserver program (UC MFP) focuses on keeping Californians safe and well as they use culturally appropriate, research-based practices to preserve food at home. UC MFP volunteers teach safe food preservation in order to reduce food waste, increase food security, and provide engaging ways for Californians to explore healthy meals. When done correctly, preservation can be a safe and fun way to store nutritious food.

In Humboldt and Del Norte Counties, MFP volunteers have been out in the community for over a decade. They are passionate about providing preservation workshops and demonstrations to the public. In 2025, they hosted 11 classes, teaching 212 community members exciting preservation techniques. Some popular classes include pressure canning tuna, making kombucha, yogurt and more!

Currently there are a limited number of volunteers, making it difficult to expand and diversify classes. In an effort to grow the program, the Humboldt/Del Norte MFPs are excited to offer the MFP New Volunteer Training for the first time in over three years! They will be training 30 new volunteers in 2026.

For more information, check out their website: [UC Master Food Preservers of Humboldt & Del Norte Counties](http://ucmasterfoodpreservers.org/humboldt-del-norte-counties)



MFPs Teaching a Hands-On Workshop

Research Makes Local Food Easier

Laurie Wayne

Lots of federal dollars in food benefits come into our counties – from \$300,000 to over one million per month; but hardly any is spent on local food, and Advisor Laurie Wayne is wondering why. In research sponsored by the Western Rural Development Center, she'll be asking CalFresh participants who make purchasing decisions about the barriers that keep them from using more benefits locally. For this research, she is recruiting residents of Modoc, Lassen, and Siskiyou Counties who use CalFresh and make the purchasing decisions for their household. Focus groups are 90 minutes long, and participants will be compensated with a gas or grocery card. Please call (530) 233-6400 and ask for Laurie, fill out the quick survey at <https://bit.ly/4a1iGJT>, or scan the QR code in the picture to apply. *Este formulario también está disponible en español.*

Do you use
SNAP/CalFresh?
Paid Focus Groups Forming Now!
Participation is strictly anonymous

Questions? Laurie Wayne, at (530) 233-6400 or come by the Farm Advisor's Office at 202 W 4th St in Alturas.

  **SNAP** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

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