



# *2011 Annual Report*

University of California Cooperative Extension  
Los Angeles County

## Message from the County Director

# 2011 was a year of transition at UC Cooperative Extension



### Mission Statement

*UC Cooperative Extension in Los Angeles County develops and implements community-based educational programs that address the critical needs of the county's diverse and multiethnic population. Staff and volunteers provide and encourage the use of current research-based information in the areas of nutrition, family and consumer science; youth development; urban gardening; commercial horticulture; agriculture; and natural resources.*

The highlights in this year's annual report reflect significant changes in UC Cooperative Extension programs and administration. We revived and updated a familiar project, concluded two distinguished programs, and adjusted to an approaching change in leadership.

Despite these significant organizational changes, UC Cooperative Extension continued to contribute to the health and well-being of Los Angeles County residents in 2011.

Due to a strong local interest in food preservation, I am pleased to report that, after more than 10 years, we revived the Master Food Preserver Program in Los Angeles County! We held two training cycles in 2011, and now have a cadre of more than 30 active, highly motivated UC Master Food Preserver volunteers. They joined our other dedicated volunteers (Master Gardeners and 4-H leaders) in helping us carry out our programs for the public. We could not conduct our programs without their outstanding work at the community level.

In 2011, we said goodbye to two *Network for a Healthy California* programs: The *Children's Power Play! Campaign* and the *Latino Campaign*. Cooperative Extension's contract for these programs ended in September 2011, and due to constrained resources for administering these large programs, we regretfully decided not to renew the contract. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health took over management of both campaigns on October 1. We look forward to being a community partner with the county as we work to improve the health of Los Angeles County residents.

Finally, the end of 2011 also marked a leadership transition for UC Cooperative Extension in Los Angeles County. After more than 14 years as county director, I decided to go back to program work, focusing on education and research in sustainable food systems. Beginning in January 2012, my colleague, Dr. Keith Nathaniel, was appointed to fill the director position. Keith has been with Cooperative Extension for 17 years (most recently as our 4-H youth development advisor). Along with his many years of leadership experience, his academic expertise is in after-school programs, adolescent development and youth science literacy. We couldn't be in better hands!

I am grateful to the staff, volunteers and our longtime partners at the Los Angeles County Community Development Commission for making my time as county director exciting, meaningful and very productive.

I look forward to seeing you in 2012!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Rachel Surls".

Rachel Surls, Ph.D.

## 4-H Youth Development Program

# Learning leadership skills for life



In Los Angeles County, 4-H is where youth learn, grow and work together to experience and achieve the extraordinary. Reaching youth in their own communities, the program helps young people develop life skills in leadership, citizenship and communication.

In 2011, more than 225 volunteers and community partners collaborated with staff to offer 4-H activities in more than 25 communities throughout Los Angeles County. Staff reached more than 2,000 youths through activities, enrichment experiences and community events.



During the summer period, 4-H youth attended summer camp at Camp Seeley in the San Bernardino Mountains. The camp, a low-cost, one-week program, allowed Los Angeles urban youth to experience the joys of hiking, fishing, swimming, and the arts and crafts. It was also a great way for the youth to roll up their sleeves, dig into nature and form a better understanding and appreciation of the environment.

As one of our center-piece events, 4-H hosts an annual pet symposium for Los Angeles County. UC Cooperative Extension is pleased to report that the 2011 4-H Pet Symposium, held in October, was a popular event! More than 460 participants, many discovered 4-H for the first time.



It was a fun and educational day full of activities and getting to know new kinds of animals. Youth met pet-care specialists, rescue organizations and animal enthusiasts with expertise in raising rabbits, mice, chickens, rats, dogs, cats and even pygmy goats.

Susan Lendroth, author of popular children's books, including "Calico Dorsey" and "Maneki Neko," spoke to youth about her books and writing career. After her talk, she delighted guests by signing books.

4-H staff members want to extend a special thanks to veterinarian Lisa Harris and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) for providing a much-needed low-cost vaccination and chipping clinic. These were great additions to the pet symposium.



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## Helping Los Angeles families eat healthier



On the nutrition education front, UC Cooperative Extension's food and nutrition program experienced a banner year in 2011. Nutrition educators were active in many community events around the county and hosted workshops for residents of Los Angeles County housing developments (Carmelitos, Franciscuito Villa and Harbor Hills, to name a few).

The Master Food Preserver Program in Los Angeles County was resurrected after a 10-year absence with tremendous success. The program, funded by the Metabolic Studio, a direct charitable activity of the Annenberg Foundation, was spearheaded by Master Food Preserver Ernest Miller and UC Cooperative Extension advisor Brenda Roche, a nutrition expert. Beginning in March, students learned how to preserve food using water bath canning, pressure canning, fermenting, pickling, dehydrating and freezing. For the first class, UC Cooperative Extension received applications from more than 70 residents, all competing for 18 spots. The first group of highly qualified students have become a core group of volunteers working to revitalize the Los Angeles County Master Food Preserver Program. In order to build the volunteer base and meet the high demand for food preservation education, UC Cooperative Extension offered the volunteer training course again in September.

We received 118 applications for the second class to fill 18 spots. Although the demand increased, staff must maintain the small class size to preserve the "hands-on" approach for training volunteers. In addition, the program has received a great deal of media attention. The instructor and program have been highlighted in KCRW's "Good Food" and have been blogged about on numerous occasions by the Los Angeles Times and LA Weekly. Our volunteers maintain an active Facebook page ([facebook.com/MFPLA](http://facebook.com/MFPLA)) with more than 900 "likes." We have received calls from other Cooperative Extension offices in California, looking for information on how to start their own MFP program. People across the country have also called inquiring about similar programs in their communities or asking for food preservation information.

In September, program staff and volunteers provided food preservation demonstrations to the public at the Los Angeles County Fair. The lessons were well-received by fair attendees and collaborators. The food preservation booth was a popular fair destination.

In 2011, UC Cooperative Extension was awarded a one-year grant from the University of California Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (UC-SAREP) to implement Grow and Eat Fresh in LA, a vegetable education program for community gardeners. As a supplemental project of the Grow LA Victory Garden Initiative, which offers four weeks of basic gardening instruction in community gardens throughout the county, Master Gardeners were trained to incorporate nutrition education and cooking instructions into their gardening classes using Cooperative Extension's Fresh from the Garden lessons. Students learn about the nutrition benefits of the vegetables they grow and how to healthfully prepare them once they are harvested from their gardens.

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## Nutrition, Family and Consumer Science

# Helping Los Angeles families eat healthier



In 2011, the University of California Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program's name was officially changed to UC CalFresh. In Los Angeles County, UC CalFresh reached more than 1,500 low-income participants through health fairs and community events.

The program also reached more than 900 CalFresh-eligible adults through



weekly classes and one-time workshops. In 2011, UC CalFresh saw a 91 percent increase in adult enrollment.



The Expanded Food Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) continued to be an important Cooperative Extension service. This nutrition education program delivers research-based information to help limited-resource residents that will help them make nutrition and health decisions. More than 800 families completed eight weeks of EFNEP classes, a 29 percent increase from the previous year. Families improved food resource management as well as nutrition and food safety practices.

Youth EFNEP targets limited-resource families with young children. In 2011, staff trained 143 teachers, reaching more than 4,500 youth. The program saw a 100 percent increase in the number of teachers trained during the last couple of years. Using the "Reading Across My Pyramid" curriculum, youth increased their knowledge significantly of the essentials of human nutrition. Impact indi-

cators showed that Youth EFNEP improved nutrition knowledge of nearly half of the children who participated in the program.

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In order to enhance program delivery, staff established partnerships with key community organizations: VA Dietetic Interns, LA's Best After School Program, USC Child Development Centers and Cal State LA interns. Staff trained teachers and interns, who in turn, conducted the Youth EFNEP curriculum at schools and community youth organizations.

## The Network for a Healthy California

# Building the skills for a healthy life



The *Network for a Healthy California* is a unique collaboration between schools, community organizations, teachers and parents to improve the health of low-income children and their families by promoting healthy eating and increased physical activity. Through nutrition education in community settings as well as participation in mass media campaigns, the Network takes on the challenges to combat diabetes, obesity and other chronic health problems.

In 2011, staff were pleased to cap off the program on a positive note, as they continued the promotion of good nutrition and physical activity through the two campaigns. Over the years, the *Children's Power Play! Campaign* and *Latino Campaign* have been an important part of UC Cooperative Extension's core services and identity in Los Angeles County.



The *Children's Power Play! Campaign*, which works closely with teachers and staff of community youth programs, reached almost 42,000 9-to-11 year olds. Thanks to outstanding partners throughout the county, the campaign reached children in classrooms, school cafeterias and after-school programs. As for the *Latino Campaign*, it reached more than 275,000 low-income adults in Los Angeles County by playing an active outreach role in festivals, farmers markets, grocery stores and in strong partnerships with community-based organizations.



Due to constrained resources and administrative costs, UC Cooperative Extension decided not to renew the program contract. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health in October took over management of the programs in October. Although it was sad for UC Cooperative Extension to say good-bye to the programs, residents will receive the same level of service under the county's management. The campaigns will continue to work with local school districts and community organizations to make a real difference in reducing the risk of chronic diseases.

UC Cooperative Extension staff enjoyed their time managing these campaigns. Although they will be missed, staff look forward to continuing UC Cooperative Extension's collaborative work with the county.



## Common Ground Garden Program

# Teaching families how to grow produce



Each year, UC Cooperative Extension staff are excited to be a part of the hub of gardening activities in Los Angeles County. With the popular Master Gardener Program and Grow LA Victory Garden Initiative, UC Cooperative Extension engages gardening enthusiasts as well as those just interested in gardening, in important issues of sustainability and building community. Equally important, the programs help many families grow their own fresh and nutritious food.

In 2011, UC Cooperative Extension noted many successes. Two hundred thirty-six Master Gardeners logged more than 14,000 volunteer hours and more than 4,500 continuing education hours. Their time and effort helped more than 132,000 low-income or limited-resource county residents grow and eat their own food. Volunteers started or engaged in 271 projects (located in 97 community gardens, 106 school gardens, 9 senior gardens, 16 shelter gardens, and 43 fairs and farmers markets). In spring, staff trained 54 new Master Gardeners. Once trained and certified, these individuals go out into various communities and pass on the knowledge to the public. UC Cooperative Extension "trains the trainer."



In its second year, the Grow LA Victory Garden Initiative continued to be just as successful. In 2011, Master Gardeners helped 400 residents become new gardeners at 39 gardening locations. Participants learned how to start a garden, compost, start a seed, manage pests, transplant, prepare the soil and plant seasonally. After the course, many participants started or expanded their vegetable gardens. The

main reasons they gave for gardening included "saving money," "eating healthier" and "ensuring food is free of pesticides."

It was an eventful year for Yvonne Savio, UC Cooperative Extension's gardening crusader (Common Ground Program manager and Master Gardener instructor). She was recognized in nine newspaper articles and appeared in KCET's "The Edible Garden: Breaking Ground." In addition, she conducted 25 presentations for gardening groups and county housing development residents and at conferences (such as the Altadena Community Garden, LA County Arboretum, Gene Autry Museum of the West's Earth Day and Master Gardener Statewide Conference).



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# Making new technologies attainable



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UC Cooperative Extension advisors continue to share information and expertise to members of the horticulture industry, including nursery growers, landscapers and public and private stewards of landscapes. They are knowledgeable about new technologies, research and regulations that pertain to water conservation, pest management strategies and plant selection.

UC Cooperative Extension advisor Don Hodel, an internationally recognized environmental horticulturist, enjoyed a productive year. In 2011, Hodel was appointed to the United States Department of Agriculture Red Palm Weevil Technical Working Group. Working closely with the California Department of Food and Agriculture and local agriculture commissioners, the group of experts investigated the introduction of this serious pest in Southern California and developed appropriate management strategies.

Hodel played an important role in the dissemination of up-to-date information throughout the county. In 2011, he conducted 19 presentations to more than 1,500 owners, managers and operators of businesses involved in the installation and management of landscape plants (many of whom are public sector employees for organizations such as The Arboretum and Botanical Garden of Los Angeles County and the LA County Community Development Commission). In addition, he conducted 14 presentations to more than 580 homeowners and consumers about home gardening and landscaping. On the research front, Hodel conducted 23 research projects and authored or co-authored 22 publications.

UC Cooperative Extension advisor Dennis Pittenger, an environmental horticulture expert, focused his effort on sustainable landscaping by comparing and developing various methods to reduce the use of natural resources, particularly water, in Southern California. During the year, he has expanded content for the Center for Landscape and Urban Horticulture's website, <http://ucanr.org/sites/UrbanHort>, and initiated a project with five other universities in the U.S. to devise a new paradigm for estimating water needs of urban landscapes. Based on research and teaching, the project will help landscape managers and planners develop a more accurate water budget and irrigation schedule.

Finally, Pittenger produced a new UC leaflet, "Urban Trees and Ozone Formation: A Consideration for Large-Scale Plantings," with co-author John Karlik, UC Cooperative Extension advisor in Kern County. The publication presents useful information and insight for selecting tree species to those planning for or instituting a large-scale urban tree planting program.

UC Cooperative Extension advisor Cheryl Wilen, an integrated pest management expert, works with the public and private sector and homeowners to ensure that best practices in pest management are being employed. Working with the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, she visited two public housing facilities (Nickerson Gardens and Pico Gardens) to assess the level of pest infestations and make recommendations for adopting an integrated pest management approach.

Following the site visits, Wilen conducted training sessions for 60 maintenance workers and supervisors to help them understand what to look for when visiting residential units and offered suggestions for pest infestation prevention. She also provided training on how to use baits, which are less toxic and often more effective than sprayed insecticide treatments, and proper techniques for using boric acid powder.



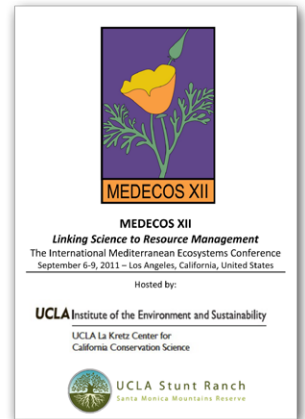
## Natural Resources

# Preserving Los Angeles County's natural resources



UC Cooperative Extension's advisors work with nonprofit and private organizations and educational institutions to address Los Angeles County's issues on invasive species.

In September, Bell spoke at the International Mediterranean Ecosystems Conference at UCLA. Much of his talk focused on the restoration of the degraded natural habitat in Southern California—one of the world's five Mediterranean ecosystems. He also gave a poster presentation on restoration of native grasses, based on his research in San Diego and at the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in Cheseboro Canyon. Both of these projects are in the manuscript stage.



Bell's experiments provided opportunity for more funding. Bell and his colleague, Chris McDonald, received support to expand the results of their research on approximately 200 acres of reserved habitat in Southern California.

Finally, Bell's research on the control of the giant reed (*Arundo donax*) with herbicides has been published in the *Journal of Aquatic Pest Management Society*. The field work portion was conducted in Montebello, Norco and San Diego.



Sabrina Drill, cross-county natural resources advisor, brought together researchers, agricultural producers, landowners, and government and nonprofit organizations from Los Angeles and Ventura counties to work on a coordinated effort to manage invasive weeds in the Santa Clara River. After some groundwork, the Santa Clara River Invasive Weeds Task Force was created. Members represent the upper and lower watersheds of the river and meet quarterly. In addition, Drill works with landowners and managers, primarily from unincorporated regions of Los Angeles County, to control the spread of invasive weeds in wildland and recreational areas frequented by county residents.

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## Agriculture

# Providing research and technology to commercial agriculture



The agriculture program centers on the High Desert region of Los Angeles County. UC Cooperative Extension advisor Andre Biscaro provides research-based information regarding crop production and pertinent environmental issues to growers and local agencies. He also works closely with other UC Cooperative Extension advisors and specialists in order to develop cost-effective and sustainable agronomic practices. He considers the challenges associated with increasing production costs, water use restrictions, agriculture-urban interface and a growing population. Most of his work takes place in unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County,

such as Acton, Agua Dulce, Antelope Acres and Leona Valley.



In 2011, Biscaro organized meetings and workshops for members of the agricultural community, assisted farmers with technical support and conducted research on alfalfa varieties and hay yield.

Publications play an important role in extending Biscaro's research to the public. He published the summer 2011 edition of *High Desert Crop Notes* and presented his research, "Summer Annual Weed Control in Established Alfalfa in California," which was conducted with two colleagues

(Steve Orloff and Rob Wilson), at the Western Society of Weed Science. He also reviewed technical articles for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Dustbusters Taskforce, a group of professionals looking for ways to mitigate wind erosion in the Antelope Valley.

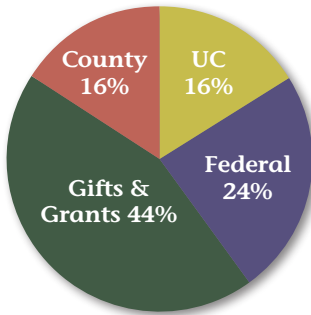


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## Funding

# Thank you to our supporters



### Funding Sources:

County . . . . .	16%
UC. . . . .	16%
Federal . . . . .	24%
Gifts, Grants, Contracts & Endowments. . .	44%

*We want to also thank our 4-H volunteers and Master Gardeners for their wonderful support and commitment. They are an important part of UC Cooperative Extension's mission and community.*

*Thank you!*

We would like to thank the following organizations for their support:

- The 51st Agricultural District
- Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources
- DowAgro
- DuPont Crop Protection
- International Palm Society
- International Plant Nutrition Institute
- Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Foundation
- Los Angeles Arboretum and Botanic Garden
- Los Angeles Breakfast Club
- The Los Angeles County Community Development Commission
- The Metabolic Studio (a direct charitable activity of the Annenberg Foundation)
- New Mexico State University
- Operation: Military Kids Department of Defense Military Funding
- Operation: Military Kids Department of Defense Military Camp Funding
- Renee's Seeds
- Trader Joe's
- Two Dog Nursery
- The University of California Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (UC SAREP)
- West Coast Arborists, Inc.

## *From the campus to the community*

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