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2014 8.05 Health Matters
Food Security 1

This is Health Matters, talking about food security.

Food security is a recent buzz word coined to describe the goal of insuring that people have access to health-sustaining food in their home place. It's an important goal. There's way too much food insecurity in the U.S. Federal grant money for food security is being distributed through states and universities, most often for studies, although some food security money has gone directly into alleviating hunger by supplying food to those in need.

In a follow up next week, we'll report on some ongoing food security issues, but today, we want to discuss work that has been quietly happening here in Hoopa to insure access to health-sustaining food - work that has been ongoing for a number of years. The oldest food security program in Hoopa is the Federal Commodities and Food Distribution Program, which was designed for Indian reservations and is primarily funded by the federal Department of Agriculture.

Hoopa's commodities program is managed by Keith Hostler, who has made a lot of effort to stock nourishing options for people who rely on commodities to feed their families, including locally grown fresh produce. Another source of fresh local produce has been organized the Klamath Trinity Resource Conservation District, headed by Rhoby Cook. The KTRCD runs a project called Vegetable Club. The Vegetable Club started out as a CSA project. CSA means Community Supported Agriculture.

CSAs are popular all over the U.S. The formula is simple. People pay a reasonable yearly fee to a local grower or team of growers and pick up their vegetables and herbs every week the gardens are producing. This model didn't quite fit here on the Rez. Some people can't afford to pay a lump sum in advance. Some forgot to pick up their produce.

So, the KTRCD made some changes and called it the Vegetable Club, which offers a couple of options. People can pay by the week for a bag of vegetables grown by local farmers. KTRCD puts in an order every week to buy vegetables wholesale and passes the wholesale cost on to Vegetable Club members.

People who are a part of TANF can get their bag of freshly grown vegetables paid for by TANF as part of their benefits if they want them. Pick up is Wednesday afternoon from 4 - 5 pm in front of the Kim Yerton library. Just let them know you're on TANF and sign your name. Also, 10 bags go to the Food Distribution Program every week, so if you are on that program you can get some when you pick up your commodities.

Even if you are a paying customer you get a really great deal on local organic produce. Right now, the program is serving 24 families per week, but they have room for more. Vegetable Club runs year round, so even if you have a summer garden, you can get your winter vegetables through Vegetable Club.

In addition to the Vegetable Club Project, the KTRCD also manages the Kin Tah Te Community Demonstration and Botanical Garden that was originally started by Q'osos back in the day. The garden is really more like a park with a vegetable garden. It covers three acres of land owned by the School District next to the Two Rivers Community School, near the NF. Over the years, thanks to the help of K'imaw Medical Center, the Diabetes Prevention Program, Humboldt Area Foundation, Tribal Roads Department, Tribal Forestry, PUD and many volunteers, the community's garden has evolved into a beautiful public place to grow food or simply to gather with family.

Kin Tah Te has a small orchard of fruits trees including apples, pears, persimmons, plums and cherries that were donated by the Fruit Tree Planting Foundation. The demonstration garden includes vegetables, berries, herbs, and flowers. Many of the plants have been donated by farmers and nurseries. School children participate in the garden by starting some of the plants from seed, and children currently come to visit on class trips to learn about drip irrigation and soil fertility.

The Kin Tah Te Garden is maintained by a handful of loyal volunteers and is open to the public for those who want to come and pick for themselves. Or simply relax on the benches and enjoy the trees. In time there will be lots of fruit and berries to share. Megan Baldy is the Community Garden Coordinator and is often on hand to explain what's available.

The community garden donates a variety of foods to the Senior Center and the Diabetes Center. Although Kin Tah Te has reduced its scale of production, due to lack of help, they still offer bumper crops, such as last year's overflow of lemon cucumbers that were passed out on Sovereigns Day. Future plans for the Community Garden include a walking trail around the perimeter for exercising. Native food and basketry plant sections are also in the works.

Health Matters is a production of KIDE Hoopa CA. Produced and written by Cynthia Poten.

Engineered by Joseph Orozco. Our readers were Jay Renzuli and Joseph Orozco. For this audio and more information, visit our download area at www.kidefm.org. Thank you for listening.

Sources and Links

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