



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Agriculture and Natural Resources

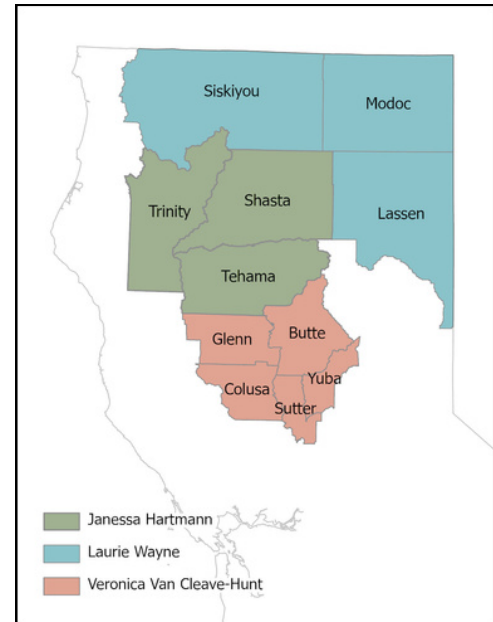
UC Cooperative Extension

The North State Picnic

UC Extension Community Nutrition and Health Update

Welcome Back!

It's time for the UC Cooperative Extension Community Nutrition and Health Advisors of the North State to share their favorite projects, plans, and research with you. This issue features updates from Janessa Hartmann (Shasta, Tehama, Trinity Counties), Veronica VanCleave-Hunt (Sutter-Yuba, Butte, Colusa, and Glenn Counties) and Laurie Wayne (Modoc, Lassen, and Siskiyou Counties). We're excited to welcome new Advisor Grace Belt (Area Youth, Families and Communities Advisor for Humboldt and Del Norte), to Cooperative Extension. You'll have a chance to hear from Grace in the next issue, but rest assured she's hitting the ground running in true Extension style.



UC Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) has released its [2040 Strategic Vision](#), which supports ANR's mission to cultivate thriving communities, sustainable agriculture, resilient ecosystems, and economic prosperity in California. We hope you'll enjoy reading about our work in communities all across the north state, and that you'll be inspired to join in. Please don't hesitate to reach out to your Cooperative Extension office if you have questions about anything you read here, or if you have suggestions for us. We're here to listen and to support you with science-based solutions and research. You'll find our contact information on the back page.

Thanks for checking in!

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UCCE: Ag and Ed in Our Communities

Janessa Hartmann, Veronica VanCleave-Hunt, Laurie Wayne



The California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) overarching goal is to help Californians access safe and healthy food by promoting California agriculture. This aligns with University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Community Nutrition and Health advisors goals and the broader UC ANR 2040 strategic vision. The projects discussed in this article highlight our partners and our ability to work together to leverage funds to address community needs.

CA Farm to School Incubator Grant Program

In 2024, CDFA awarded [\\$52.8 million](#) across the state for Farm-to-School Incubator projects. These projects support healthy eating habits for families and provide direct income to California producers. Four project tracks exist, early care education centers, schools, technical assistance providers, and agricultural producers and food hubs. In our region, 29 projects were awarded, totaling close to \$7 million. Of which, there are several projects that the UCCE is directly supporting over the two year program.

Red Bluff Joint Union High School District (RBJUSD, located in **Tehama County**) was awarded a school track grant that will source locally grown produce for school meals and integrate hands-on food education into the curriculum at two high schools. This project, starting in the 2025-2026 school year, will invest in infrastructure, staff training, and curriculum training to ensure long term sustainability and impactful outcomes for students and community. The RBJUHS and UCCE partnership will empower students with the knowledge and skills to make healthier food choices while also addressing food insecurity and access. Overall, this program aims to promote community resilience and strengthen the food system by building local farmers relationships, and providing nutrition education to students.

In **Siskiyou County**, Farm to School Incubator Grants were awarded to Moon Toad Farms, Homeward Bounty Farm, Tulelake Basin Joint Unified School District, Butteville Union Elementary School, Siskiyou Union High School District, and the Karuk Tribe. They are joined by Bidwell Canyon Farm in Modoc County and four schools in Lassen County: Richmond Elementary, Shaffer Unified Elementary School District, Westwood Unified School District, and Fort Sage Unified School District in Herlong. These farms, schools, and organizations will reach students from preschool through high school with fresh local food to eat, to grow, and to learn about. UCCE small farm and youth development programs will provide research-based resources to these grantees as they produce fresh, healthy food from farms and greenhouses, and deliver meaningful curriculum that revolves around the science of raising and eating good local food.

First 5 Shasta (located in **Shasta County**) was awarded an early care and education (ECE) track grant to provide local produce and nutrition education to seven underserved family child care providers. This partnership is between Happy Valley Fresh (local food aggregator), First 5 Shasta, Shasta College, and UCCE and will begin in summer 2025. Happy Valley Fresh will deliver seasonal produce. Shasta College ECE students will receive training from UCCE Educators to implement nutrition education. Curricula will be both evidence-based and align with child development standards.

UCCE: Ag and Ed (Continued)



First 5 Shasta/ Shasta County (cont.)

This project will provide students with worksite learning and professional development, support in-home family childcare providers with local produce and recipes, and educate preschool age youth on nutrition and gardening. Nutrition education materials will also be shared with participant households to support positive child feeding habits at home.

Burnt Ranch Elementary School (located in **Trinity County**) was awarded their "Cultivating Wellness" grant to expand their garden learning space, create an orchard, and increase local procurement of organic foods. UCCE Master Gardeners will provide orchard technical assistance and UCCE Nutrition Educators will train the Garden Educator on curriculum, assist with food tastings, and support policy, systems, and environmental changes. This project will provide students with hands-on agriculture learning and promote community resiliency.

UCCE Butte County was awarded a technical assistance grant to work with seven rural schools to increase local food literacy and value across Butte, Colusa, and Glenn counties. The partners for this grant are: Pierce Joint Unified School District, Williams Unified School District, Oroville City Elementary School District, and Princeton Joint Unified School District. The UCCE, Butte County, will work with school sites to increase local food literacy and value to enhance the farm to school activities of the CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE program.

Credentialed teachers will be trained to support student council members facilitating taste test evaluations. They will collect data to inform school food service directors about local foods students would like to have in school meals. Student council will develop marketing materials highlighting local, seasonal produce that students will taste test and grow in their school garden. These activities will be promoted in the cafeteria, and externally to the school community through social media posts, school menus, and newsletters. Credentialed teachers will be trained to facilitate garden-education that is aligned with Next Generation Science Standards and incorporate cultural foods and recipes. The partnering sites at Oroville City

Elementary School District have been trialing large group taste tests during recess. Students vote on whether they like a produce item. The North Valley Food Hub has been instrumental in sourcing local produce and delivering to schools.



Students tasting rainbow chard and casting a vote



Oroville City Elementary School District Food Services Coordinator, Shari Carillo

UCCE: Ag and Ed (Continued)

California Nutrition Incentive Program

Additionally, through CDFA, there is the California Nutrition Incentive Program (CNIP) which supports the purchasing and consumption of California-grown fruits and vegetables. This year, a total of 12 projects were funded across the state. For the first time, Shasta Growers Association (located in Shasta County) was awarded the CNIP grant to provide incentives at the four certified farmers' markets in Shasta County at a 50% discount. The \$54,000 grant called, Shasta Market Match, started in April 2025 and matches \$15 nutrition incentives to CalFresh shoppers for each farmers market visit.

This program provides a significant opportunity to address a critical need. Feeding America estimates that 72% (approximately 130,000 residents) of Shasta County is eligible for CalFresh ([Feeding America](#), 2022). However only approximately 31,000 residents participated in CalFresh in January 2024 ([California Department of Social Services](#), 2024). Through partnership with UCCE and Healthy Shasta, significant marketing and outreach of the program incentives has occurred in Spring 2025. Outreach has expanded across multi-sector agencies and organizations, in English and Spanish, and via electronic and hardcopy flyers. This promotion effort is intended to recruit shoppers to the local farmers market thereby improving the affordability of locally grown produce and providing an income for northern California small and mid-sized farms. Overall this project aims to enhance the resilience of the regional food system by strengthening the connection between producers and community members.



Shasta Growers Association Farmers Market Flyer



Shasta Market Match Flyer

UCCE: Ag and Ed (Continued)

Farmers Market Benefits Go Electronic

Farmers Market Nutrition benefits for seniors and families are nothing new, but this year they're getting a big facelift by going electronic, and UCCE is a key player in making sure the transition goes smoothly. Until this year, these market-specific benefits came in the form of paper "checks" that folks redeemed at the market for fruits and vegetables (and honey for seniors). While the farmers market programs helped increase intake of fresh nutritious food and helped farmers increase their revenue at markets, the system had some real limitations: each check had to be spent on a single purchase with no change given, the farmers had to deposit the checks at a bank within a certain time period, and if a check was lost or damaged, the benefit was lost. This year, both Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition programs are transitioning to a new system that allows for flexible purchasing, automatic integration into programs like the California Nutrition Incentive Program (CNIP), traceability, and easier record keeping for farmers, and quicker, easier transactions.

Each new, colorful farmers market benefit card has a QR code that a farmer can read with their smartphone, allowing them access to a system with a simple interface that makes the purchase fast and secure. The cards make for a "one stop" payment system that provides transparent, automatic access to multiple types of nutrition benefits so that folks using the cards can easily support farmers and markets while bringing home as much nutritious food as possible.



Example of a Farmers Market Benefits Card

In a project headed by Regional Food Systems Area Advisor for the Capitol Corridor Olivia Henry, Advisors Hardeep Singh in the Central Sierra and Laurie Wayne in the Far North State are forming a small team of UCCE Nutrition Advisors determined to help farmers' markets and community members in our rural communities reap the rewards of this new system. They are partnering with the California Department of Food and Agriculture to deliver training and support to farmers and benefits users to help them get comfortable with the new system and to be prepared for the market season. These advisors will provide in-person, individual support to farmers and customers at markets as well as information to customers eligible to receive them.

"When community members shop at farmers markets, they are getting good, nutritious, fresh food, helping farmers sell their products, getting to know their neighbors, and often learning about additional community services"

"We're excited to be part of bringing this big improvement to the markets in our region and to work with our community partners to help the transition go as well as possible." says Advisor (and former farmer) Laurie Wayne.

Reducing Household Food Waste to Improve Food Security

Veronica VanCleave-Hunt & Janessa Hartmann

A team of Community Nutrition and Health, UCCE Advisors are developing a toolkit for health educators that promotes skills to reduce household food waste. The team represents both rural and urban regions in northern, central, and southern California. This three-part research effort first found that a need existed for evidence-based materials for UCCE staff and volunteers. Parents and guardians who qualify for CalFresh were recruited to have group discussions about their household food practices, barriers, and motivations for saving food. After analyzing the focus groups' responses, the Household Food Waste Educator Toolkit and lessons were developed accordingly.

Advisors piloted the lessons as a series in seven counties. Sites included: First 5 Family Center, Community Health Center, Elementary School, Family Resource Center, Low-income Housing Sites, and a Veteran Site. Preliminary results showed a statistically significant increase in participant confidence to perform twelve food-related practices including sorting and preparing waste for collection, safely storing and reheating food, and preserving food using refrigeration and freezing. One participant said they learned "To always make a shopping list. And freeze the food that I'm not going to use just to keep it fresh. I learned so much in this class. It was so amazing."

Once published, these lessons and resources will be available at no cost to the public. University of California staff and volunteers plan to use this toolkit to reinforce food resource management skills and address participants' interests in reducing food waste at home.

DID YOU KNOW? THE AVERAGE AMERICAN FAMILY SPENDS \$1,500 ON FOOD THAT GOES TO WASTE EACH YEAR?



Pilot Participants in Redding

Overview of the Lessons

1: Shop Smarter Plan Ahead

- Tips for meal planning, making a shopping list, and shopping to save money and food.

2: Efficient Kitchen (Cooking to reduce waste)

- Food preparation and cooking techniques for using food ingredients in a variety of ways

3: Food for Keeps: Organizing your Kitchen

- Storage techniques for improving the shelf-life of foods and how to decipher "use-by", "sell by" and expiration dates

4: Chill Out: Preserving Food by Freezing

- Techniques for freezing foods to preserve them for future use

5: Green Your Routine

- The practice and benefits of composting



Pilot Class in Redding

Walk, Seek, Celebrate: 20 Years of Healthy Shasta

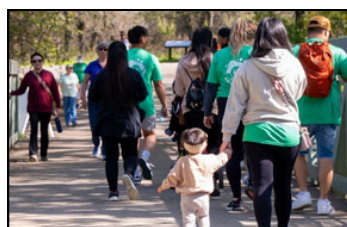
Janessa Hartmann



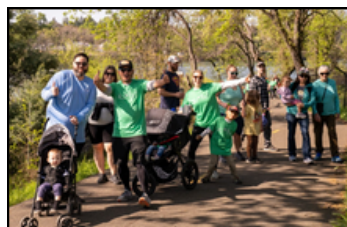
Healthy Shasta is a collaboration of 26 organizations dedicated to making healthy choices easier, convenient, inviting, and affordable in Shasta County. In celebration of our 20-year legacy, and through funding by the Sierra Health Foundation, First 5 Shasta, and CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE, Healthy Shasta offered three free physical activity related opportunities across Shasta County. The first activity, the **Silver Shoe Quest**, was a school-based scavenger hunt. A total of 23 schools (approximately 6,100 students spanning TK-12th grade) registered for the activity. Students that participated were active an average of 50 minutes.

The Silver Shoe Quest was the kick-off to our community-wide **Golden Shoe Hunt**. A total of 20 golden shoes were placed at parks and trails across the county. Clues for shoe locations were provided in English and Spanish on the Healthy Shasta website. There were over 3,100 entries in our Golden Shoe Hunt.

Approximately 33% of responses indicated that this was their first time at that park/trail or that they learned about that park/trail

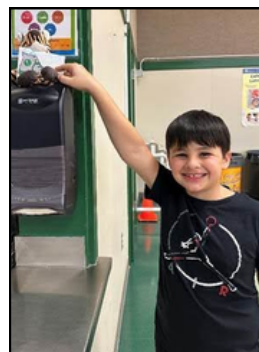


Celebration Family Fun Walk Participants



through the challenge, while 26% of responses said that they've only been there once or twice before.

The last activity was our free **Celebration family fun walk**. Over 900 participants registered for our walk, and the first 500 participants received a free commemorative t-shirt. Overwhelmingly, positive feedback was received for the three activities and included comments about having fun and getting outside as a family, enjoying exploring new places, older youth helping younger youth, and wanting to participate in the next Healthy Shasta challenge.



Students participating in the Silver Shoe Quest at school



Youth participating in the Golden Shoe Hunt



Healthy Shasta Steering Committee

Community Partnerships to Address Cancer Rates in Tehama County

Janessa Hartmann

Cancer is the second leading cause of death among Americans. Tehama County ranks among the highest in California for cancer mortality (Tehama County Health Services Agency, 2024). In Fall 2024, an initiative was started with the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE), UC Davis Comprehensive Cancer Center's Office of Community Outreach and Engagement (UCD CCC), Tehama County Public Health, and St. Elizabeth's Hospital to address the cancer burden in Tehama County. This community health and clinic collaboration was initially established to identify systemic factors contributing to local cancer rates and to build a coordinated, countywide approach to address those barriers. In November 2024, a total of 26 participants, representing 11 medical providers, clinics, and partners came together for a dinner-and-discussion. The goal was to understand what challenges and opportunities healthcare providers have, at the clinic level, related to cancer prevention and screenings. As shared during the presentation, lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related death among Tehama residents 54 years and older. During the meeting, the manager of the county's sole Oncology Center provided valuable insights into common reasons for lung screening referral denials. Because of this dialogue, a month later, the denial rate was reduced by an estimated 65%, significantly reducing referral errors and the time it takes for a patient to be scheduled for a lung cancer screening.

A second dinner-and-discussion was held in March 2025. After summarizing the initial meeting, the event had two distinct goals; to review local cancer specific data and to determine the collective focus and next steps. UCD CCC provided individual, community, and organizational interventions that their team would support in Tehama County. Through a facilitated conversation, the group decided to address colorectal cancer by working at the clinic level on patient educational materials, referral decision-tree processes, and clinic staff training. Future work will also explore system-level barriers such as colorectal cancer screening workflow prompts and electronic medical records improvements.



Participants in the Dinner-and-Discussion

Master Food Preserver Program is Growing Up!

Laurie Wayne



One of UC ANR's most popular and visible statewide offerings is the UC Master Food Preserver (MFP) program. An expanding group of trained and dedicated volunteers from communities large and small is fulfilling the UC MFP mission- to keep Californians safe and well as they use culturally appropriate, research-based practices to safely preserve food in the home, reducing food waste, increasing food security, and providing engaging ways for Californians to explore healthy food. In the North State, our Master Food Preservers are active throughout the year. Have you run into one at a festival, fair, class, or demonstration?



Making kimchee is a hands-on preservation practice!

MFP volunteers have been busy connecting with the public and honing their skills through classes, including:

- Canning apple pie filling in McCloud in the fall
- Teaching Shasta County youth about canning in the popular Junior Jams class in the winter
- Learning salmon canning at UC Davis
- Partnering with UC SAREP to offer hands-on "Everything Elderberry" sessions in the Warner Mountains last summer;
- Teaching emergency food and water preparation and safety in Tehama County

This summer, the MFPs will integrate dehydration and freeze drying into their offerings. You can keep abreast of all the MFP happenings and ask any preservation questions by visiting the [Far North UC Master Food Preserver Facebook page](#) (also run by wonderful volunteers). If you are interested in becoming a Master Food Preserver, mark your calendar for October 1, when applications open up for the 6-month certification class. In the meantime, look for MFPs at your local fair or other event, and if you see them, stop by and say hello!



Trainees perfecting their canning skills

Understanding our Food System

Laurie Wayne

The term “Food System” refers to the ways communities get fed, from production to marketing, to composting, and food waste reduction. Our region is predominantly rural, and Advisor Laurie Wayne has been conducting research on special characteristics of our food system. Last fall, Wayne distributed short surveys to community members in Lassen, Modoc, and Siskiyou Counties, and the results started to form a picture of the unique challenges of our food system and how UCCE is helping to address those challenges.

Wayne found some intriguing results from this initial survey. For example, in our rural communities, access to transportation is a requirement for most residents to access food: 40% of respondents had to travel over 25 miles round trip to get to a food store or pantry, and 7% reported that they regularly travel over 100 miles for groceries. These and other findings summarized in the picture below demonstrate how closely related food systems are to challenges like regional infrastructure, economic development, and education.

UC ANR is working to deliver programs that address these and other food system challenges that our communities face – programs like Master Food Preservers, the California Food Hub Network and Agritourism programs, and the Small Farms Network provide research and resources to local Cooperative Extension Advisors and others who are in touch with the special needs of their clientele.

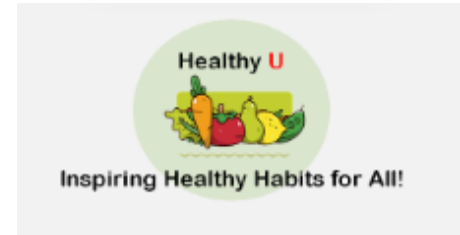


A Food System Has Many Interdependent Sectors

The next step in this research is to form focus groups throughout the region to delve more deeply into community food system conditions and challenges, as well as community members' vision for the future. This research will inform programs and focus funding and other research on areas of greatest concern or opportunity, and it will be part of a wider body of research being conducted by Extension colleagues across the many rural regions of the country. If you are interested in learning more about this research-in-progress or would like to join a focus group, please contact Laurie Wayne at the Modoc Farm Advisor office via email (lwayne@ucanr.edu) or phone (503.233.6400).

Healthy U, Innovative Health Education for Adults with Disabilities

Veronica VanCleave-Hunt



In Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Sutter and Yuba counties the average percentage of all individuals under the age of 65 with disabilities (10.4%) is greater than that of the state of California (7.3%). In California this population experiences health disparities and has a higher incidence of chronic diseases including diabetes and heart disease.

In January 2024, Healthy U, a new approach to community health education for adults with disabilities was developed in response to an expressed need by California State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) associates. The University of California Cooperative Extension, Butte Cluster (UCCE Butte Cluster) partnered with SCDD for the North State, and Sherri Douglas, a Self Advocate who serves on an SCDD advisory committee as a person with a disability, to develop a health education series, *Healthy U*.

Healthy U, is a 6-part series of 60-minute community health education lessons. Topics were chosen based on the needs expressed by individuals in the disability community. Lessons were developed using evidence-based resources. These include: Social Emotional Connection to Food, Eating Healthy on a Budget, Healthy Recipe Demonstrations, Physical Activity, Sugar and Review of the topics.



Sherri Douglas, SCDD
Self Advocate

This series has been delivered online, and in-person for members of the disability community in California, including individuals, self advocates, professionals, and family members. Over 100 participants have attended at least one lesson.

At the end of each lesson, participants provided feedback and ideas for future lesson topics. There were a total of 31 responses from individuals who identified as self-advocates. 100% selected "agree" to the statement "Education and support for a healthy lifestyle is important to me". The majority of these respondents selected the following topics of interest: "opportunities to do more physical activity" and "food preparation/cooking".

Contact Us

Janessa Hartmann

1851 Hartnell Ave
Redding, CA 96002

(530) 224-4900



<https://ceshasta.ucanr.edu/>



jlhartmann@ucanr.edu



CalFresh.UC.ShastaCluster

Laurie Wayne

202 West 4th Street
Alturas, CA 96101

(530) 233-6400



<https://cemodoc.ucanr.edu/>



lwayne@ucanr.edu



Devils.Garden.Research.and.Educa
tion

Veronica VanCleave-Hunt

5 County Center Drive
Oroville, CA 95965

(530) 552-5812



<https://cebutte.ucanr.edu/>



vvanceleavehunt@ucanr.edu



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