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In Neighborhoods

BUILDING A **HEALTHY** SACRAMENTO

# Walk this Way

## National grant will improve walkability and health in South Sacramento neighborhoods

BY MIKE BLOUNT

**R**esearch shows that living a more active lifestyle can reduce the risk of chronic disease. But what if the neighborhood you live in isn't conducive to safely walking, riding a bicycle or participating in other healthy recreational outdoor activities?

Through a \$150,000 national grant from the American Planning Association, nonprofit WALKSacramento will help address this issue by bringing together local health advocates and design professionals to talk about how to prioritize health in the planning process and improve health and safety in Sacramento communities.

WALKSacramento Project Manager Kirin Kumar says the grant will specifically help update neighborhoods and streets that are currently not designed for pedestrian traffic.

"Especially in South Sacramento, we have streets like Fruitridge Road and 65th Avenue that are really wide and primarily focused on automobile traffic," Kumar says. "There are opportunities there for redesigning the street with an

emphasis on getting around on alternative transportation like biking or walking."

Kirin says improving the safety on these streets could include things like adding light fixtures, bicycle lanes, more crossing opportunities or protected sidewalks.

**"WE WANT EVERYONE TO HAVE COMMUNITIES THAT ARE PLANNED FOR HEALTH."**

*Kirin Kumar, project manager for WALK Sacramento*

But safety is only part of the focus. As a Building Healthy Communities partner, WALKSacramento will also conduct focused outreach to encourage residents to be more active to improve health outcomes in the community and combat chronic diseases. In particular, obesity is a significant health problem. According to a Sierra Health Foundation report, in 2009, 1 in 4 adults was obese in Sacramento County.

Ultimately, Kumar says the goal is to build communities in South Sacramento

that are mixed use, safer and healthier for residents to live in.

"The main focuses of the grant are safety, combating chronic disease and improving economic opportunity," Kumar says. "Communities that are mixed use perform better than traditionally designed communities and bring in private investment. Millennials and older folks are also choosing to move into communities that are more mixed use."

Kumar says encouraging residents to utilize alternative modes of transportation, like riding a bicycle, using public transit and walking, also helps to address the impact of climate change by reducing the prevalence of driving.

"We're trying to create change on two levels," Kumar says. "We want to get planners and health professionals to have more effective conversations with each other on how to incorporate public health into the planning process, and we want to encourage advocacy for healthy communities. We want everyone to have communities that are planned for health."

Kirin Kumar, project manager for WALK Sacramento, says a recent \$150,000 grant will help address walking and biking issues in South Sacramento, leading not only to safer streets, but better health outcomes for residents. Photo by Laura Marie Anthony



### BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

In 2010, The California Endowment launched a 10-year, \$1 billion plan to improve the health of 14 challenged communities across the state. Over the 10 years, residents, community-based organizations and public institutions will work together to address the socioeconomic and environmental challenges contributing to the poor health of their communities.

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BUILDING A HEALTHY SACRAMENTO

# Local leaders eager to combat institutional racism

BY NATASHA VON KAENEL

On Friday, Jan. 15, over 100 government workers from around Northern California met in Oakland to discuss new ways to combat institutional racism. The meeting was put on by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), a national network of government committed to evaluating practices and programs to ensure that all people, regardless of race or socioeconomic status, are treated equally.

Combating institutional racism can seem like an impossible goal, where inequities hide behind bureaucratic language and tradition. But GARE's toolkit helps public employees see, for example, that small things like missed garbage pickups, inequitable distribution of community funds, or light bulbs not being changed frequently enough, all contribute to a larger problem of poor community health.

Francine Tournour, Director of the City of Sacramento's Office of Public Safety & Accountability, says that despite the challenges, the room was fired up, filled with an energy she says only comes around "every now and then."

"People think that just because it's not like it used to be, there aren't issues. But in fact there are," Tournour says.

**"I DON'T SEE HOW ANY GOVERNMENT AGENCY WOULDN'T GET INVOLVED IN SOMETHING LIKE THIS."**

*Francine Tournour, Director of the Office of Public Safety & Accountability*

Identifying and challenging inequities that come about through institutional practices is the focus of GARE's Racial Equity toolkit. Funded in part by The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative, GARE works with agencies to improve city and county services by including race and socioeconomic data when analyzing the success of government programs. By inserting this information into the agencies' analysis, cities have found that it becomes easier for government workers to identify the complex problems of institutional racism.

Susan McKee, Chief of Staff for County Supervisor Patrick Kennedy, left the meeting with hope that the toolkit would give all government workers a voice in fixing this systemic problem. "Giving the people who actually work in government the power to talk about changes that need to be made ... I think that's really important," she says.

Tournour agrees and hopes that the GARE toolkit will help the city tackle problems that have plagued Sacramento for years. "Immediately, homelessness comes to mind," she says. "GARE gives you studies that have taken place nationally, so we are not in a silo."

Symptoms of institutional racism can be big and ugly, like police brutality or unfair prison sentencing, but they can also be small, and easy to miss or dismiss.

"I don't see how any government agency wouldn't get involved in something like this," Tournour says. "And see how they can make themselves better accessible to a community who may not even know how to access some of their services."



Sacramento government workers, including Francine Tournour with the city's Office of Public Safety & Accountability, were among those who were part of a Government Alliance on Race and Equity cohort in Oakland on Jan. 15.  
Photo by Kate Holtzen

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**Reach out to your local representatives and tell them you support their efforts to combat institutional racism and the implementation of GARE's toolkit in Sacramento.**

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**“ Help migrants seeking a  
decent life, find acceptance  
and support. ”**

*~ Pope Francis*



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# Students Learn Why Decisions Matter

BY EDGAR SANCHE

**A**ttention young people: Making healthy choices means more than eating nutritious foods, not smoking and not drinking.

It also means committing to responsible decisions — such as avoiding gangs and managing your emotions — along with goal-setting and respecting yourself and others. These are among the critical lessons 40 students are learning in Healthy Choices, a class at American Legion High School in Sacramento's Oak Park.

Most of the students are trying to catch up with credits required for a diploma. Aware that previous misbehavior and poor academic decisions caused them to lag, they have modified their ways and are now determined to succeed.

"If we want to change our society, we have to start by changing the students who will go into society as adults," says Healthy Choices teacher Damien Giacchino, of the Sacramento Chinese Community Service Center. "If we can train (K-12) students ... and equip them with skills such as social and emotional learning, health and wellness, then maybe we can see a shift in our society, our world, of healthier adults."

American Legion is one of four South Sacramento schools where the center offers health-related education in partnership with the Sacramento City

Unified School District. The lessons are delivered by center-hired teachers, with funding from The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities Initiative.

**"IF WE WANT TO CHANGE OUR SOCIETY, WE HAVE TO START BY CHANGING THE STUDENTS WHO WILL GO INTO SOCIETY AS ADULTS."**

*Damien Giacchino, Healthy Choices teacher at American Legion High School*

At American Legion, Giacchino teaches during regular hours, but at other schools the program is taught after school. The curriculum varies by age group, says Kelsey Neff, program manager of social emotional learning for the nonprofit center. At Nicholas Elementary, for example, students do outdoor P.E. and study proper nutrition — a subject that used to be a low priority for some of Giacchino's students, including seniors Ulyssa Hernandez and Brelen Page, both 18.

"Mr. Damien taught me that eating fruits and smoothies is a really good decision," says Hernandez, who now prefers McDonald's salads over Big Macs.



"This class is a big reminder every day that I should eat healthy."

Page says he, too, stopped eating junk food after enrolling in Giacchino's elective class. But Giacchino has taught him much more than making good food choices. Making responsible decisions extends to many aspects of our well-being.

"He's a good teacher. He tells us how to get around obstacles that we may have in life," says Page, who is college-bound.

Students in the Healthy Choices class at American Legion learn about responsible decision making, whether it's what to eat or how to manage emotions. Photo by Charles Gunn

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For more about the Sacramento Chinese Community Service Center's ongoing efforts to better the community, visit:

[facebook.com/SacChinese](https://facebook.com/SacChinese) or [www.sccsc.org](http://www.sccsc.org).



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# Cultivating Urban Ag in Sacramento County

BY NATASHA VON KAENEL

Last March, the Sacramento City Council passed the Urban Agriculture Ordinance, allowing urban farmers to sell produce grown on their property or on vacant lots. Small farm stands quickly popped up, advertising their “hyperlocal produce” usually grown within a few yards of the stand.

But some residents of the Sacramento region soon learned that the ordinance would not apply to their properties, despite living a short bike ride from the city center.

“The actual boundaries of Sacramento City and Sacramento County are really weird,” says Matt Read, an organizer for the Sacramento Urban Agriculture Coalition, which is supported in part by The California Endowment’s Building Healthy Communities initiative.

Many neighborhoods in South Sacramento, including those south of 14th Avenue all the way to Florin, are unincorporated and subject to the zoning ordinances of Sacramento County. Many of those neighborhoods suffer from lack of economic opportunity.

Judith Yisrael is a member of The Yisrael Family Urban Farm, which has land in both the city and the county. She says that fresh produce grown and sold locally will revitalize and strengthen these communities. “We live in a food desert. It is easier for me to locate and purchase a bag of

chips, a candy bar and a beer, than it is for me to find an apple or fresh spinach.”

**“WE LIVE IN A FOOD DESERT. IT IS EASIER FOR ME TO LOCATE AND PURCHASE A BAG OF CHIPS, A CANDY BAR AND A BEER, THAN IT IS FOR ME TO FIND AN APPLE OR FRESH SPINACH.”**

*Judith Yisrael, The Yisrael Family Urban Farm*

Yisrael believes urban agriculture can be a solution to a wide range of problems facing her community. “This isn’t just about improving food access. It will provide economic development and opportunity throughout the county. Urban Agriculture will improve the public health of our community.”

Read agrees: “Urban agriculture really gets people out on the sidewalk and engaging with their community. It is another tool to build community in a few minutes, to help people connect with a neighbor.”

The proposed county ordinance is still being developed. Chris Pahule, a principal planner for Sacramento County involved



Judith and Chanowk Yisrael of the Yisrael Family Urban Farm hope urban agriculture stands will soon be allowed in the county.

in drafting the ordinance, says that it still needs to get through the Community Planning Advisory Councils, the Planning Commission and the County Board of Supervisors before urban farmers could set up stands and start selling their produce in the county. It is unclear if and when the ordinance would go into effect.

The process may seem lengthy, but Yisrael is patient. “We understand that these types of things take time and research to really develop it all out.”

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# Young Voices Making a Difference

BY KATE GONZALES

Every Friday night, a group of teenagers gather in support of a Sacramento ballot measure that most of them will be too young to vote on. But that does not mean they'll be silent.

Measure Y — the Sacramento Children's Fund and Marijuana Business Operations Tax — proposes placing a 5 percent tax on medical marijuana sales in the City of Sacramento to invest directly into youth programs. The teens are collecting young peoples' thoughts on the kinds of programs Sacramento youth need, and if the measure is approved, it could provide funding to fulfill those needs.

The East Bay Asian Youth Center received a grant from The California Endowment to organize young people who wanted to improve the lives of their peers. The center's Youth Action Team in Sacramento is using this grant funding to better organize and expand its scope.

Last year, the team designed and distributed a survey to get youth opinions on how potential Measure Y funds should be spent. They conducted surveys at middle schools, several high schools and at the Sacramento County Juvenile Hall.

"Youth who are from under-served communities, impacted by violence or other factors, have barriers to being successful," says East Bay Asian Youth Center Program Director Leesai Yang. "Yet they often understand the programs they need the most."

Respondents said that if the measure passes, money should be spent on afterschool

programs, youth centers, and internship and work opportunities. Recognizing the importance of safe spaces and greater opportunities, the Youth Action Team would support the construction of a wellness center, where students can access services.

**"IF THE KIDS ARE  
THE FUTURE, THEN  
THE KIDS SHOULD  
BE ABLE TO PLAN  
FOR THE FUTURE."**

*Christopher Phakeovilay, Youth Action Team member*

"I feel like youth need an opportunity," says Christopher Phakeovilay, an intern and sophomore at Luther Burbank High School who helped develop the survey. "Youth these days don't have opportunities — they really don't."

If Measure Y is approved by voters, the team will share information from the survey with the City Council in hopes of influencing how these funds are spent. For now, they are developing a plan for door-to-door campaigning and event outreach throughout Sacramento to raise awareness on the measure.

Only a handful of Youth Action Team members will be old enough to vote for



East Bay Asian Youth Center Youth Action Team interns Tommy Lee and Yia Lee work with a group of teens to plan advocacy and outreach efforts. Photo by Kate Gonzales

Measure Y when it appears on the June ballot. Dee Khang is one of them.

"I'm excited," she says. "I'm happy I get to vote now."

Khang, along with the other interns, will continue to advocate for a brighter outlook for Sacramento's youth.

"They say the kids are the future," Phakeovilay says. "If the kids are the future, then the kids should be able to plan for the future."

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For more information on the  
**EBAYC Youth Action Team,**  
contact Leesai Yang at  
[leesai@ebayc.org](mailto:leesai@ebayc.org)

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# New Program Gives Undocumented Residents Access to Care

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Marcos, an undocumented immigrant from Mexico, dreams of getting a green card that would identify him as a legal U.S. resident. He knows the process may take years. In the meantime, he has obtained a different card, one that identifies the 29-year-old Sacramento landscaper as a client of Healthy Partners, Sacramento County's new primary care program for undocumented county residents.

"This card represents a lot to me, because it represents my health," says Marcos, who asked that his full name not be printed. "If I need a checkup, I can go see my doctor at Healthy Partners."

Citing fiscal constraints, the county discontinued primary health services to undocumented immigrants in 2009 in a bid to save \$2.4 million a year. But last summer, amid a rebounding economy, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors re-established primary health care through the Healthy Partners Program. The board's unanimous vote sent a powerful message: Denying basic health care to "people without papers" endangers the public health.

The program opened Jan. 4 at the Sacramento County Health Center on Broadway, with an initial commitment to provide free primary and preventive health care to 3,000 low-income undocumented clients ages 19 to 64. Services are delivered by Health Center staff who also serve Medi-Cal enrollees. Services include primary health care, medication services, flu shots, women's health, and treatment of chronic conditions.

Enrollment assistance and outreach for Healthy Partners is provided by, among others, Sacramento Covered and La Familia Counseling Center. Both nonprofits receive support from The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative. The clinic has had no shortage of clients.

## DENYING BASIC HEALTH CARE TO "PEOPLE WITHOUT PAPERS" ENDANGERS THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

"We've experienced a steady enrollment flow since our opening," says Jodi Nerell, a licensed clinical social worker who directs the Healthy Partners Program for the county's Department of Health and Human Services, Primary Health Services Division.

As of late February, about 1,000 people had received medical services through Healthy Partners. About 95 percent identified Spanish as their preferred language, with the rest citing Russian and Mien as their primary tongues.

When county supervisors voted to fund the primary care program, they said they expected local hospitals to contribute at least \$1 million worth of services, according to The Sacramento Bee. Sacramento



At right, Jodi Nerell, LCSW, Program Coordinator for the new Healthy Partners Program, works with John Onate, MD, Medical Director at the Sacramento County Health Center in Sacramento, which began seeing undocumented adult residents on Jan. 4. Photo by Melissa Uroff

Physicians Initiative to Reach Out, Innovate and Teach (SPIRIT) program will also donate specialty services valued at an estimated \$1.5 million to the program.

Besides The Endowment, other partners include the Mexican Consulate in Sacramento. With so many partners — clients being No. 1 — it was only natural the program be christened Healthy Partners.

The name "embodies (our) partnership... with our patients and with our stakeholders," says Nerell, who expects services in the program to continue into next year.

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# Changing Records, Enriching Communities

Prop. 47 savings will fund social services

BY KATE GONZALES

**W**hile there is disagreement over how much money has been saved through Proposition 47, one thing is certain: Those savings will fund programs to benefit communities statewide.

California voters passed Prop. 47 in November 2014. The proposition reduced some nonviolent property and drug offenses from felonies to misdemeanors and allowed for the re-sentencing of inmates who were incarcerated when it passed.

The law also mandated that Prop. 47 savings be invested in the newly created Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund. Money will be distributed annually through grants, to support recidivism reduction programs, truancy and dropout prevention programs and trauma recovery centers. The first deposit to the new fund will be in July.

These changes in the criminal justice system resulted in a decrease in inmates — an estimated reduction of 4,700 prisoners in 2015-16. Gov. Jerry Brown's administration and the Legislative Analyst's Office agree on that number. They disagree on how that number translates to dollars saved.

An LAO report released in February says the Department of Finance's projected cost savings of \$62.7 million is low, and actual savings is closer to \$135 million. If the LAO is right, that's significantly more funding for community services.

Danielle Williams, community organizer with Sacramento Area Congregations Together (Sacramento ACT), says the city needs those services to re-integrate former convicts and keep people out of jail in the first place.

**“PEOPLE WHO GET OUT [OF PRISON] NEED SERVICES AND SUPPORT TO FULLY REHABILITATE, OR THEY GO RIGHT BACK INTO THE SYSTEM.”**

Danielle Williams, Community Organizer, Sacramento Area Congregations Together

“Sacramento is a prime example where you see our challenges with homelessness and mental health are all intertwined with our criminal justice,” Williams says. “People who get out [of prison] need services and support to fully rehabilitate, or they go right back into the system.”

Sacramento ACT's work to mobilize and advocate for the successful implementation of Prop. 47 is partially funded through The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative. The organization



In November, Sacramento ACT employees and other organizations gathered to celebrate the anniversary of the passage of Prop. 47. Photo by Anne Stokes

is pushing for the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors to transparently document local Prop. 47 savings.

Sacramento ACT and other organizations are hosting a tour during which they will informally gather opinions on how money saved through Prop. 47 should be spent in Sacramento. Those who need help processing forms to have their criminal records changed, or want information about employment, housing, mental health or re-entry services are encouraged to attend.

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### I AM PROP 47 RECORD RECLASSIFICATION AND EXPUNGEMENT RESOURCE TOUR

**Saturday, April 23**, Sam and Bonnie Pannell

Community Center, 2450 Meadowview Road

**Saturday, May 21**, Unity Church, 9249 Folsom Blvd.

**Saturday, June 25**, McClatchy Park, 3500 Fifth Ave.

Each event is from noon to 4 p.m.

**For more information, call 916-470-2077.**

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# Putting Health Care Careers into Context

BY NATASHA VON KAENEL

Emmy Zepeda, 18, didn't always know she wanted to make prosthetics. Like most people, she wasn't even sure how someone would do that.

Then she enrolled at Arthur A. Benjamin Health Professions, a high school focused on preparing students for careers in health. Right away in her ninth grade medical sciences class, she learned about many different careers in health care. Her ears pricked at the topic of bioengineering.

During her junior year, Health Professions helped her get a volunteer internship at UC Davis where Emmy shadowed different health professionals. Emmy remembers watching a man get fitted with his prosthetic leg for the first time.

"Everybody was around him, helping him put it on correctly. Then they stood him up, and let go," she recalls. "It was so cool to see his face, to see the emotions of his family members. He started crying. He could finally walk."

Most high school students don't have the opportunity to see moments like this firsthand, and for Emmy, that is what makes her high school so special. "That internship really sealed the deal for me going into prosthetics," she says. "It was really cool seeing how they make them and how they give it to somebody and make their life better."

With the help of The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities grant program, which funds Sacramento City Unified School District's Health Careers Pathway Program, Arthur A. Benjamin Health Professions High School is able to take students on field trips to medical sites, connect students with paid and unpaid internships, provide materials for Health Careers Pathway courses and develop a unique medically integrated curriculum.

**"THAT INTERNSHIP REALLY SEALED THE DEAL FOR ME GOING INTO PROSTHETICS."**

Emmy Zepeda, student at Arthur A. Benjamin Health Professions High School

According to Marla Clayton Johnson, the school's principal, 54 percent of their students who enter post-secondary education programs choose a health care major. And unlike students who have attended more traditional high school programs, many of these students come with a firsthand understanding of what it takes to be a health care professional. This familiarity makes them more comfortable in difficult prerequisite classes than other students who may drop out, overwhelmed.



Emmy Zepeda, a senior at Arthur A. Benjamin Health Professions High School in Sacramento, holds a display arm. A medical sciences pathway class helped pique her interest in prosthetics and now she plans on pursuing a degree in bioengineering. Photo by Natasha von Kaenel

Emmy is currently finishing up her senior project on HPV and cervical cancer, while juggling another health-related internship with SCUSD's Connect Center. When the summer ends, she is off to UC Merced where she will major in bioengineering with hopes of making prosthetic limbs one day.

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SCUSD is always looking for health care professionals willing to open up their offices to students for internships or field trips, or to come out to the schools as guest lecturers or advisers on curriculum.  
**For more information about volunteering for the Health Careers Pathway Program, contact Ann Curtis at [Ann-Curtis@scusd.edu](mailto:Ann-Curtis@scusd.edu).**

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# Wanted: More Community Health Workers

BY NATASHA VON KAENEL

**T**he entire country is facing a shortage of health care professionals, with the Association of Schools of Public Health reporting that roughly 250,000 more public health workers are needed by 2020 to fill the gap. With this shortage, it has become more important than ever to encourage young people to pursue careers in health.

This January, with help from The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative, five high school interns began working at La Familia Counseling Center, Inc., gaining firsthand experience of what it means to be a community health professional, educator and ambassador to their local communities.

Monica Soto, one of the interns from Hiram Johnson High School, says the main reason she applied for the internship was to see different kinds of careers available in health. "It's not always going to be that you are a doctor or a nurse," she says. "In a crazy way, even the Zumba teacher can be a health worker."

Community health careers can include social work, interpreting, counseling, nursing, working as a dental hygienist, learning disabilities specialist, behavioral or mental health clinician, care coordinators, health navigators and much more. But one of the biggest challenges California faces is filling the gap of diversity in the health industry. In 2012, a review by the California Senate reported the state's current workforce of health

professionals do not reflect California's racial and ethnic composition or language proficiency.

So during their time at La Familia, the interns planned a health fair for over 400 people, made presentations to their local community about different health topics, including bullying, abuse, hypertension and the importance of good nutrition and exercise, as well as surveying local populations about their health needs and helping them register to vote.

**"IN A CRAZY WAY, EVEN THE ZUMBA TEACHER CAN BE A HEALTH WORKER."**

Monica Soto, Intern at La Familia Counseling Center, Inc., senior at Hiram Johnson High School

Oreana Luna, an intern from Valley High School, worked on a project about obesity in the Hispanic community, and says, "That project was part of being an ambassador to my community and advocating for them about the risk that obesity does have." This internship inspired Oreana "to really do my best and help more people in my community, because that's the future generation," she says.

Monica was also inspired by her internship with La Familia. "Community workers can



From left, Monica Soto from Hiram Johnson High School, and Oreana Luna and Anthony Lor from Valley High School gained exposure to community health careers during an internship with La Familia Counseling Center, Inc. Other interns (not pictured) are Vanessa Jajar from Luther Burbank High School and Isela Martinez from Arthur A. Benjamin Health Professions High School. Photo by Anne Stokes

change the lives of many people," she says. "We all think it is a beautiful thing that we get to work with this community and learn from people you wouldn't normally associate with."

After college, both Oreana and Monica plan to pursue careers in public health.

## BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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## Get involved

La Familia offers a wide of range of educational workshops and programs for adults and children, including karate and Zumba classes, parent support groups, youth leadership groups, women support groups, employment services and more. Visit [lafcc.org](http://lafcc.org) or find them on Facebook at [facebook.com/lafamiliacounselingcenter](https://www.facebook.com/lafamiliacounselingcenter)

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In Neighborhoods

BUILDING A **HEALTHY** SACRAMENTO

# World-class Care, For Some

Decision to reject Medi-Cal patients impacts community

BY KATE GONZALES

**U**C Davis Medical Center is renowned for providing the best care in the region, but since 2015, Californians covered through Medi-Cal have not had access to that care.

In January 2015, the center ended its last contract with a Medi-Cal managed care plan. Medi-Cal managed care plans coordinate medical services for over 436,000 Sacramento County residents enrolled in the state's Medicaid system that helps pay for health coverage for low-income individuals and families, as well as those with disabilities.

Randy Nash is one of them. Nash was stabbed in 1975, leaving him paralyzed and in a wheelchair. He was a patient at UC Davis Medical Center until last year, when he received a notice telling him he would need to find care elsewhere. Nash says getting referrals and prescriptions for his pain medicine has been difficult since then. He's had poor treatment in other hospitals and had come to trust the doctors and nurses at UC Davis Medical Center — his medical home for 40 years.

He says forging new relationships and getting the care he needs since he left UC Davis has been stressful.

"In the long run, I'd say it's going to cost a lot more if I end up back in the hospital than it would if I was being still seen at UCD," he says.

While some hospitals, clinics and doctor's offices limit the number of Medi-Cal patients they accept, it's rare to completely reject them

for primary care, says Amy Williams, deputy director of Legal Services of Northern California. She says it came at an unfortunate time.

"UC Davis Medical Center doesn't provide any primary care services to anyone who is on Medi-Cal, which, in a post-Affordable Care Act world, is quite a few people," she says. "[We had] a big provider drop out of the system absolutely at the wrong time."

**"IN THE LONG RUN, I'D SAY IT'S GOING TO COST A LOT MORE IF I END UP BACK IN THE HOSPITAL THAN IT WOULD IF I WAS BEING STILL SEEN AT UCD."**

Randy Nash, Former UC Davis Medical Center patient

Williams says this surge can lead to a more heavily burdened local health care landscape, with other area hospitals and doctor's offices having to pick up the slack.

In late 2015, UC Davis medical resident students reached out to the Building Healthy Communities Health Access Action Team, which Williams co-chairs, to express concern that the hospital no longer served the region's low-income and vulnerable patients. The Health Access Action Team, a coalition that



Randy Nash received care at UC Davis Medical Center from 1975 until 2015, when the provider stopped accepting Medi-Cal patients. He has struggled to find quality care in other settings. Photo by Melissa Uroff.

includes residents and community-based organizations that receive funding from The California Endowment, organized community meetings to get input from South Sacramento residents. They wrote a letter to hospital administrators outlining community concerns, which included the difficulty patients can have in building new relationships with providers that accept Medi-Cal.

"Once our patients find a good system of care that's set up and understands them, they want to stay there," Williams says.

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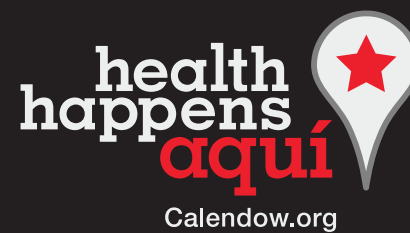
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In Neighborhoods

BUILDING A HEALTHY SACRAMENTO

# Political Participation for All

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION PROMOTES HMONG VOICES IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING

BY KATE GONZALES

In Sacramento, there's a grassroots group whose members know it's vital — and hip — to be politically engaged.

Since 2012, Hmong Innovating Politics (HIP) has worked to empower communities that have long been ignored and bring a greater diversity of voices to the table when important decisions are made. The organization is partially funded through a grant from The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative, which supports efforts that promote community health in South Sacramento.

## Rocking the vote

Despite Sacramento's large Hmong population, Cha Vang says the community often didn't know how to participate in the political process, therefore they did not engage in the decision-making that directly impacted their lives. She and her peers, young professionals who worked in nonprofits, founded HIP to break those barriers down.

"A lot of times our community doesn't vote," she says. "We thought it was very important that our community understands how much their vote means in this system."

Dedicated to promoting civic engagement among Hmong, Southeast Asian and other disenfranchised communities, HIP organizers host voter education forums in election years. During these forums, residents can get help registering to

vote and receive in-depth information about ballot measures. This information is offered in English and Hmong.

## Supporting Youth

HIP does not endorse candidates as a nonprofit organization. Instead, it emphasizes educating community members about the political process and advocating for policies that reduce disparities that affect the community. This past June, they helped the next generation of voters rally around Measure Y, which proposed placing a tax on marijuana cultivating businesses in the city to support youth programs.

**"WE THOUGHT IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT THAT OUR COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDS HOW MUCH THEIR VOTE MEANS IN THIS SYSTEM."**

Cha Vang  
Hmong Innovating Politics organizer

HIP teamed up with East Bay Asian Youth Center's Youth Action Team in Sacramento to do door-to-door campaigning to turn out votes in support of the measure. Although it did not pass, Vang says the neighborhoods the Youth Action Team hit voted overwhelmingly in support of the



Members of Hmong Innovating Politics, or HIP, promote diversity in political participation. Photo courtesy Hmong Innovating Politics.

measure and saw significant increases in voter participation.

The organization also works to ensure the communities they represent are included on an advisory council for Sacramento City Unified School District's Local Control Accountability Plan, or LCAP. The LCAP gives districts more say in how to meet the state's educational priorities and spend funding.

"We make sure we have Hmong and SE Asian parents on the council and that their concerns are being heard at the district level," Vang says.

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With over 21 measures on the November ballot, HIP is gearing up for a busy summer and fall. HIP will host voter education forums Sept. 17 and Oct. 22 at Yav Pem Suab Academy, 7555 S. Land Park Drive, Sacramento. Times TBA. Connect with HIP online at [hipsacramento.com](http://hipsacramento.com), Facebook, [hipsacramento.com](http://hipsacramento.com) or by phone at 916-668-9447.

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# Elevating Young Women's Voices

BY ANNE STOKES

**J**aelyn Singleton has always been a “big picture” thinker. At 17, she already has a healthy résumé of community activism and leadership experience under her belt with no plan to slow down anytime soon.

“I’ve always been really into community work,” she says. “When you do something because it’s the right thing to do, you ... think more of the bigger picture than just yourself.”

For the past three years, Singleton, who recently graduated from C.K. McClatchy High School and is headed to Sacramento State in the fall, has been an integral member of Girls on the Rise, a leadership, service and advocacy organization for young women of color in south Sacramento. Formed in 2013 by the Center for Community Health and Well Being, the group is a way for girls to identify issues in their community and address them through action projects.

According to Katie Keeler, program manager at the Center for Community Health and Well Being, developing girls’ leadership skills contributes to their personal and professional success, which in turn benefits the whole community.

“Fostering leadership in young women in general is really essential in driving equality, uplifting communities and encouraging forward progress and change,” Keeler says.

Girls on the Rise embodies just such progress. Youth members decide what issues are on the

agenda and organize all projects from start to finish. The latest venture, their third annual leadership conference, was held at the end of June.

“We’re the ones who are gathering [and] presenting the information,” Singleton says. “Having a fully developed conference and workshops that we know, I think that’s going to connect a lot more with the youth.”

**“THINK IF WE ALL  
PUT IN A HELPING  
HAND ... HOW  
AMAZING THIS  
COMMUNITY  
WOULD BE.”**

Jaelyn Singleton, Girls on the Rise youth intern

The theme of this year’s leadership conference, “Success Starts With Self-Care,” featured two workshops on an issue that the girls found affects many members of their own families and communities: stress. One workshop focused on identifying stressors and how they affect all aspects of health. The other was centered on healthy coping mechanisms such as music, art and yoga.

For Singleton, the goal of the conference was to give peers and community members self-



Jaelyn Singleton was recently hired as a youth intern for Girls on the Rise to help organize the group and facilitate its community service projects. One such project at the Oak Park Sol Community Garden helps educate community members about budget-conscious and healthy eating options available in south Sacramento’s food desert. Photo by Anne Stokes

care tools to use in their daily lives. Whether making good nutritional choices or taking the time to decompress through yoga, the hope is that physically, mentally and emotionally healthy individuals will spread positive interactions throughout the community.

“When people are so distracted by [their] problems, they’re not able to advocate for themselves,” Singleton says. “Think if we all put in a helping hand ... how amazing this community would be.”

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# Young and Hopeful

IN LIGHT OF RECENT SHOOTINGS, BOYS & MEN OF COLOR SUMMIT LOOKS TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

**T**he tragic distrust between police and African Americans will linger until new ideas for mutual respect are found by today's youth.

That prediction was made recently by Robert S. Nelsen, president of Sacramento State University, as he welcomed 150 young men to his campus for the annual Boys & Men of Color Summit held on July 21.

Referencing the recent fatal shootings of African Americans in Minnesota and Louisiana, and the subsequent fatal shootings of police officers in Dallas and Baton Rouge by black gunmen, Nelsen addressed the young men ages 14 to 21 with hope.

"You're the ones who are going to change [this situation]; it's not going to be old ... guys like me," said Nelsen, 64. "You have to show us how to make America inclusive and human."

Now in its fifth year, the Boys & Men of Color Summit is organized by a diverse group of young men with funding support from The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative. Among the planners this year was Matthew Cornelius-Germany, an 18-year-old African American bound for Sacramento City College.

The Kennedy High graduate applauded Nelsen's speech.

"I pretty much agreed with what he said," Matthew stated. "We [youth] need to find new, creative ways" to achieve peace between police and minorities.

Until that day, Matthew will continue to fear police, or as he put it, "feel uneasy" around them, despite being a law-abiding citizen.

While the shootings weighed heavy over the summit, the main purpose was to motivate youth to succeed. Speakers, including Sacramento Vice Mayor Rick Jennings, urged the youngsters to avoid gangs, drugs, cigarettes and alcohol, and, of course, attend college.

**"IT'S GOOD THAT ... NOT EVERYONE'S GIVING UP ON OUR YOUTH."**

Matthew Cornelius-Germany, 18  
Organizer of Boys & Men of Color Summit

The power of education was another main theme. In his remarks, Nelsen emphasized that tomorrow's leaders — those who will change society — must be college-educated. Workshops addressed issues such as teachers who set up students for failure, a subject that attendee Anthony Campi knew well.

"A history teacher at [a local middle school] told me I would end up a bum on the streets," said Anthony, 15, now at McClatchy High School. "She said I would never go to college."



From left, Anthony Campi and Matthew Cornelius-Germany attended the July 21 Boys & Men of Color Summit, where recent shootings between police and black men were repeatedly mentioned by speakers.  
Photo by Anne Stokes

Anthony, a Latino, is on a mission to prove that since-fired teacher wrong.

"I believe I can follow my dreams," Anthony said, adding the summit gave him a road map for the path to college.

And what was Matthew's biggest takeaway from the summit? It may well have been this: "It's good that ... not everyone's giving up on our youth," he said.

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# Unlocking Potential

#SCHOOLSNOTPRISONS CONCERT PROMOTES EDUCATION MESSAGE

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

**F**or a split second, the bad memories overwhelmed 20-year-old Michael Rizo.

The former gang member sat inside The Prison Cell, a traveling jail replica that stopped for the day at Sacramento City College. Inside the exhibit, amid recorded sounds of electronic door-release buzzing and slamming gates, Rizo gazed at mannequins depicting inmates caged behind heavy steel.

"I didn't like going in there because it brought back memories of something I don't want to experience again," said Rizo, of West Sacramento, who was repeatedly jailed for gang-related violence from age 12 until his late teens.

Rizo fled the mock prison and joined more than 1,000 other youth enjoying the #SchoolsNotPrisons Concert Tour, sponsored by The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative.

Keeping people out of prison is the driving goal of the 10-city free concert tour, which kicked off at Sac City on Aug. 6. Performers included rappers Ty Dolla \$ign and John Forte, and Mariachi Arcoiris, believed to be the world's first LGBTQ mariachi. Dancing the night away, the youth smiled.

But they became somber at The Prison Cell. The realistic, 24-foot "slammer," created by Santa Cruz's Barrios Unidos Prison Project, spotlighted The Endowment's call for more schools, fewer prisons. According to The Endowment, since 1980 California has built 22 prisons, but only one UC campus (UC Merced).

"We want to keep people out of the prison system and in the educational pipeline," Michael Poindexter, interim president of Sacramento City College, told the youth. "Stay in school!"

**"EVERYONE THERE SUPPORTED THE BETTERMENT OF OUR YOUTH, THE BETTERMENT OF OUR FUTURE."**

Michael Rizo, attendee at #SchoolsNotPrisons concert held on Aug. 6

Echoing his comments: Marianna Sousa, student trustee on the Los Rios Community College District Board.

"We want money in our schools, not in prisons," Sousa told the crowd.

Speakers encouraged concertgoers to learn more about the issues and get involved in their communities. While improving voter turnout among all voters is a goal, The Endowment's Andres Reyes says the nonprofit is making special efforts to awake the "sleeping giant" — California's Latino voter — with its "Vota!" campaign. Of the state's 6.9 million eligible Latino voters, only 4.1 million are registered to vote. Too many don't actually do so.



Amar Cid poses for a photo with a #SchoolsNotPrisons sign during a concert event Aug. 6 at Sacramento City College. The event sought to promote education as an alternative to incarceration. Photo by Anne Stokes

These messages resonated with Rizo, a Caucasian raised by Latinos, who is active with the Anti-Recidivism Coalition. He will register to vote, and this fall, he will enter Sac City as a freshman.

"The concert was a great event with a righteous cause," Rizo said. "Everyone there supported the betterment of our youth, the betterment of our future."

Rizo is no longer involved in gangs. "Gangs are a waste of life, a waste of your childhood," he said.

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BUILDING A **HEALTHY** SACRAMENTO

# Saving Lives — In and Out of the Pool

BY KATE GONZALES

On a recent Thursday afternoon, the sun blazed down on a small group of teens as they laughed and swam. But this was no typical summer day at the pool.

These teens are the first to receive lifeguard certification training through the new Youth Detention Facility Lifeguard Program — a partnership between the YMCA of Superior California (the Y) and the Sacramento County Probation Department. The class is funded through The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative to promote community health in south Sacramento.

To participate, youth from the detention facility must be at least 15 years old and pass a swimming test. They'll spend 26 hours in training — 13 hours in class, 13 in the pool. Once they pass a final test, they'll earn an American Red Cross lifeguard certification — giving them skills for employment at community pools once they are released.

The detention facility's pool, where the training takes place, is surrounded by high walls — but the scene is not bleak. During a recent training, the youth learned techniques including ways to safely enter the water and recover a victim. Then they put the lessons to practice, working in pairs to rescue one another.

Aquatics Director Patrick Maridon teaches the class, which he says gives the teens a greater

sense of purpose and reduces the likelihood that they will re-offend.

"It's really a position they can take pride in," Maridon says. "They're going to be in a position where they get to help others, save others, and interact with the community."

**"IT'S REALLY  
A POSITION  
THEY CAN  
TAKE PRIDE IN."**

Patrick Maridon, aquatics director, YMCA of Superior California

The program also aims to address a serious disparity. In Sacramento and nationwide, African-American children die from accidental drowning in swimming pools at disproportionate rates. A study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that between 1999 and 2010, black children ages 5 to 19 died at a rate 5.5 times greater than their white counterparts.

Isaih, a 17-year-old at the facility, is on his way toward earning his certification. An eager student in the classroom and an enthusiastic one in the pool, he says he wants



Patrick Maridon, aquatics director at the YMCA of Superior California, teaches lifeguard certification classes at the Youth Detention Facility in Sacramento. Photo by Anne Stokes

a life free of crime when he gets out. With no legitimate work experience under his belt, this certification could give him the second chance he's looking for.

"I just want to change my life," he says. "I want to get an actual job, make something of myself."

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If you are interested in hiring a certified lifeguard who went through the Youth Detention Facility Lifeguard Program, contact  
**Ray Lozada at 875-0291.**

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BUILDING A HEALTHY SACRAMENTO

# Putting homemade food in schools

BY NATASHA VONKAENEL

**B**ack in 2010, Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) began efforts to bring local and nutritious produce into the district by putting salad bars in every school lunchroom.

At first glance, it doesn't seem that difficult: Source fruits and vegetables locally, then serve them. But something as basic as cutting up watermelon becomes an impossible task in small, cramped kitchens with only a few hours to prepare before hundreds of hungry students begin to get in line.

"The majority of the kitchens in the school district are only equipped to heat and serve," explains Amber Stott, a member of the Central Kitchen Task Force. "If they want to put something on their salad bar, it's got to be something that comes pre-chopped or in a baby size."

This seriously limits the district both in the variety of produce they can serve and where they can purchase it. But with the help of The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative and funding from a 2012 bond, Measure R, local food activists and district leaders are currently drafting plans to build a centralized kitchen that would serve over 50,000 meals a day to students at every school in the district.

"We have more flexibility in a centralized kitchen. We can chop, dice, serve, purée," Stott says. "Then we can distribute it to every school in the district, right away."

Ensuring the food served is of the highest quality is particularly important in SCUSD, where 64 percent of students are from low-income households and qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

**"FOR SOME OF THESE KIDS, THE ONLY FULL MEALS THEY GET A DAY ARE AT SCHOOL."**

Robyn Krock, member of the Central Kitchen Task Force

"For some of these kids, the only full meals they get a day are at school," says Robyn Krock, a fellow member of the Central Kitchen Task Force. Some students eat up to three meals a day at school. "Having those meals be as healthy and nutritious as possible is crucial," Krock says.

In 2015, data collected from fifth, seventh and ninth graders in SCUSD showed that 40.7 percent of students were overweight or obese, putting them at a significantly higher risk of developing type II diabetes, stroke or hypertension.



A student casts her vote for Veggie of the Year in one of SCUSD's food literacy classes. SCUSD has dedicated itself to getting students excited about healthy eating. SCUSD's plans to build a centralized kitchen will only amplify these efforts. Photo by Amy Nicole Photography

"All of these [conditions] are preventable if we eat our vegetables," Stott explains. "It is critical that we get them at this early age and get them learning the habit of eating vegetables to protect their health."

The district is still deciding on where to build the centralized kitchen and has yet to draw up the designs. Both Stott and Krock encourage local residents to get involved by attending school board meetings and giving feedback on proposed plans.

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BUILDING A **HEALTHY** SACRAMENTO

# Y-PLAN program pushes students to change local policy

BY NATASHA VONKAENEL

When Anastasia Thanpaeng's classmates in the Health and Medical Sciences track at Hiram W. Johnson High School first heard about Y-PLAN, the junior says there was a chorus of grumbling. Students were initially skeptical because, "Nobody really listened to students or our voices. They just wanted to hear what adults said," Thanpaeng says.

In Y-PLAN, or Youth – Plan, Learn, Act, Now, students choose a problem, are matched up with a civic organization, then conduct research and surveys that are presented to local leaders and policy makers.

With the help of local nonprofit WALKSacramento, students divided into groups and explored the urban environment around their school, documenting areas needing improvement or attention. The Health and Medical Sciences track, Y-PLAN and WALKSacramento are all supported by funding from The California Endowment, which supports community health programs in South Sacramento.

Thanpaeng's group honed in on a regularly used bus stop on 65th Expressway and Lemon Hill Avenue. The sign was hidden behind overgrown bushes and there was no place for students to sit while waiting for the bus to arrive.

"They are all scattered and they aren't talking to each other," Thanpaeng explains, emphasizing how a bench would encourage the students to congregate.

Her group conducted surveys of students, administrators and community members and

found that an overwhelming majority would be more likely to use the bus if they felt safer at bus stops and if the stops were more aesthetically pleasing.

**"OUR VOICE, US STUDENTS, WE CAN BE HEARD. WE CAN MAKE WHAT WE WANT TO HAPPEN, HAPPEN."**

Anastasia Thanpaeng  
11th grade student at Hiram W. Johnson High School

They presented this data and other research to district staff, community members, fellow students and teachers, recommending that two benches be installed, one on each side of the street.

Then summer hit and Y-PLAN was put on pause until school started again in September. But not for Thanpaeng. She forged on, continuing to work with WALKSacramento and reaching out directly to Regional Transit.

By September, the two benches were finally installed and the overgrown shrubbery cut back, revealing the bus stop sign. The success of Thanpaeng's group has made it clear to her



Anastasia Thanpaeng sits on the bench her Y-PLAN group helped get installed at the bus stop on 65th Expressway and Lemon Hill Avenue. Seeing the bench for the first time makes Thanpaeng feel "proud and excited" about her work with the program. Photo by Natasha vonKaenel

peers how much adults value the opinions and concerns of youth.

"Our voice, us students, we can be heard. We can make what we want to happen, happen," she says, adding that Y-PLAN also helped elevate student conversations around health.

"Ever since we started Y-PLAN, I feel like my peers are more educated about health in the community. We actually talk about health in our community and educate others."

## BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

In 2010, The California Endowment launched a 10-year, \$1 billion plan to improve the health of 14 challenged communities across the state. Over the 10 years, residents, community-based organizations and public institutions will work together to address the socioeconomic and environmental challenges contributing to the poor health of their communities.

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[y-plan.berkeley.edu](http://y-plan.berkeley.edu).

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# Getting Youth to Vote Starts Years Before Age 18

BY NATASHA VONKAENEL

**V**oting is learned behavior, and changing voting patterns in communities with traditionally low voter participation doesn't happen overnight.

A number of organizations supported by The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative have been working to spur voter engagement in south Sacramento, a neighborhood predominately made up of people of color, where at least a third of residents live below the poverty line.

Lower registration rates in south Sacramento follow a trend found across the country, where populations of color with higher levels of poverty are less likely to vote or be engaged politically.

"We have to change that by starting to ignite that interest in the youth, to bring them to the table," Nakeya Bell says. "Youth are our future."

Bell, the youth and community program manager for PRO Youth and Families, helped coordinate a kick-off event on Sept. 25 along with staff from Sacramento ACT, Hmong Innovating Politics (HIP), La Familia Counseling Center and others.

The event brought together over 40 young people to engage in an open discussion about how to vote and the many propositions on the ballot this coming election. The majority of the youth who attended are still in high school and ineligible to vote.

"Especially when we are talking to a lot of youth of color or they're children of immigrants, a lot of folks may not be as familiar with the voting

process," explains Tere Flores, voter integration lead for Sacramento ACT. "We can start to create an awareness for them now about how important voting is, so that when they do become eligible, they will register and will vote."

**"IT'S IMPORTANT TO GET OUT AND VOTE FOR WHAT WE WANT WHEN WE GROW UP. IT'S THE WORLD BEING LEFT TO US, WE'VE GOT TO TAKE CARE OF IT."**

Araiye Thomas-Haysbert, member of the Building Healthy Communities Youth Leadership Team

Araiye Thomas-Haysbert, a senior at Hiram W. Johnson High School, won't be eligible to vote until the election in 2018, but she attended the event anyway, and plans to participate in upcoming voter drives and a phone bank on election day.

"We have to be concerned for our communities and our environment," she says. "It's important to get out and vote for what we want when we grow up. It's the world being left to us, we've got to take care of it."

Thomas-Haysbert specifically remembers their discussion about Proposition 56, which



Nakeya Bell, youth and community program manager for PRO Youth and Families, and Araiye Thomas-Haysbert, member of the BHC Youth Leadership Team, hope to increase voter registration in south Sacramento, an area with below average voter registration rates. Photo by Natasha vonKaenel

would increase the tax on tobacco products by an additional \$2. After the discussion, even though she can't actually vote, Thomas-Haysbert decided she was in favor of Proposition 56, knowing the money would be put to good use.

"[This money] can go to a greater fund," she says. "A lot of people smoke and it should be taxed."

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Look out for upcoming voter drives organized by Sacramento ACT and HIP. More information can be found online at [www.sacact.org](http://www.sacact.org) or [www.facebook.com/HIPSacramento](https://www.facebook.com/HIPSacramento).



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# High School Students Get a Lesson in Ag

BY THEA MARIE ROOD

The Burbank Urban Garden, or “BUG,” is more than just a cute acronym. It is also possibly the best spot in the region for kids who attend Luther Burbank High School to learn about agriculture.

“When I found this place, I realized it is a little gem,” says Todd McPherson, BUG garden coordinator, “and we have the opportunity to create something really special here.”

The garden allows students to learn about agriculture right on campus through an after-school program that also earns them credit.

McPherson is an employee of The Center, an organization that runs afterschool programs throughout the Sacramento region and has received funding from The California Endowment.

He quickly realized the Luther Burbank High School site was unique.

“We have over an acre of land, a full-size greenhouse, a barn and a tractor,” he says. “There are also 40 fruit trees, 16 raised beds, a shade structure we hope to turn into an outdoor kitchen,” and rows of crops.

It’s no accident this infrastructure exists. Starting in the mid-1970s, the school had a full Future Farmers of America ag program in place, which was great considering the school’s namesake is the renowned 19th century horticulturist. But the program was discontinued in 2008.

McPherson hopes to restore that educational tradition, and the school district’s leaders are expressing interest in building formal career and college pathways around the garden.

“WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE SOMETHING REALLY SPECIAL HERE.”

Todd McPherson  
BUG Garden coordinator

“There is a huge breadth of careers — agriculture is a vast industry,” McPherson says. “And there is also the idea of social justice — south Sac has food access issues. We can make a better future for ourselves; we can create a solution, in a simple little piece of land, by growing food and selling it to our community.”

Jordan Grace, who graduated from Luther Burbank in 2016, was a student who embraced this idea. Grace’s family farmed in Fresno throughout his childhood, and he “got all the worst jobs,” he says with a laugh, like lawn-mowing and hole-digging.



Jordan Grace, left, helps Todd McPherson plant garlic at the Burbank Urban Garden at Luther Burbank High School. Grace graduated from the high school in 2016, but continues to volunteer at the garden. Photo by Kate Gonzales

When Grace moved to Sacramento, he needed extra credits and figured gardening would be an easy way to get them. It was a happy accident, as he became intrigued by the organic and sustainable farming practices. It even resulted in a job — McPherson hired him to help run the Mack Road Valley Hi Farmers Market — and he still volunteers at the BUG.

The result: Grace began to think about agriculture in a different way. “I’m getting dirty,” he says, “and actually helping people.”

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See photos of the garden and keep track of volunteer work days at  
[Facebook.com/BurbankUrbanGarden](https://Facebook.com/BurbankUrbanGarden).

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# Bringing Social Justice to the Dinner Table

BY THEA MARIE ROOD

Sacramento may be the farm-to-fork capital, but we also have residents who are less worried about where a chicken was raised and more worried about putting dinner on the table at all.

“Some of the families we serve have no recognition of the moniker ‘farm-to-fork,’” says Brenda Ruiz, a local chef and the president of the Sacramento Food Policy Council. “They say, ‘All I know is I can’t make it through the month.’”

The council was founded a year ago to highlight and improve food issues in our area. It is funded in part through a grant from The California Endowment’s Building Healthy Communities initiative.

“We want a food system that is fair and sustainable, and economically prosperous — that’s the sweet spot,” says the council’s secretary, Paul Towers, who is also the organizing director and policy advocate for Pesticide Action Network North America. “Farm-to-fork has brought renewed attention to local farmers and the value in local food, but there is still unfairness up and down the food chain: small scale farmers of color, food servers, families that don’t have access to fresh and healthy foods. It can be perceived as an elite conversation, but we all need to eat.”

One project the council has taken an interest in: Sacramento City Unified School District’s long-planned central kitchen. “Voters approved bond money in 2012,” says Ruiz. “But we have

yet to see it be built.” As the largest school district in our region, the district supplies meals to 74 schools. Rather than modernizing and enlarging all the school kitchens, the idea of a central one — where fresh, local food could be prepared — made more sense. “The Central Kitchen would create opportunities for farmers that don’t have markets,” Towers says. “It would also get fresh food into public schools — where many students rely on a school lunch as the only or the most significant meal of the day.”

**“WE WANT A FOOD SYSTEM THAT IS FAIR & SUSTAINABLE, & ECONOMICALLY PROSPEROUS.”**

Paul Towers  
Sacramento Food Policy Council secretary

The council also recently held a School Food Forum, a one-day conference that brought together teachers, food professionals, parents and policy makers.

Other issues on the council’s radar: better management of food waste (for compost or fuel), SB 1000 (which would require cities and counties to address environmental justice



Sacramento State students help prepare food for the Sacramento Food Policy Council’s School Food Forum. Photo courtesy Sonya Logman/Sacramento Food Policy Council

in their general plans), wage and workplace fairness for all food system workers, and a soda tax.

“We’re well-positioned to bring missing elements of social justice to the food movement, as both a local discussion and at the state level,” Towers says.

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Follow the Sacramento Food Policy Council on Facebook ([facebook.com/SacFoodPolicy/](https://facebook.com/SacFoodPolicy/)) or check out their website at [sacfoodpolicy.org](http://sacfoodpolicy.org).

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In Neighborhoods



BUILDING A **HEALTHY** SACRAMENTO

# Walking the Walk

BY ANNE STOKES

**E**mboldened by long, wide straightaways and unencumbered by stoplights, cars rush down Power Inn Road at freeway speeds. People regularly dash across four lanes of traffic rather than walk a half mile to the closest crosswalk and then back the same distance.

“There’s not a lot of crosswalks or stoplights to cross over, so it’s scary,” says Nailah Pope-Harden, resident and president of the Avondale-Glen Elders Neighborhood Association (AGENA).

Pope-Harden was one of a handful of residents, volunteers and representatives of the city of Sacramento who spent a Saturday afternoon surveying a portion of Power Inn Road and nearby residential areas, documenting hazards faced by pedestrians and cyclists.

Volunteers on this walk audit noticed that utility poles and illegal dumping impede already narrow sidewalks. They saw just how fast traffic moves, even during the weekend, and the potential risks to children walking or biking to school. They noted how drivers didn’t always stop for pedestrians in crosswalks, and that the marked crossings aren’t always used.

To find solutions to these types of issues, AGENA has partnered with WALKSacramento, a nonprofit organization that works with community groups, elected officials and planning agencies to advocate for safe, healthy and walkable environments. For the past several years, The California Endowment’s Building Healthy Communities initiative has funded the nonprofit organization’s efforts to identify viable solutions and give communities tools to enact change.

“The point of our program is not only to help communities come up with neighborhood active transportation solutions — like new

pedestrian facilities, new bike facilities — but also really build the capacity of neighborhood associations to have a voice in the urban planning process,” says Kirin Kumar, WALKSacramento’s Interim Executive Director. “It really is a way for us to engage residents in the conversation around planning and how design affects their day-to-day life.”

**“IT REALLY IS A WAY FOR US TO ENGAGE RESIDENTS IN THE CONVERSATION AROUND PLANNING AND HOW DESIGN AFFECTS THEIR DAY-TO-DAY LIFE.”**

Kirin Kumar,  
Interim Executive Director, WALKSacramento

Thoroughfares in the Avondale and Glen Elder neighborhoods can be hazardous for pedestrians and bicyclists. Yet in these neighborhoods — where the median annual income averages \$32,000 — many residents need to walk or bike to get to work, school or to access public transportation.

For WALKSacramento, the end goal is to create an active transportation analysis that details



Volunteers, city officials and residents took to the street on Saturday, Nov. 12, to assess and document the challenges faced by pedestrians and bicyclists on streets in the Avondale and Glen Elders neighborhoods, such as Power Inn Road. Photo by Anne Stokes

viable solutions that AGENA can cite when working with agencies such as SMUD, Regional Transit and the City of Sacramento. Solutions range from immediate issues, like calling code enforcement to remove debris, to long-term projects, like creating safer routes for pedestrians and bicyclists along Morrison Creek.

“We love our neighborhood but we want to make sure we have access to the rest of Sacramento as well,” says Pope-Harden.

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# #STAYLOUD



# 'We Will Not Be Divided'

BY THEA MARIE ROOD

**T**he Sacramento Unity Circle, a diverse group of community organizations in south Sacramento with the goal of addressing crime there, is aptly named.

"We want everyone in Sacramento to know we won't be divided by race," says Cha Vang, executive director of Hmong Innovating Politics. "We are working together, standing together, and we will not be divided by individual criminals."

The Unity Circle was created in response to Facebook posts — and resulting media coverage — that suggest Asian-Americans in south Sac have recently become targets of home invasions and robberies by African-American perpetrators. The group recently held a press conference to set the record straight.

"Really the main purpose of the press conference on Nov. 3 was to speak on this issue and to dispel the myth that these are a racially charged set of crimes," says Imani Lucas, who works for the Health Education Council and oversees the Sacramento Minority Youth Violence Prevention initiative.

In fact, experts maintain crime is a long-standing issue for the entire south Sac community, regardless of race. "This is not something new to us," says Vang. "It is just getting a lot more attention, at a faster rate, and is blowing up now because of social media."

Lucas agrees, adding most local crime has its roots in the drug trade. "Part of the vio-

lence has also involved the stores in Little Saigon, and it's developed a stereotype that (the perpetrators) are all African-American youths."

But Lucas suggests just as victims come from all racial groups, so do criminals. "We are not looking at this along racial lines," he says.

**"ALL RACIAL GROUPS NEED TO BE SAFE IN OUR COMMUNITY."**

Cha Vang  
Member of Sacramento Unity Circle

Instead, the Unity Circle is bringing together community and faith-based groups, several of which are partners in The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities Initiative, as well as the Sacramento Unified School District, law enforcement and Sacramento County Probation. "We need to work on the issue of crime in our neighborhood together," says Vang. "All racial groups need to be safe in our community."

This does not mean, however, more or heavier-handed policing. "The general practice of Sacramento P.D. is NOT just arresting their way out of every situation," Lucas says. "Instead, they are engaging



Laura Vu of Hmong Innovating Politics speaks during a press conference Nov. 3 to show that members of the Asian-American and African-American communities are united in efforts to stop crime in south Sacramento.  
Photo by Alberto Mercado

more with the community."

Residents also need to meet and get to know one another. The Unity Circle will give them a chance to do just that at its upcoming Jan. 11 meeting. "It will be potluck style," says Lucas with a smile. "Come on and participate."

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Sacramento Unity Circle's next meeting  
**WHERE:** Fruit Ridge Community Collaborative, 4625 44th St., Sacramento  
**WHEN:** 6:30-8:30 p.m. Jan. 11, 2017  
**INFO:** [healthedcouncil.org/events/](http://healthedcouncil.org/events/)

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