

Seeds and Trees Program

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Introduction

Seeds and Trees is a program founded by the University of California Global Food Initiative, focused on finding ways to sustainably and nutritiously feed large populations.

Seeds and Trees offers workshops in Spanish and English at the UC Riverside Community Garden to educate students, parents, their children and low-income communities on healthy eating habits and sustainable home gardening practices.

The program worked hard to close the knowledge gap between the UCR system and the surrounding low-income communities by opening up the university and its resources to the community through Workshops, Potlucks, Seed Exchange Events, Socials, Tours, Dig n' Dance, and the Food Security 5K Run/Walk.



Project Goals

The goal of Seeds and Trees is to address the problem of malnourished children, and college students that are deficient in Vitamins E and D, and are not getting enough vitamin A, calcium, or magnesium [1].

Continue to encourage students and families to start their own home gardens or become members of community gardens.

Build more community gardens, and have a plot growing various vegetables to give to people who are hesitant about gardening.

Encourage classes to have field trips to community gardens.

Build connections with other community gardens for interested alumni.



Methods

To promote the UCR's GFI theme "Healthy students, Healthy Campus, Healthy Community", Seeds and Trees made use of the UC Riverside Community Garden to offer gardening workshops in Spanish and English.

The workshops were led by Master Gardeners, and translated by Claudia Villegas, and volunteers from the Spanish Department at UCR.

Through the use of workshops, students and families were demonstrated that gardening is relatively easy and can be done at home or apartments through the use of containers.

Having Seed Exchange events encouraged new gardeners to take a chance, and allowed others to have a variety of seeds.

Seeds and Trees worked with St George's Episcopal Church to reach out to families of various backgrounds.

The program called upon individuals, sororities, fraternities, societies, clubs, and graduate students to volunteer at the UCR Community garden, and helped the Community Settlement Association start the Community Garden.

Working with the R' Pantry attracted individual students, and are now reliable R' Garden volunteers.

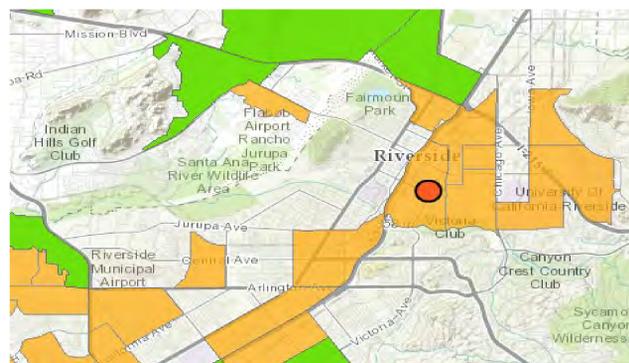
Outcomes

Helping the Community Settlement Association start the Community Garden attracted more families to come to the UCR Garden to harvest oranges, strawberries, and more.

Seeds and Trees has done community organizing around food and nutritional knowledge, but early learnings taught us that most parents do not perceive value in the opportunity to modify the diets for themselves or their children's. Where they do perceive value is in childcare and low cost family activities. Therefore, having hands on Workshops were great for keep adults and children interested.

The Potlucks and the 5K Run/Walk made families and UCR students interact with one another.

The social events attracted students to come out the garden, and some of them went on to become plot holders.



- USDA map of the Food Desert in Riverside. Green represents census tracts who are Low Income (LI) and have Low Access (LA) to healthy food within 1-mile. Orange are LI and LA within 0.5 miles.
- A food desert is when people have to walk more than 500 meters to healthy nutritious foods [2].

Conclusions

Having Workshops and all the various events attracted college students and the local community to come to the UCR community Garden.

Seeds and Trees expanded outreach to low-income and disadvantaged communities through an outreach program targeting three critical communities: 1) food bank clients, 2) low-income families, and 3) local churches.

The critical insight garnered is that many working-class and immigrant parents lack access to information about healthy food options.



Grating Workshop led by Master Gardener Larry Dodson and translated by Claudia Villegas

Food Security 5K Run/Walk

Future Goals

Set out clear goals across diverse populations and build into Seeds and Trees the ability to measure results. All aspects of the project will be data driven, organize different communities into three discrete cohorts, tracking those cohorts through different colored coupons and raffle offers, and use based goals to measure success, i.e. Number of:

- Parents who attend events
- Children who plant seeds
- Garden plots reserved
- Attendees who go on to volunteer

Event participation will be tracked, measured and the results of the data will be used to refine additional outreach programs. Parent participation is the critical element to food and nutritional education, so putting most of the energy on tracking parent interactions with the program is fundamental. A data driven approach is the only way to ensure Seeds and Trees is meeting the needs of the community.

Have the Food Security 5K Run/Walk every Spring Quarter to attract communities outside the Inland Empire to come to the R' Garden and learn about resources.

Have food fairs at the UCR community garden to encourage communal pride and cohesiveness among Riverside residents. This will also provide a special occasion for families to relax and have fun together.



Dig n' Dance

Literature Cited

- Robinson, A., & S. (2015, January 4). Riverside: Residents coached on healthy living. Retrieved from <http://www.pe.com/articles/eastside-757336-health-healthy.html?page=1>
- Gregory, P. J. (2015). The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI): three recent publications. *Food Security*, 7(5), 1091-1092.

Acknowledgements

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