

## The “Freshy” Nominees

### Best Performance by a State Employee to Improve CalFresh

#### **Andrea Bricker, California Department of Aging**

- “Worked with DSS and DPH to develop a brochure specific for the senior population that clearly explains the CalFresh application process”
- “Brought attention to the underserved senior population in California and worked with DSS to develop a brochure specifically targeted to the senior population. She also promoted training for front-line staff on how to work more effectively with the senior/elderly population.”
- “Attended meetings and worked with focus groups, and promoted senior participation in the CalFresh program”

#### **Chris Webb-Curtis, California Department of Social Services**

- “She has worked tirelessly to improve access to the program by implementing changes in CalFresh that will allow needy Californian's to receive food benefits. She has done everything from MCE, admin waivers to ease application processes, modified automation systems to permit on-line access and modernize business practices, and rebranded the program so it reflects its new image and removes some of the stigma associated with the old name.”
- “Since her arrival in the program, Chris has worked tirelessly to improve access to critical food benefits to needy Californians. She has worked to modernize the automation systems that administer the program so that access can occur on-line, by phone or face-to-face. She has also overseen the implementation of many new policy changes including Modified Categorical Eligibility (MCE), Administrative Waivers to ease the application process and the rebranding of the program.”

#### **Giv Nassiri, California Department of Social Services**

- “As an AGPA with CDSS, Mr. Nassiri worked to increase accountability as a necessary component to county implementation of CalFresh. By both helping shape the focus of the Quality Control reviewers to include error abatement, as well as identifying root error causes and employing the three tier review system, Mr. Nassiri was instrumental in helping California lower its active error rate. Mr. Nassiri continues his work now on the county level as an Administrator for Solano County.”
- “Mr. Nassiri was instrumental in changing the culture of QC reviewers' mentality as well as the development of the three tier review system - both of which have helped California lower its CalFresh active error rate over the last eight years. Mr. Nassiri did this while an analyst with the CalFresh Branch of the California Department of Social Services and has since moved to a position with Solano County.”

#### **Roseanne Stephenson, California Department of Public Health**

- “The Outreach Program and its partners sponsored mass media, established a statewide hotline, staffed local events, conducted face-to-face interviews, coordinated efforts with local social service offices, and pre-screened more than 45,000 households, resulting in an estimated 11,000 hard-to-reach households qualifying for CalFresh. Ms. Stephenson's team helped the California Dept. of Aging with it's first-ever CalFresh outreach to seniors and CDSS with introduction of the new CalFresh brand.”
- “Ms. Stephenson's passion led her to work with the California Department of Social Services to establish a unique public health partnership using social marketing to increase Cal Fresh participation. By 2010, 7 partner organizations provided outreach in 43 counties through 70 CBOs, and The California Endowment made Outreach part of its 2-year commitment to help increase participation in federal assistance programs like CalFresh.”

## Best Performance by a County Employee to Improve CalFresh

### Laura McDuffey, Shasta County

- “During 2010, Ms. McDuffey and her six CHA's assisted with more than 1,100 CalFresh applications, helping to increase Shasta County's participation in CalFresh and putting food on the tables of families in need. It is estimated that there are some 9,000 Shasta County residents who are eligible for CalFresh benefits, but are not being served. Ms. McDuffey's work is vitally important to Shasta County's mission of healthy families in thriving, safe communities.”
- “In 2010, Laura McDuffey and her small group of Community Health Advocates were tasked with reaching out to Shasta County's most vulnerable populations – the elderly, homeless and children. Recognizing that certain populations had very limited access to county resources, they began doing nutrition outreach to residents without transportation and/or childcare, those who had trouble filling out the complicated paperwork and/or providing supporting documentation, and those who speak other languages.”

### Megan VanSant, Mendocino County

- “Provided “Food Stamp Advocate” training to local organizations. Set up a hotline (46-BREAD) staffed by a bilingual outreach worker trained to answer questions about CalFresh and screen for likely eligibility. Secured private funding for the printing and dissemination of posters, etc. Set up outreach tables at local grocery stores, libraries, food banks, and other locations. Coordinated a network of alternative sites for completing CalFresh applications at family resource centers.”
- “In 2009, staff at the Mendocino County Health and Human Services Agency facilitated the development of a new community coalition called *Food for All Mendocino*. Staffed by employees of the County's Eligibility and Family Assistance Services division, the coalition includes representation from local food banks, community dining rooms, child advocacy organizations, local schools, and other County programs. The primary mission of the coalition is to increase participation in CalFresh.”

### Mendocino County Health and Human Services Agency (as a whole)

- “Won USDA Hunger Champion Gold Award 2010 for effective SNAP outreach - 1 of only 2 gold awards nationwide & the only one in CA • Spearheaded the "Food For All Mendocino" coalition • Trained Food Stamp Advocates to help local agencies assist applicants • Set up alternate sites in a geographically challenging areas • Visited remote areas to assist with mail-in applications • Set up a bilingual hotline for CalFresh info, eligibility screening, etc. • Secured outside funding to print/distribute bilingual brochures & posters • Found AmeriCorps VISTA workers to assist with outreach & applications • Conducted outreach events at stores, soup kitchens, libraries, etc. • Set up a child-friendly alternative interview room with small tables, art supplies, etc. at Public Health for completing applications with an advocate • Helped increase mail-in applications 170% (270% of previous) in 2 yrs • Helped increase client load 52% from Jan 08-Jan 10.”

### Raquel Vargas, Orange County Social Services Agency

- “Raquel Vargas has been helping with CalFresh for 8 years when we started the program called *Food Stamps in 4 Hours*. We've been doing workshops in Orange County and been working together since then.”
- “She's helped us to extend in Orange County with other agencies such as Second Harvest and Catholic Churches. She's helped us to get the permit for all the different centers and sites where we do all the workshops. Now she's helping us to do the *Food Stamps in 2 Hours* instead of 4 Hours. We have workshops from 8 a.m. - 10 a.m. and 9a.m. - 11 a.m.”

## **Best Performance by a Local Advocate to Improve CalFresh**

### **Holly Calhoun, SEELA (Sustainable Economic Enterprises Los Angeles)**

- “Holly has worked diligently as a partner in Roots of Changes' CDFA Farmers' Market Consortium grant which promotes usage of EBT at Farmers' Markets and gives an add-on incentive to folks that use their EBT at the markets. Holly has worked with HALA (another ROC partner) to bring this program to several farmers' markets and has done a tremendous job working with her communities in promoting usage of EBT and bringing folks back as repeat customers. A shining star!”
- “Promotion, PSA's on local Los Angeles radio stations, bus stop posters, school district flyers - EBT usage has increased by 300% since the beginning of the grant (October 2009 “Attended meetings and worked with focus groups, and promoted seniors inclusion in CalFresh.”

### **Jessica Jones, Los Angeles Regional Food Bank**

- “Jessica is a tireless advocate for the underserved and demonstrates over and over again how much she cares about getting CalFresh to her community. She has an excellent rapport with the health and human service offices.”
- “Jessica provided staff for the Cal Fresh launch with the Governor and Maria Shriver in Long Beach. She arranged staffing and equipment and had very limited time to prepare.

### **Lisa Sherrill, Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano**

- “Although Lisa isn't steering the ship of the Contra Costa/ Solano Food Bank, she is indeed “Freshy” award-worthy. Lisa goes above and beyond her community work, setting up meetings with legislators to remind them of the importance of healthy, fresh and accessible food for all Californians. An unsung hero, Lisa understands the importance of having policy makers see not only the face of hunger, but also the active solutions that our community has taken to alleviate it.”
- “Tireless advocate and dedicated campaigner for CalFresh in Solano and Contra Costa Counties.”

### **Maria Venegas, Stockton Food Bank**

- “Maria has not only reached out to the Stockton community but has also traveled throughout the county providing assistance to families who normally wouldn't have access to this assistance. She does outreach at Head Starts, schools, health fairs, community centers, and here at the food bank. Her workflow never ceases, and she consistently makes her clients feel welcome and comfortable.”
- “Maria consistently reaches across cultural barriers to provide assistance to those families in need of help. She goes beyond what is required to make sure those individuals and families are given the necessary care needed to get back onto their feet. She is sincere in her work giving the Emergency Food Bank and CalFresh a good reputation in the community.”

### **Shasta Grower's Association and Healthy Shasta**

- “The Shasta Growers Association (SGA) made the farmers' market more accessible to CalFresh recipients by accepting CalFresh EBT cards as of October 2009. Then, for the 2010 market season, SGA and Healthy Shasta teamed up to make the market even more accessible by offering \$50 worth FREE “Healthy Shasta Market Money” tokens to every household receiving CalFresh benefits in Shasta County. To date, over \$66,000 worth of tokens have been redeemed at the market.”
- “Healthy Shasta and SGA teamed up to promote the use of CalFresh EBT cards at the farmers' market. Households receiving CalFresh benefits, (approx. 10,000) received two \$25 vouchers in the mail. CalFresh customers could then bring their vouchers to the Market and redeem them for \$50 in “Healthy Shasta Market Money” (wooden tokens with the HS logo on them). The tokens can be used to buy CalFresh allowable products at any vendor that accepts the regular SGA EBT tokens any Saturday through 12/18/10”

### **Steve Naimin, Del Norte Clinics**

- “For raising public awareness on the importance of having healthy families and healthy children. For helping families understand that it is not difficult to apply.”
- “For attending conferences; keeping in contact with A.F.D. workers, and keeping everyone informed with all the changes that go on with CalFresh. We at our Clinic are very dedicated in what we try to do in the public and that includes all outreach programs. We go out to the people, to farm workers, to schools, and door to door. We educate them on the importance of having healthy families. We let them know that there is support and that we can help. People are so skeptical about applying and are very intimidated. We help with the process.”

### **Dr. Va Lecia Admas, St Joseph’s Center of Venice**

- “Va Lecia played a vital role in improving CalFresh in Los Angeles County in 2010. As director of a major social services provider on the Westside of LA County, she has worked hard to ensure all clients have been supported when applying for nutrition assistance benefits. In 2010, Va Lecia went above and beyond the call of duty by making it possible for Supervisor Yaroslavsky, who proposed an anti-hunger motion at the Board of Supervisors, to localize his commitment to CalFresh.”
- “Va Lecia worked closely with Supervisor Yaroslavsky's staff to better understand the challenges faced by CalFresh applicants in his district. She facilitated workshops for service providers to learn more about applying for CalFresh and she hosted a major kick-off event with elected officials and county staff to launch the county's Mobile Outreach Enrollment Van. Without Va Lecia's steady commitment, Supervisor Yaroslavsky would not have maintained his focus on CalFresh in 2010.”

## **Special San Diego Category**

### **Best Performance by a San Diego County Employee to Improve CalFresh**

#### **Mirna Lopez, San Diego Health and Human Services Agency**

- “I am not sure how long Mirna has been working with CalFresh, but I can tell that she has passion and motivation in her work. She works closely with community partners to help them understand issues facing their clients, address barriers related to negative errors, and ensure that each person that comes into the Chula Vista FRC in San Diego is treated with dignity and respect. She is very knowledgeable about CalFresh and is able to explain details to non-experts simply and competently. Mirna has assisted community-based partners on multiple cases; without her help, diligence and patience many of our clients would have gone days without food. We could not ask for a better liaison.”

#### **Silvia Camacho, San Diego Health and Human Services Agency**

- “Silvia has partnered with SDHC and area outreach partners for the last couple of years. Through her diligent efforts we have addressed the needs of the rural homeless in Campo, refugee families in El Cajon, and other issues facing families in the area. She patiently answers questions from community partners, is responsive (even when on jury duty!) and thoughtful. In addition, her concern for the families she serves is evident with each encounter. Silvia’s partnership, care and expertise have made a significant difference in the lives of families and individuals. We are extremely grateful for her partnership!”

#### **Stephanie Gioia-Beckman, Senior Advisor to County Supervisor Ron Roberts**

- “In a county that has struggled for many years to improve its participation rate in CalFresh, Stephanie Gioia-Beckman, Senior Policy Advisor for County Supervisor Ron Roberts, has worked diligently to address barriers, improve partnerships with community based organizations, and develop overall understanding of the issues related to hunger and CalFresh access. With a history of advocating for children’s issues, she has directed that passion toward addressing the needs of hungry families throughout San Diego County.”
- “Ms. Gioia-Beckman worked closely with San Diego Hunger Coalition to educate the San Diego County Board of Supervisors about the CalFresh program and its benefits to low-income families, including the connection between CalFresh and nutrition, the impact on poverty and hunger, as well as the financial benefits to the entire county of ensuring full enrollment in CalFresh. The recent unanimous adoption by

the Board of Supervisors of 69 recommendations for improving CalFresh in San Diego was due in no small part to her advocacy and support.”

## **Special San Diego Category** **Best Performance by a San Diego Advocate to Improve CalFresh**

### **Daniela Solano, San Diego Food Bank**

- “Over the last few years, Daniela Solano, from the San Diego Food Bank, has built their outreach program from the ground up. Due to her commitment to her customers, ingenuity and willingness to pursue new innovations in assisting her clients, she has had a major impact on the success of her applications. The outreach model that Daniela has established has proven a higher and faster approval rate, and has resulted in fewer barriers for the client. The model has allowed for more local San Diegan's to access Cal Fresh benefits.”
- “Covering the large and diverse County of San Diego with mobile outreach events at schools, food distributions, churches and other locations is a full time job in and of itself. In addition to this outreach, she manages a dedicated flock of volunteers, follows up with and advocates for clients, and still manages to partner with other organizations like San Diego Hunger Coalition and San Diego HHSA to address systemic barriers and facilitate change.”
- “Daniela’s positive attitude, creativity and persistence have defined her as one of the CalFresh Outreach leaders in San Diego County.”

### **Jennifer Tracy, San Diego Hunger Coalition**

- “Jennifer Tracy has continued to work diligently in San Diego County to improve CalFresh. Her continued efforts include work with a number of county partners, including those associated with local community based organizations and the CalFresh county administration. This past year, Jennifer took on a significant leadership role as part of the SNAP Work Group of the Social Services Advisory Board for the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. Her commitment to and knowledge of CalFresh in San Diego County was exemplified in the significant contributions she made to the goals of the Work Group. Her efforts in this process have lead to the publication of a number of recommendations, informed by community advocates, to be considered by the Board as part of a countywide implementation plan. Jennifer, who always approaches her work with a positive attitude and is genuinely a pleasure to work with, is and will continue to be great advocate for low-income Californians.”

### **Paola E. Lopez, SAY San Diego**

- “I would like to nominate Paola Lopez. Paola has worked with many of our agency's clients and day in and day out taken the extra mile to follow up with their CalFresh applications. Paola shows dedication and pride in helping everyone and anyone who needs assistance. Paola goes the extra mile by helping members who do not qualify and attempts to set them up with outside resources in order to help the family and clients at need. All in all Paola has put in many hours of work to reduce the number of families either on the brink of hunger or currently hungry in our community.”
- “Paola Lopez does an amazing job working with all of the clients to help reduce hunger. Paula maintains a flexible schedule so that she can help support her clients. I have seen her miss lunch, or take part lunches, so that she can provide her clients with the assistance they need in completing their application. She is friendly and kind. Paola treats all of the applicants with respect and dignity. She advocates for them so that their needs may be met.”
- “In the past couple of years Paola has been assisting clients and families with CalFresh applications. I have seen how quick of a response she gets from the county after submitting the paperwork required by the families. This shows that she has a good working relationship with the CalFresh liaisons at the county office, and with the families who show up with questions regarding their applications. When she has questions she is able to get an answer for the clients and is consistent on her how she completes the applications. She has made it much easier and comfortable for families to complete the CalFresh application process.”

### **Teresa Garcia, Vista Community Clinic**

- “Teresa is a case manager in the Rays of Health Program. She provides supportive services, linkages and referrals to her clients. When she helps a family with the process of applying for food stamps, she doesn't just assist with the application. She educates her clients on the importance of good nutrition for their children and works with the families until the process is completed. Because of her vocation for this field and her dedication, many of our low income families have access to nutritious foods and a healthier lifestyle.”

### **Bill York, 211 San Diego**

- “Mr. York has proven himself as a leader in CalFresh Outreach by developing a training program for 2-1-1s across California, as well as for community partners. He has also been instrumental in building strong relationships with the County and community partners, increasing access to CalFresh and streamlining the application process. Most recently, Mr. York has been proactive and very influential in the rebranding efforts as we transition to CalFresh, and sees the change as an amazing opportunity.”
- “Mr. York constantly strives to improve CalFresh on a statewide and local level. He was a very influential member in the Food Stamp Task Force of San Diego, which united a variety of outreach partners with County administrators to come to discuss how to work together to run the CalFresh Program, and overcome barriers to access and challenges in the system, to create countywide solutions. In December, the Board of Supervisors approved the many recommendations to provide the best service possible.”
- “Attended the CalFresh launch in Long Beach with the Governor and Maria Shriver and produced display materials almost overnight to make the event a success.”
- “Bill not only attended the launch but he also updated the 211 training materials to get the subcontractors ready for CalFresh Outreach. He is a catalyst for change in San Diego and participates at state and local events promoting access for many underserved. Bill's "can do" attitude inspires others to look beyond obstacles and be successful.”