



The “Freshy” Award winners will be announced at the 2017 CalFresh Forum on February 1, 2017 in Sacramento.

You can cast your vote online at:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YRNCB6G>

## 2017 Freshy Award Nominees

### Administrator of the Year

#### **Denise Boland, Director of the Department of Employment and Benefits Services Social Services Agency of Santa Clara County**

Denise is always looking for ways to better the lives of low-income residents and increase access to CalFresh for the people of Santa Clara County. She is creative and open to pilots and trying new initiatives to increase access to CalFresh. The CalFresh team under Denise’s leadership is often an early adopter of state initiatives like telephonic signatures, the CalWIN mobile app, and recertifications for continuing benefits by phone. She directed her team to provide a flyer highlighting CalFresh application assistance and other Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties programs to every Medi-Cal recipient. Her team also partners with the Food Bank to offer a monthly produce distribution for CalFresh and CalWorks recipients. *“Denise cares for clients, and she ensures we provide services to clients in a timely manner, she is a goal oriented leader and a straight shooter communicator. She also cares a lot about her team.” ~ Program Manager, Department of Employment and Benefits Services.*

#### **Juanita Fleming, CalFresh Program Specialist Solano County Health and Social Services Department**

Juanita continually reframes the focus of the Solano County Health and Social Services Department efforts towards reaching under-served communities. She increased access to CalFresh by introducing same-day service in remote geographical areas, making sure her ground-level eligibility workers were well-versed in the expansion of the student exemptions, and conducting trainings for community members that emphasized increasing participation. She is always an important participant at community events and committees. Juanita is an inspirational partner for the Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano Counties.

#### **Andrea Ford, Assistant Agency Director Alameda County Social Services Agency, Workforce and Benefits Administration**

Andrea Ford has led the way to collaboratively strengthen the CalFresh program in Alameda County. Since 2015, she has convened a roundtable of key thought-partners including Alameda County Community Food Bank, the Alliance to Transform CalFresh, California Association of

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Food Banks, the Office of Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan and her ALL IN Alameda County anti-poverty collaborative. As a result, Andrea oversaw the coordination and October 2016 launch of California’s first pre-populated CalFresh application pilot utilizing Medi-Cal enrollment data. In addition to the CalFresh pre-populated application pilot, Andrea Ford ensured that the CalFresh division of the Alameda County Social Services Agency provided support to the development of Alameda County Community Food Bank’s “Food Now” and Spanish-language “Comida Ahora” websites. These sites are utilized by the Food Bank’s outreach team, social service providers, and community-based organizations throughout the County to pre-screen and determine CalFresh eligibility.

### **Audry Gonsalvez, CalFresh Program Analyst Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department**

Audry has served as a pillar of support for the Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano Counties. She increased access to CalFresh through same-day service events, helped CalFresh participants maintain benefits by coordinating clients to opt-in to receive text reminders, and increased the collective knowledge of CBOs and community members by leading CalFresh trainings. Audry has made herself accessible for answers to the most specific case questions all the way to advice on the largest scope projects. She’s a strong partner the Food Bank can always rely on.

### **Ken MacKell, Program Manager Butte County Department of Social Services**

Ken MacKell and his team, specifically Susan Shippelhouse and Amber Wilks, have gone above and beyond to help CSU Chico Center for Healthy Communities (CHC) increase CalFresh enrollment as well as application approval rates. They have provided various trainings throughout the year that have increased knowledge and understanding including: CalFresh eligibility and the application, older adult eligibility, the verification packet, and a Medi-Cal overview. Ken’s team also communicates regularly, sometimes daily, with CHC about issues related to client applications and verifications. Through that partnership, the trainings and feedback have increased the application success rate, the event applications have been processed more smoothly, and the approval rate has doubled this past year. Ken and his team have been open to ideas and have made changes to support CHC’s work. It feels like a true partnership and CHC is thankful to be working with him and his team.

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**Elliott Robinson, Director  
Monterey County Department of Social Services**

During Elliott's tenure as chair of the CWDA CalFresh Committee (2011), he has been instrumental in advocating the collaboration of CDSS and the County Welfare Departments (CWD). He has worked to ensure consistency of program processes and helped CWDs better understand the many complexities and challenges of CalFresh program administration. Elliott is also very proactive in thinking outside the norm to pursue strategies from other states—including waiver requests, sharing of best practices, and effective training strategies.

**Tiana Wertheim, SFBenefitsNet Manager  
San Francisco Human Services Agency**

Tiana has worked tirelessly to increase access, help participants maintain benefits, and promote the CalFresh brand in San Francisco. Most recently, she has championed numerous efforts to increase access via dual participation between Medi-Cal and CalFresh, including the launching of an aggressive in-reach initiative in partnership with San Diego 211 to call potentially CalFresh eligible Medi-Cal enrollees to encourage dual enrollment. She has also spearheaded efforts to understand the training needs of Medi-Cal workers in order to promote CalFresh, ultimately developing scripts and training curriculum. She has created promotional campaigns to reach out to newly eligible populations and partnered with county and CBO entities that are most likely to interact with those communities to encourage CalFresh enrollment. She has pursued opportunities to pilot telephonic signature options in San Francisco to address churn rates, and is always seeking to go one step further in her efforts. Tiana is truly a CalFresh champion.



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### **Grassroots Mobilizer of the Year**

**Mohammed Aly, Restaurant Meals Coalition Lead  
Community Member working with Orange County Food Access Coalition**

Mohammed has helped mobilize community members and organizations to urge the Orange County Social Services Agency and new Homeless Care Coordinator to recommend that the Restaurant Meals Program be implemented in Orange County. Due in large part to Mohammed's persistence, this five year process was deemed a common sense approach by county officials and SSA eligibility workers. Recently, the Orange County Board of Supervisors approved the Restaurant Meals Program and the County Social Services Agency (SSA) will soon begin the process towards implementing this program.

**Francesca Costa, CalFresh Outreach Program Manager  
San Francisco-Marin Food Bank**

Francesca has increased access to CalFresh through training community partners to understand CalFresh eligibility and the application process. She works tirelessly on creating a training curriculum that is easy to understand and will help the Food Bank's partners implement best practices in their own agencies. She always gets amazing feedback after every training and we even get people from food banks outside of our county asking to attend trainings and use our curriculum. Our clients are the true beneficiaries of this work since they have more available options to receive assistance in a community setting when it is convenient for them. Francesca is a naturally gifted teacher and always thinks about the "student's" perspective and what would make things easiest for them.



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### **Sarah Palmer DeFrank, Advocacy Manager California Association of Food Banks**

Over the past two years, Sarah has created and nurtured the County Advocate Program, devoted to county-level administrative advocacy to improve access to CalFresh. Today, 112 advocates in 17 counties are working with their welfare departments to make improvements that increase CalFresh participation and retention of benefits by eligible people. Participants in the County Advocate Program develop a local work plan to address high priority issues in their county, and then advocate and work with their county welfare department to seek partnership and administrative improvements to the program. For example, County Advocate groups have chosen to work on reducing churn, in-reach strategies, coordinating outreach, and restaurant meals, to name a few efforts. In addition to implementing a broad-based, grassroots advocacy model, Sarah is deeply committed to equitable access and ensures that equity is discussed wherever she goes.

### **Carly Finkle, Advocacy Manager Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano**

In her first year as Advocacy Manager at the Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano Counties, Carly has worked to positively influence CalFresh policy and has helped win numerous important victories. Her many accomplishments in her short time at the Food Bank have included hosting client listening sessions, leading grassroots advocacy efforts, conducting congressional and state legislative visits, testifying at state hearings, and authoring twelve published opinion pieces advocating more effective anti-hunger policies. The listening sessions that Carly hosts have been the most effective way to obtain community advocates, who have then attended meetings with elected officials and testified at hearings. Those advocates with lived experiences of hunger are especially impactful when speaking out for programs including CalFresh.

### **Sandra Varela, CalFresh Outreach Specialist II Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County**

Sandra Varela is a true champion of CalFresh. She is an assertive and passionate advocate, who puts 110 percent of her efforts to get an application approved. Sandra's advocacy skills and passion to help her community to be free of hunger have led her to win

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big victories for her clients, and she has managed to get the families with the most complicated cases approved for benefits. She does direct outreach at different partner agencies, soup kitchens, shelters, and food distributions. She also coordinates a CalFresh Buddy program, which trains community volunteers to do outreach at different local non-profits.

#### **Gustavo Herrera, Western Director Young Invincibles**

Gustavo led Young Invincibles' efforts to successfully pass AB 1747 (Weber), which will help address student hunger on California college campuses. Young Invincibles worked to support the passage of the bill by collecting and highlighting local stories and publishing research about the prevalence of college student hunger. Gustavo led the organizing and legislative advocacy that secured an important win that increased resources and infrastructure to address the persistent problem of hunger on college campuses.



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### **Innovative Outreach Leader of the Year**

#### **Aynalem Adugna & Tadese Alemu, Bureau Chief & Research Specialist III, CDSS Research Services**

Aynalem's and Tadese's passion for research, dedication to public service, and approachable attitude make them valuable Innovative Outreach Leaders. They have created and provided CalFresh Outreach Geo-maps and piloted collaborative efforts with counties. They consistently work with counties and provide excellent customer service. They are open to discovering new ways of looking at data with the CalFresh Outreach unit at CDSS and provide expertise when exploring geo-mapping possibilities.

Aynalem and Tadese incorporate their research knowledge to create and provide a visual means of locating pockets of low-income communities underserved by CalFresh. The geo-maps provide an opportunity for Outreach workers and counties to focus efforts in areas of greatest need.

#### **Claribel Chavez, Food Connection Specialist Second Harvest Food Bank**

Claribel is an established presence in the community and works to increase and improve CalFresh advocacy by using the media as an effective platform. Due to her efforts, more and more people in the local community can relate to or recognize the work in CalFresh outreach. She uses her ability to reach out to many people by sending the message that there should be no myths or stigma attached to CalFresh benefits.

#### **Marcia Garcia, CalFresh Outreach Coordinator San Diego Hunger Coalition**

Marcia has worked with the San Diego Hunger Coalition to increase access to CalFresh for the past two years. During that time, she has quickly established herself as a leader in providing technical assistance and support. She has served as a facilitator for Benchmark Institute's FAST training, and has developed countless outreach materials to spread the word about program changes. Marcia regularly goes the extra mile to determine the best way to make applying for CalFresh easier. Her commitment to the CalFresh community and those we serve

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can be heard every day as she brings levity to challenging conversations. We are a better community for her contributions.

**Elizabeth Gomez, Associate Director of Client Services  
Alameda County Community Food Bank (ACCFB)**

Elizabeth Gomez is a pioneer and a leader in CalFresh Outreach. For more than a decade, she has led the development of tools and strategies that have been successfully adopted and deployed throughout California and the nation to maximize CalFresh/SNAP participation. The innovative work of her team extends beyond CalFresh, as she collaborates with other federal nutrition program leads to maximize ACCFB’s reach. The work of her team also extends beyond Alameda County. For example, ACCFB outreach staff assisted with Disaster SNAP in the aftermath of the Lake County fire. Elizabeth has also developed a comprehensive body of evidence-based outreach materials, a website that can function like a mobile application to connect people to CalFresh, and in-reach strategies to connect families who currently receive Medi-Cal to CalFresh.

**Martha Montesinos, CalFresh Outreach Worker Manager  
CalFresh/ FOOD Share, Inc. of Ventura County**

Although Martha is relatively new in her management position, she has played a very important part in helping to make her outreach worker team become one of the most successful outreach teams in Ventura County. Martha is someone very special because she has demonstrated her leadership skills and ability to motivate her team and to foster others to get involved. She has opened up communication and collaboration efforts with the FOOD Share staff, always seeking additional ways to assist families with especially difficult situations. She has provided valuable insights to our Agency Relations team seeking ways to improve other means of access to a family's need of additional food sources and outreach organizations. Martha is simply a one-of-a-kind jewel that embodies the mission of CalFresh and its people, all while doing it always with the biggest smile and heartfelt empathy to all that she serves.

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### **Joey Romero, Project Director Family Service Association, Mobile Fresh**

Joey Romero is the Program Director of Family Service Association (FSA) Mobile Fresh, a renovated commuter bus grocery store on wheels! Joey’s networking in the community has helped to expand this innovative mobile service which provides a variety of produce and dry goods sold at prices 20 to 30 percent less than markets, and combines the convenience of a corner store with the selection and freshness of a Farmers Market. Mobile Fresh recently partnered with the Transitional Assistance Department/CalFresh in San Bernardino County to travel to locations at three CalFresh Offices six times per month in the cities of San Bernardino, Colton, and Ontario. Mobile Fresh also provides outreach materials and healthy recipes amidst posters and signage reminding shoppers to eat healthy. Furthermore, Mobile Fresh, with Joey as its representative, collaborates with the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health Nutrition Program’s “Champions for Change” and County Nutrition Action Partnership (CNAP) to increase access to healthy foods and address food insecurity.

### **Brandi Sandoval, Supervising Program Specialist Community Outreach Branch (COB)**

Brandi has worked to increase access to CalFresh by creating an initiative with Riverside County Farmers Markets to have all markets and sellers accept CalFresh benefits. Riverside County and DPSS COB are teaming with several agencies to ensure this initiative is viable, accurate, and attainable. When CalFresh is accepted at these local Farmers’ Markets our CalFresh customers will have more options for healthier foods, which will also stimulate the local economy. During CalFresh Awareness Month Brandi’s team at COB sends out flyers and posters to all Riverside County–DPSS district offices to post in their lobbies to inform their customers about CalFresh and any new updates. She also works to promote the CalFresh program community meetings and present updates and CalFresh services to community based organizations and the public.

### **Dennis Tivey, Communication and Outreach Coordinator County of Santa Barbara Department of Social Services**

Dennis has developed, implemented and manages a Public Outreach Planning, Tracking, and Reporting Tool. This tool was developed to optimize collaboration among the numerous

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agencies (public and community based) that perform CalFresh outreach to increase CalFresh access and participation while promoting the CalFresh brand and maximizing outreach resources from the County and CBO's. The tool also allows grant recipients to track their outcomes for effortless grant reporting. The event and outcomes tracking also provides critical data that is utilized for collective impact and targeted outreach. The County can demonstrate collective outreach efforts since the outreach events are now stored in one automated solution. Event data has been utilized by the County to map CalFresh Participation compared to high needs areas. All County agencies can then utilize this information to do more targeted outreach in their efforts to increase CalFresh access and participation.

#### **Juan Torres, Program Manager of Food Access and Operations Catholic Charities Diocese of Santa Rosa**

Juan has continuously been a collaborative partner, he is an active member of the Sonoma County Advocate Program, he was a huge help during the Lake County Fire and has expanded the Catholic Charities Santa Rosa Outreach Program. He brings his perspective being a former County CalFresh Eligibility Worker to the advocacy process and does not shy away from collaborative projects.

#### **Juliana Vega, CalFresh Outreach Coordinator Jacobs and Cushman San Diego Food Bank**

In the short time that Juliana has been in her position (less than 10 months), she has actively sought out new partnerships to help increase CalFresh participation—specifically with the student population. She does it willingly and without hesitation. She is resilient and eager to educate the public about such a resourceful program that can help them to access more healthy food.