



# Committed to a Healthy California

## Supporting Community Based Organizations

### Food is Medicine: Building Healthy Habits, Promoting Wellness and Fighting Childhood Hunger in San Diego

According to America's Health Rankings (AHR), nearly 95 percent of children in California have medical insurance coverage, but ensuring kids get proper nutrition begins at home and in the community before they get to the doctor's office. Food is medicine, and there are promising resources and support opportunities in San Diego to address issues like food insecurity and nutritious eating habits that affect a child's overall health.

#### Food for Thought

Being a kid can be tough, but for children living at or near poverty-level, getting adequate food – especially healthy, fresh options – can be even tougher. California is one of the toughest situations in the nation, ranking 45th nationally in the percentage of households with a high-level of concentrated disadvantage for children, meaning the percentage of families below the poverty line, receiving public assistance, female-headed households, unemployed or younger than age 18.

Not having proper food resources can add an extra layer of challenges and limit children from meeting their full potential. Across the state, youth obesity and related substance use disorder also trend high among California youth, with 31 percent of children ages 10-17 being overweight and five percent of children aged 12-17 being dependent on drugs and/or alcohol.

In San Diego County alone, one in seven of the 3.2 million residents struggle with hunger, meaning almost half a million people might not know where their next meal is coming from. Children are even more affected, with 163,000 kids – one in five – facing food insecurity.



#### FOOD INSECURITY

In California

**11.8%** of homes are food insecure.

*America's Health Rankings*

In San Diego

**15.3%** of total population is food insecure.

*San Diego Hunger Coalition*



#### POVERTY

California has the nation's highest poverty rate, meaning a family of four lacks enough to meet basic needs including food, at **13.3%**

*United States Census*

National City, where UnitedHealthcare hosted a food insecurity grant presentation, has a poverty rate of **25%**

*San Diego Regional EDC*



#### CHILDHOOD OBESITY

**31%** of CA youth ages 10-17 are obese.

*America's Health Rankings*

**1 in 5** kids in San Diego are obese, and rates **double** for Hispanic and low-income kids.

*San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative*

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## A Partner Against Hunger, a Promoter of Wellness

Addressing food insecurity is a systemic challenge in San Diego. UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of California works proactively with community partners and providers to address childhood hunger and nutrition outside the home, classroom and doctor's office. Here are four recent and ongoing initiatives offering kids access fresh food and a "healthier" education:

1

### San Diego Food Bank Grant

This spring, UnitedHealthcare awarded the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank a \$375,000 grant to help address food insecurity, modernize the food bank's client registration process by reducing wait times at distribution sites and connect San Diegans countywide to wrap-around social services, including housing and employment services. The grant is expected to support the delivery of 10 million pounds of food in 2019.

2

### Olivewood Gardens "Kitchenista" Program

"Kitchenistas" are graduates of Olivewood's Cooking for Salud parent education program who guide other parents to achieve a positive approach to healthy cooking. UnitedHealthcare partners with the program on peer-to-peer presentations at PTA/PTO meetings within the National City School District to provide research-based nutrition information, tips for healthy celebrations and healthy cooking demonstrations to parents in the community. In addition to the Kitchenista program, UnitedHealthcare supports a field trip program, enabling students to travel from their schools to Olivewood Gardens for hands-on learning.

3

### Harmonium "Prime Time" Program

Harmonium provides after-school programs, teen programs and counseling services to more than 5,000 San Diego families daily. During the 2018-2019 school year, UnitedHealthcare partnered with its "Prime Time" after-school program to help educate families with kids in underserved communities about healthy lifestyles. UnitedHealthcare works within five San Diego Unified School District schools in low-income areas to provide educational materials and monthly on-site activities including physical fitness challenges, healthy eating activities and dental health education. Kids leave each session with new materials that they can take home and share with their parents so they can start making healthy lifestyle choices together.

4

### Kroc Fit Kids Childhood Obesity Prevention Program

Kroc Fit Kids, a program of the Salvation Army Kroc Center, provides 3rd–5th grade students the opportunity to learn about healthy eating habits, try new forms of exercise and gain additional minutes of physical activity during the school day. In addition to monthly on-site activities at their schools, the children also attend monthly field trips to the Kroc Center (a one-mile walk each way) to participate in physical activities such as ice skating, rock climbing and yoga. In 2019, UnitedHealthcare gave \$10,000 to support programming for the school year.



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