

CalFresh Forum

Sacramento, CA | February 18, 2014

The 2014 Freshy Award Nominees

Administrator of the Year

Jose Corchado, Social Services Program Supervisor Fresno County Department of Social Services

Jose has been a great asset as a county representative to Fresno's CalFresh Advocacy Taskforce. Taskforce members can always count on Jose to address any CalFresh concerns and answer questions. In addition, he keeps the taskforce up to date on new CalFresh rules and regulations. Jose is consistently open to new outreach strategies and, because of his countywide expertise, is able to offer valuable feedback. Jose's commitment validates the work of the Taskforce and has allowed the Taskforce to expand its outreach work.

Susan Foerster, Chief, Policy, Planning and Partnership Section (retired) California Department of Public Health

Susan is the founder of the Network for a Healthy California and for over 40 years has led the effort in California to increase food security and access to healthy food and beverages. She has been a collaborator and supporter of CalFresh/SNAP-Ed and has been an effective innovator. Her work has changed California's landscape in terms of access to healthy food among low-income children and families.

Rick Wanne, Deputy Director of Eligibility and Operations San Diego County Health and Human Services

Rick has played an instrumental role in working to strengthen and improve the culture of CalFresh in San Diego County Family Resource Centers. He has contributed to the success of numerous changes to streamline and simplify the application process. In addition, he's worked to create an internal culture of creativity; allowing staff to think outside the box and creatively approach new ways to improve CalFresh participation. Rick's efforts have cut through red tape, rethought old bureaucratic systems and ensured that good ideas can move forward. Internal system improvements that have occurred during Rick's first year include: new data management systems, as well as document processing centers to improve verification retention, and the piloting of digital document sharing platforms. These systems help staff, outreach partners, and most importantly, low income people needing food. In the community, family resource centers have new lobby management systems to assist clients and reduce wait times, and HHSA is working with community partners to pilot out stationed eligibility workers working side by side with community CalFresh outreach partners.

Grassroots Mobilizer of the Year

Veronica Garcia, CalFresh Outreach Supervisor

Food in Need of Distribution, Inc. (FIND Food Bank)

Veronica is at the heart of a small, dedicated, still relatively new team working primarily in eastern Riverside County. Veronica is a product of the very community she serves, drawing upon her professional and personal ties to bring authenticity and familiarity to her work. She makes use of FIND Food Bank's CalFresh "outreach pipeline" at every level: organizing and participating in community events, attending food-assistance distributions, following up with individuals and families that have been pre-screened, meeting with CalFresh applicants in their neighborhood or community in order to make the application process that much more accessible, and responding to inquiries from new and longer-term clients in need of assistance maintaining benefits. She also assists clients in processing their quarterly and annual benefit renewals. Within FIND Food Bank, Veronica has achieved what we call the "gold standard" of outreach referrals. Individuals and families who've had a good experience with Veronica pass along her name and contact information to others they know who may also benefit. Not only does FIND Food Bank have to expend fewer resources to achieve such referrals, but more importantly, those calling Veronica already know her to be trustworthy, dependable, consistent, and helpful.

Veronica is part of the team that won a 2013 "Freshy" for the unique, public-private partnership that FIND Food Bank and the Riverside County Dept. of Public Social Services have been developing since late 2010, the outcome of which has indeed helped Riverside County make up some much needed ground in increasing CalFresh participation by those who are likely eligible for CalFresh (Riverside's PAI ranked 29th when we initiated our CalFresh outreach program in 2010; by 2012, our county improved to a rank of 24th; thanks to a full range of efforts).

Amanda Sharp, Division Manager

Tehama County Department of Social Services and Community Action Agency

Amanda has worked with dozens of local organizations to leverage funds in multiple programs; increasing overall nutrition and services to eligible families. Amanda worked with several local nonprofits and interested citizens to forge a FoodShare Coalition. This coalition has evolved to include the development of a county-wide Food Policy Council, first-ever Earth Day event, mobile community garden program, a focus on access to Farmer Markets, and increased use of the award winning collaborative garden for juvenile hall residents.

The impact has been that hundreds of families are growing their own food in the far-reaches of Tehama County, the Food Policy Council is in development and facilitating access to more nutrition related grant opportunities, and hundreds of CalFresh eligible families attended workshops and demonstrations on how to save money, cook healthy and use CalFresh dollars wisely. Since Tehama County is so large, but has so few people, Amanda was able to bring garden boxes to families across the county, an approach that helped people access more healthy produce in one growing season.

Parke Troutman, Public Policy and Advocacy Director

San Diego Hunger Coalition

During the past two years, Parke has worked to develop a deep level of understanding of legislative policy on the local, state and federal level. Never one to shy away from a dense bill or a detailed historical analysis of congress, Parke's ability to identify key issues in legislation and advocacy have helped ensure that our collaborative partners are working with the best information available. In addition, Parke asks questions that help target important opportunities and enable partners to better understand the strategies and goals of legislative policy advocacy.

Parke has played a key role in obtaining significant numbers of supporters to letters to congress related to the Farm Bill, helped usher SB134 through the California State Legislature, and provided significant support for SB283, which received a long and diverse list of supporters. In the coming year, Parke will continue to organize our partners and communities to bring the voice of San Diego to Sacramento and Washington DC.

Parke has been a strong and reliable member of the 1-in-10 coalition in San Diego, the San Diego Hunger Advocacy Network, the California Hunger Action Network, and the Getting our Act Together on the Farm Bill (GOAT) committee, among many other efforts.

Innovative Outreach Leader of the Year

Note: due to the large number of nominees in this category there will be two winners.

Jenny Breed, CalFresh Outreach Director

CSU Chico Research Foundation, Center for Nutrition and Activity Promotion

As one of the seven Prime Contractors in the state, Jenny is constantly thinking of new strategies to improve access to healthy foods and broaden knowledge about CalFresh. She emails weekly notices to staff and partners sharing new information. She encourages partners and staff to become familiar with the toolkit and has conducted numerous trainings and forums in the north state addressing food insecurity and accessing available resources. Jenny promotes the CalFresh brand by keeping the name in all meetings and normalizing CalFresh so that it is more socially acceptable and known in the community. Jenny has partnered with multiple departments of the University, encouraging social work, nutrition, education/teaching students and more to participate in CalFresh Outreach and intern for the team. She relies on students and their enthusiasm to help create exciting promotions and PowerPoint presentations to bring in potential participants.

Amy Dierlam, CalFresh Outreach Assistant

River City Food Bank

Amy is very effective in gaining the trust of and creating relationships with the clients she serves. She has been an advocate for increasing senior CalFresh participation by working with senior centers to provide outreach, CalFresh information, and application assistance. Amy has recently partnered with a church to provide onsite applications at Safegrounds and the weekly homeless dinners. Additionally, Amy has become involved in providing outreach at a local apartment complex where a WIC office is located. The goal of this effort is to make contact with WIC clients as they leave their WIC appointments. This effort has been particularly effective, as this is a high need area and the school district liaison for the homeless population has started providing referrers for this location.

Due to these efforts, River City Food Bank has seen an increase in senior CalFresh participation within the last few months. Additionally, she has been able to provide feedback in improving county processes, in particular the handing of CalFresh/General Assistance and expedited cases.

Liz Gomez, Outreach Programs Manager

Alameda County Community Food Bank

Elizabeth oversees one of the largest outreach teams in the state. Liz and her team set aggressive goals each year to ensure that every eligible household in Alameda County is enrolled in CalFresh. Liz and her team are pioneers in using media campaigns and messaging to connect people with CalFresh. Last year Liz and her team submitted 2,115 CalFresh applications with an approval rate of 85%. This year, with a newly expanded team, they plan to increase this number by more than 50%! In an effort to reach this goal Liz and her team used a direct mail strategy, encouraging 58,000 people to apply for CalFresh. The response rate was excellent and the team is still filling enrollment clinics with people who they connected with through this mailer. Liz has been doing this work for 11 years and freely shares

throughout the state and country all that she has learned so that others may build successful programs too.

Hector Hernandez, CalFresh Outreach Consultant

California Association of Food Banks

Hector has increased access to CalFresh, increased CalFresh participation and promotes the CalFresh brand. He attends several CalFresh events throughout Los Angeles County on an ongoing basis. He is consistently looking for opportunities to participate in community/media events to promote CalFresh. Additionally, Hector was able to get CAFB partners and DPSS invited to participate in one of Los Angeles largest health fairs, the Telemundo Fair. Thousands of people attend this event every year and because Hector was able to open the door for us we have been able to increase our outreach efforts tremendously.

Hector's dedication to his work is truly admirable. He is knowledgeable, friendly and is always willing to help those with less knowledge on the CalFresh program. He is always looking for opportunities to form creative partnerships and further promote CalFresh.

Liz Metzler and Elizabeth Hall, CalFresh Outreach Coordinators

Jacobs and Cushman San Diego Food Bank

Liz and Elizabeth are a great duo! They work endlessly to help end hunger in San Diego County by promoting CalFresh and increasing CalFresh participation. They are true examples of people who care and are passionate about their work and the people they serve. Each month Liz and Elizabeth submit on average 80 completed CalFresh applications to the county and 75% or more of those get approved. To help further these efforts, they have identified and established more than 10 hubsites throughout San Diego County, occurring about 20 times a month, where clients can go to get help to apply, reapply, or get recertified. In addition, they advocate for their clients till the end! On more than several occasions, they have helped to overturn wrongfully denied cases into approved cases. These ladies are true rock stars!

Natasha Paz, Community Nutrition Assistant II

Center for Nutrition and Activity Promotion at Chico State

Natasha takes the time to problem solve with potentially eligible individuals in an effort to increase CalFresh participation and notifies participants of drop-in assist sites and the resources available there. In addition, Natasha encourages pre-screened individuals to take CalFresh resources and share information with others. Natasha provides extra trainings for CalFresh teams to better equip them with needed information, for example, resource techniques that work. One such technique includes the CalFresh spin-the-wheel for a resource prize. Specifically, Natasha has increased outreach to older adults and recipients of food bank commodities.

Jennifer Seneor, Program Manager

Feeding America San Diego

Jennifer has been integral in growing the Feeding America San Diego CalFresh program. She has increased our partnerships with Health Clinics and our partner agency network, expanding the amount of clients we are able to pre-screen and help apply. Through her leadership and new partnerships, last year FASD had 416 applications approved which provided 414,695 nutritious meals to residents of the County of San Diego. Additionally, FASD received the CalFresh County and Community Organization Partnership of the Year from the Local San Diego Hunger Coalition.

**Pedro Toledo, Director of Community and Government Relations
Redwood Community Health Coalition**

In 2010, Pedro Toledo developed and implemented a CalFresh outreach and application assistance program in partnership with seven community clinics in Sonoma, Healthy Kids Sonoma County and the Napa Children's Health Initiative. This collaborative has greatly expanded access to nutrition programs. Pedro has successfully linked CalFresh screenings and outreach to Health Insurance outreach. As a result of this effort, over 7,000 households have received assistance in applying for CalFresh benefits, which has greatly increased CalFresh participation in these rural communities. RCHC is working with community partners to expand this successful model to five additional counties: Fresno, Santa Barbara, Sacramento, and Yolo. These partnerships will ensure that thousands more low-income household has access to nutritious foods, affordable health insurance, and a trusting source of primary care health services.

Elected Official or Capitol Staffer of the Year

**Maria Garcia, Legislative Director
Senator Ben Hueso**

Maria was instrumental in influencing statewide and federal CalFresh policy. After an initial conversation with the Hunger Advocacy Network of San Diego, she recognized a unique opportunity for an elected official to address food insecurity for military families and veterans in California. She worked effectively with the Hunger Advocacy Network, the San Diego Hunger Coalition, MAZON and the Western Center on Law and Poverty to help guide SB 134, the *No Hunger for Heroes Act*, to a signature by Governor Brown. Maria has met with members of the San Diego Military Family Collaborative and went out of her way to schedule a special tour of the capitol for an individual who traveled to Sacramento to provide testimony for the bill. Additionally, she proved adept at working with the California Department of Social Services on ways to amend SB 134 so that it would pass and provided timely communication with the bills' co-sponsors.

Although the part of SB 134 that pertained to active duty military families was stripped out of the bill, Maria still recognizes the importance of this issue and is currently pursuing a California Senate Joint Resolution urging that the United States Department of Agriculture, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and the United States Department of Defense to take all measures necessary to prevent hunger among active duty military families and veterans. She is also leveraging a relationship with Congressman Juan Vargas' office to garner support for HR 2038, the Disabled Veterans Nutrition Fairness Act of 2013. This legislation was introduced by Reps. Vargas and Jackie Speier to strengthen the ability of SNAP to respond to hunger among disabled veterans while their disability claims are pending with the VA office.