

COMMUNITY NUTRITION EDUCATION SERVICES, INC.

“PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN URBAN LOS ANGELES # 3

One of the on-going goals of Community Nutrition Education Services, Inc. (CNESINC) is to educate urban consumers about food and agriculture sustainability issues. Below is a list of opportunities that have been implemented to provide credible education for these consumers.

Activities included:

November, 2009- There was participation in the “University of California Davis Agricultural Sustainability Institute External Advisory Committee” meeting. The Agricultural Sustainability Institute (ASI) External Advisory Committee advises the ASI director on strategic directions and priorities and also assists ASI in identifying resources required to address priority research outreach and teaching needs. This group also serves the function of the Program Advisor for the sustainability Agricultural Research and Education Program. My specific assignment was to become a member of the Food and Society Working Group.

The three active initiatives included:

- Building Regional Markets and Communities
- Community Food Security for Low Income Residents
- Food System Assessment/Food Policy

Based on proposed plans for CNES, INC, the initiative on community food security for low income residents has high priority interest. The specific goal is to connect community gardens to food security. Our contention is that gardening activities for urban residents needs to extend beyond the agricultural aspects only.

The appointment to this UC Davis Agricultural Sustainability Institute External Advisory Committee was an outgrowth of a fellowship completed with the Roots of Change (roc.fund.org) in 2007. The Roots of Change provides resources to a diverse alliance of leaders and their institutions

that are unified by strategy and collaboration in pursuit of a sustainable food system in California by 2030.

January-March, 2010- Los Angeles Urban Rural Roundtable In September 2009, Mayor Antonio Villaragosa launched a Food Policy Task Force charged with identifying ways in which the City of Los Angeles could support the regional food economy and improve access to healthy foods in underserved communities. Mable Everette, a 2007 Roots of Change fellow (roc.fund.org.), was among the 57 members of the Los Angeles Urban Rural Roundtable during January-March, 2010.

The final draft of the recommendations was:

- (1) Develop a Comprehensive Set of Food System Policies for the City of Los Angeles: 1.) Economic development; 2) Hunger and Food Security; 3) Urban and Land Use Planning for Food and Agriculture; and 4.) Food System Literacy
- (2) Inject food and agriculture into the public conversation.
- (3) Align and leverage the political strength of the City and region to support key federal, state and regional food and agricultural policies
- (4) Create a regional food policy council.

March, 2010- Attendance at a lecture focused on the concept of garden to plate, a multi-pronged effort to promote fresh food grown locally. The speakers unique perspective on the evolution of attitudes toward food security, community building, healthy foods, and nutrition over time in the Los Angeles area was very enlightening. There was a discussion of food hierarchy; 1) grow your own; 2) farmers markets, 3) organic gardens; 4) commercial stores including smaller neighborhood stores. The speaker noted that Los Angeles has a 24 hour/7 day a week growing period. In urban Los Angeles a major concern for gardeners is the cost and availability of water supplies.

There was a follow-up garden tour of a 4 acre site, comprised of vegetable beds, permaculture terraces, and a fruit tree orchard nestled on the hillsides above a major freeway system. Two restaurant owners who used the produce from this garden site were available to answer questions about their restaurant supported agriculture program initiated in 2009.

April 2010-Observed community nutrition education and gardening program for 4th graders. There were structured lesson plans, utilizing a recipe and activity book, conducted by masters level students from local university. The classes emphasized fruit and vegetable nutrition and plant biology through the use of games and competition between teams of children. Food safety was emphasized i.e. “wash your hands” because a salad was being prepared for consumption within the garden setting. The recipe consisted of red leaf lettuce, strawberries and balsamic vinegar.

At this their last class for the school year, the students prepared to harvest a variety of kale that had been grown from seeds they planted earlier in the school year.

The results of these aforementioned educational opportunities have been integrated into the nutrition education lessons: shopping at local farmers markets; growing vegetables in containers/yards; and recycling and reusing containers/ packages following grocery shopping. We have undertaken the publication of a subscription newsletter focused on nutrition, physical activity and food sustainability issues. The newsletters are available at our website (cnesinc.org).

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