



2019 Freshy Award Nominees

Cast your vote online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FreshyVote2019>

The Freshy Awards honor the actions of individual Californians and organizations from across the state that have worked diligently in the last year to improve CalFresh. The winners are nominated by and selected for a Freshy Award based on the input of Californians from across the state. There will be one winner from each category. Winners will be announced and acknowledged at the 2019 CalFresh Forum on March 6 in Sacramento. Place your votes today!

Administrator of the Year

Amber Bonilla

CalFresh ABAWD Policy Unit Manager, CDSS

Amber led CDSS' ABAWD readiness efforts to ensure that counties were ready to implement the time limit on September 1, 2018 after nearly a decade of being covered by the statewide ABAWD waiver. She and her team are experts in all areas of ABAWD time limit policy, and helped prepare county administrators, outreach partners, and other stakeholders for the return of an extremely complex policy that could impact nearly 1 in 10 CalFresh recipients without area waivers and the proper application of exemptions and work support strategies. Amber took the lead in drafting the ABAWD Handbook and the webinar training series for counties, which helped prepare the "first wave" of implementing counties as well as those that may need to re-implement in future years. She is always ready and eager to help explain the complexities of the rule in a way that is easy to understand and helpful to all partners.

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Alexis Fernandez

Chief, CalFresh Policy Branch, CDSS

Alexis has been instrumental in implementing major policy changes to CalFresh, including SSI Cash-Out reversal, securing the waivers for the Elderly Simplified Application Project and Standard Medical Deduction, the Safe Drinking Water Supplemental Benefit, the Fruit & Veggie Supplemental Benefit EBT pilot and many others. Alexis is an invaluable source of policy expertise for administrators and advocates alike and has a talent for explaining complex policy issues in an easy to understand way. Her dedicated work has increased CalFresh access and benefits for many thousands of low-income Californians.

Gabriela Gomez

Program Assistant, Los Angeles County DPSS

In response to a Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors motion to increase participation in the CalFresh Program, the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) launched a comprehensive community outreach plan to address the increasing threat of food insecurity in the county. Recognizing the importance of social media as a means of rapid information exchange and dissemination to promote the benefits of CalFresh on a wider scale, the department utilized its newly implemented social media program to communicate with internal and external stakeholders in a more timely and cost-effective way. DPSS social media platforms include Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter.

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As the staff lead for the DPSS Social Media Program, Gabriela Gomez, a Program Assistant assigned to the DPSS Communications Section, has served as the strategist for the design, content oversight, campaign planning, analysis and interpretation of DPSS social media information. Ms. Gomez's efforts supported many of the department's major media campaigns and initiatives, particularly the statewide observance of CalFresh Awareness Month in May.

Since its implementation, DPSS social media outreach has significantly enhanced the department's ability to promote CalFresh to residents in Los Angeles County who need the services most. It's also created an opportunity to co-promote services through the social media accounts at other county departments, community partners, elected officials, and key community stakeholders. In addition to publicizing CalFresh, the daily social media outreach highlights employment opportunities, community events and services, and a host of other available county resources.

Ms. Gomez, with input from the department's CalFresh Program, created the hashtag: #ChooseCalFresh, as part of a countywide campaign urging the public and media to support the effort by downloading the CalFresh Outreach Toolkit and sharing its content on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. She also invited the public to attend the over 100 informational and enrollment events in the community associated with CalFresh Awareness Month in May. Ms. Gomez collaborated with the Los Angeles County Office of Education and other school districts to gain their support in educating all parents and students about the availability of CalFresh nutrition benefits. The departments' social media outreach also assisted with dissemination of vital information during recent recovery efforts for the Woolsey fire and alerting DPSS customers about the early

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distribution of CalFresh benefits due to the partial shutdown of the federal government. She also monitors CalFresh activities and discussions on social media, responding to inquiries promptly and directing them to the proper entities within the department.

Kim McCoy Wade CalFresh Division Chief, CDSS

Kim McCoy Wade's efforts to increase participation and enrollment have helped improved the statewide CalFresh participation rate. Her strong leadership led to the successful reversal of the SSI Cash-Out policy within the Legislature, and the "all-hands-on-deck" collaborative planning process with counties and advocates to prepare for a successful rollout. Under Kim's leadership, the department has focused more on increasing enrollment and retention among seniors, helping set the stage to end SSI Cash-Out in an equitable manner. Kim and her team have also worked hard to foster a sense of shared ownership between administrators, advocates, and clients for making 500,000 newly eligible SSI clients connected to CalFresh.

Kim has many strengths as an effective administrator, especially building strong partnerships and providing innovative leadership to get stakeholders, county administrators, and advocates to work together to improve access to CalFresh.

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Nolan Sullivan

Director, Yolo County HHSA

Nolan dug deep into the problem of student CalFresh participation and developed effective solutions to help connect more low-income college students to CalFresh. Nolan is focused on helping college students enroll for CalFresh benefits and working to better understand their experience. He's vocal about the barriers that students may face when trying to understand their eligibility.

Nolan united the community-based organization and UC community under one goal— increase student's access to healthy food. Nolan's work has been instrumental to increasing CalFresh enrollment of students at UC Davis.

Bonnarith Tim

Appeals Hearing Specialist, Los Angeles County DPSS

Mr. Tim works tirelessly to help CalFresh participants maintain benefits they are entitled to. By utilizing his expertise of the CalFresh program, Mr. Tim was able to connect in a way with the claimants, advocates, and our staff to achieve their total understanding of the state requirements by interpreting policy into common core language. He has been relentless in his communication efforts by contacting district staff, advocates and others to resolve any concerns to provide an expeditious resolution without the need of for a state hearing.

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Dennis Tivey/Jose Clemente

Communication & Outreach Coordinator, Department Business Specialist,
Santa Barbara County DSS

The nominees worked as a team with Program, Management, and County Information Technology staff to develop, design, test, and implement OCTOPUS: a secure, mobile-friendly online portal for clients to submit messages and verifications (documents) to DSS staff 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition, the nominees developed and implemented a business process, developed and delivered staff training, and created materials to market OCTOPUS to clients and staff. They continue to work together in a continuous improvement process to incorporate ongoing enhancements to OCTOPUS.

By making it faster and easier to submit documents and messages, Octopus helps increase access, prevent delays, and avoid churn. It's popular with clients, staff, and community partners, and we anticipate it will be instrumental in the CalFresh end of SSI-Cash-Out implementation. Clients can reach OCTOPUS via links on our website (http://cosb.countyofsb.org/social_services), or directly at DSSoctopus.com (English) or DSSpulpo.com (Spanish). (OCTOPUS=Outbound Communication Tool Online Providing Uploaded Submissions. Also, OCTOPUS=a cute and memorable mascot for marketing.)

Since implementation began in July 2018, we have received 6,544 online document submissions---most of them through word of mouth, before official marketing to clients even began! About 57% of these documents submitted via OCTOPUS are for CalFresh!

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Our community outreach partners are using and referring clients to OCTOPUS at outreach events as well. With OCTOPUS, clients don't have to deal with photocopying, mailing, or hand-delivering their verification documents anymore—they can simply snap a photo with their phone and click to send. And unlike older online options, OCTOPUS doesn't require the user to download an app, create an account, use a login, or limit their inquiry to a single eligibility program. Submitting documents online in real time has eliminated days of waiting for the mail to be delivered and the scanning processes to occur: staff can immediately retrieve documents submitted via OCTOPUS. Staff often refer clients on the phone to OCTOPUS in order to receive their submissions right away. This helps prevent caseload "churn." Staff, community partners, and clients are ecstatic about OCTOPUS!

The nominees have leveraged technology to offer applicants and clients a tool that improves service, increases efficiency, and reduces delays. OCTOPUS was created as part of the Department's "No Wrong Door" policy. It was also cost-effective (under \$5,000), and developing it in-house provided a customizable solution for the Department.

Megan Van Sant

Senior Program Manager, Mendocino County HHSA

Megan loves the CalFresh program! She works with many programs, but it's her favorite. She has spent years passionately advocating for CalFresh. Over the years she

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has formed strong CalFresh outreach partnerships with clinics, Family Resource Centers, schools and community gardens. Because of her advocacy there are seniors, who would have never thought to enroll, that are now able to have their grandkids over for dinner. There are immigrant families who were too fearful to enroll, but feel safer because of her support. There are fewer families in our community having to make the tough decisions between food and other necessities. Megan has also been a CalFresh application assister for many years. She continues to do this work (even as a manager), because she loves helping people enroll.

Megan's work has increased the CalFresh participation in Mendocino County. Megan has helped local government better understand the importance of the CalFresh Program and how to gracefully manage the fiscal and programmatic issues.

Megan spearheaded an outreach campaign called, "*Bring a Million to Mendocino.*" This campaign switched the narrative around CalFresh. CalFresh brings funds to our community through increased tax revenue, increased money being spent at farmers markets, and increased funding. She got partner agencies throughout the county hyped-up about CalFresh advocacy. The campaign worked and we brought in more than a million.

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Elected Official or Capitol Staffer of the Year

Assemblymember Dr. Joaquin Arambula

Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Health & Human Services

From the moment Dr. Arambula took the gavel, he brought the passion and commitment from his service as an emergency room doctor to the Committee's critical role in addressing the basic needs of low-income Californians. Nowhere is his leadership more evident, however, than in taking on the challenge of an equitable end to SSI Cash-Out that had eluded policy makers for decades. He had an intuitive understanding of needing to leverage the opportunity to bring CalFresh to hundreds of thousands of Californians with strong protections to hold harmless the highly vulnerable households that would suffer as a result of this policy change. From initial briefings on the issue, he immediately took ownership and action, cultivating support within the Legislature and working with the Administration to secure what became the historic agreement in the 2018-19 Budget (AB 1811) to end SSI Cash-Out and provide state-funded nutrition benefits to those who will lose some or all of their CalFresh from this policy change. In short, we could not celebrate this victory without his dedicated leadership.

He championed the SSI Cash-Out reversal, and also led the efforts to finance the California Fruit & Vegetable EBT Pilot to ensure it can be implemented. Dr. Arambula authored legislation aiming to increase the amount of CalFresh benefits, and advanced a package of state funding for the CalFood program to connect California produce

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farmers with food banks. None of our anti-hunger goals can be achieved without the allocation of resources to reflect values—and Arambula recognizes that.

Taryn Smith

Chief Consultant, Senate Human Services Committee

In her role to provide analysis and technical assistance to all CalFresh bills that go through the Human Services Committee, Taryn increased access and participation in CalFresh, helped CalFresh participants maintain benefits, and supported successful legislation to increase benefit adequacy.

Taryn Provides legislators and advocates with countless hours of review, analysis, and technical assistance to craft CalFresh policy visions into tangible legislation that can be successfully implemented. She is extremely thoughtful and analytical, and spends the time and energy to incorporate perspectives of multiple stakeholders.

Nicole Vazquez

Deputy Chief Consultant, Assembly Budget Committee

On all human services issues, Nicole Vazquez is an invaluable contact for advocates to receive not only assistance on technical policy issues, but also inspiration to be unafraid to demand true solutions to the problems facing low-income Californians no matter how

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large the cost or political lift. Her essential role in the reversal of SSI Cash-Out embodies both of these qualities, and more. Nicole was instrumental in providing options and feedback in shaping the CA4SSI Coalition’s adamant but vague call for an “equitable end” to SSI Cash-Out into what became the detailed package to reverse cash-out with the Supplemental & Transitional Nutrition Benefits. She was a key stakeholder between advocates, the Legislature and Administration, working countless hours to diligently shepherd the policy through complex conversations and hammer out a final agreement. Her role is as pivotal as it is unseen, and continues on with her commitment to the implementation process to ensure that the promise of this generational policy change is fulfilled for the seniors and people with disabilities who will finally be eligible for CalFresh after decades of advocacy.

Senator Scott Wiener

Chair, Senate Human Services Committee (2018)

During the 2018 legislative session, Senator Wiener was the primary author of legislation that aims to make healthy food more affordable for CalFresh participants. Specifically, he shepherded the California Fruit and Vegetable EBT Pilot Project through the legislative and budget processes.

The legislation directs the Department of Social Services to update the EBT system to make healthy food incentives—known by a variety of names in California including Double Up Food Bucks, Market Match, and Mas Fresco—more scalable. The pilot will make incentive programs easier for grocers to adopt, simpler for CalFresh participants

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to use, and more efficient for administrators to manage. Through his bipartisan efforts, he secured \$9 million for the pilot project which, when completed, will position California to expand incentives programs statewide.

The CA Fruit and Vegetable EBT Pilot Project positions California to build on the work of Massachusetts and expand fruit and vegetable supplement programs to an unprecedented scale, which will increase purchasing power for low-income families, improving food security and public health.

Grassroots Mobilizer of the Year

Carly Finkle

Policy and Advocacy Manager, Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano

Through her sincerity, humility, and commitment to community engagement, Carly has built powerful, lasting relationships with dozens of client advocates. Her work to lift up individuals experiencing hunger and amplify their voices is a model for other direct service organizations, and she has been asked to present on it at local, statewide, and national forums.

The innovative programs Carly designed to empower and engage community members, such as Listening Sessions and Speaker Series, are incredibly effective at educating policymakers and have been crucial in the successful passage of a number of policies.

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Carly and her team of grassroots advocates spent time in Sacramento and in the district successfully advocating for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) grant increases and Cash-Out policy reversal through hearings and visits.

One of the first advocacy programs Carly designed was monthly listening sessions with Food Bank recipients. The goal has been to engage the people we serve to better understand their barriers to food access and build relationships. Out of these listening sessions Carly has identified and built relationships with several community advocates. In order to help our community advocates more effectively share their stories and amplify their voices, Carly designed and facilitated a training program. At the end of the series, the graduates joined advocates from across the state to share their stories with elected officials. Feedback from staff of elected officials was that this was a powerful way to advocate. Of the Speakers Series graduates, 100 percent said they felt more confident in their ability to speak publicly.

Orange County CalFresh Collaborative

The Orange County CalFresh Collaborative is a group of the main CalFresh Outreach Organizations that have come together on behalf of the CalFresh Eligible Community Members in Orange County to make their experience easier. The Collaborative is made up of Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, Community Action Partnership's OC Food Bank, Catholic Charities of Orange County, 211 OC, and Community Health Initiative of Orange County. These member organizations are facilitated in the

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collaborative by Orange County Food Access Coalition. The group has developed a shared appointment system, single point of contact phone number, use the same marketing materials, have a single website (ocfoodhelp.org), and synergize around outreach opportunities throughout the county.

The Collaborative's aim is to make it easier for people in Orange County to get help applying for CalFresh. With a unified appointment system, anyone can make an appointment with a CalFresh Outreach worker to help them apply for CalFresh. The group has also leveraged their collective power to connect with the County's Social Services Agency with the goal to work more collaboratively with them. We feel that this collective impact model is innovative and will continue to be refined to better serve low-income individuals in Orange County.

Gilbert Ramos

Director, San Bernardino County Transitional Assistance Department

Over the past four years, Gilbert Ramos and his Transitional Assistance Department (TAD)/CalFresh team have spearheaded a voluntary employee canned food drive in October to collect food benefiting the local Community Action Partnership San Bernardino County (CAPSBC) Food Bank for their Holiday Gift Basket Program. In 2018, TAD/CalFresh mobilized and partnered with 12 additional Human Service Departments/Support Divisions including Children's Network, Child Support, Aging and Adult Services, Preschool Services, Child and Family Services, Behavioral Health etc.

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to expand food drive participation resulting in 38,451 canned food donations—the largest food drive donation to CAPSBC Food Bank in the County! An important outcome of this effort has been the opportunity to promote the TAD/CalFresh brand, enhance communication between agencies, increase collaboration, and establish rapport with other Human Service Departments as well as the Food Bank. This ultimately leads to increased referrals and access to TAD/CalFresh. The voluntary giving of TAD/CalFresh staff continues to demonstrate compassion and caring for the community they serve.

The yearly canned food drive and the 2018 efforts to mobilize other Human Service Departments by Gilbert Ramos and his staff is an innovative approach to fighting hunger as well as enhancing communication, establishing rapport, and increasing collaboration between TAD/CalFresh and other agencies. This will in turn lead to future joint ventures as well as increased referrals and access to TAD/CalFresh.

Eli Zigas

Food and Agriculture Policy Director, SPUR

Eli worked to accelerate efforts to improve CalFresh benefit adequacy to support increased purchasing and consumption of fruits and vegetables. His team at SPUR continued to operate and expand the “Double Up Food Bucks” program at multiple retail sites. SPUR also helped lead the successful budget request to fund the California Fruit and Vegetable EBT program, which will pilot the use of the state’s EBT system to

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administer supplemental CalFresh benefits accrued when customers purchase California-grown fresh fruits and vegetables.

Outreach Leader of the Year

Alexandra Danino

CalFresh Program Manager, San Francisco/Marin Food Bank

In her role as CalFresh Program Manager, Alexandra worked to improve the reach of CalFresh as well as improve the perception of the CalFresh brand. She is dedicated to helping more clients take advantage of the benefits of CalFresh, and is a leader among her colleagues and partners.

Dave Guarino

Director of GetCalFresh.org, Code for America

Through his hard work and leadership, Dave has helped to increase access to the CalFresh Program statewide via GetCalFresh. He has worked collaboratively over the last 5 years with Counties, the State, food banks, outreach staff, and clients to ensure an equitable process and increased access for all.

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He co-founded what has become GetCalFresh.org in 2014, as the team's first software engineer, and has stepped into many roles over the past five years while the GetCalFresh work and team has drastically grown. After six years at Code for America and five years since starting what has become GetCalFresh, he will be departing the organization in mid-February 2019. He will be greatly missed.

Dave and his team developed GetCalFresh.org, a mobile-friendly application assistance tool that takes approximately 10 minutes to complete and has significantly increased access to and participation in the CalFresh Program. GetCalFresh has today assisted close to 300,000 SNAP applications across California. He even took the site a step further by creating both Spanish language and student landing pages as well as adding the SAR-7 and recertification process to GetCalFresh.

Because of Dave's work on GetCalFresh, the general public has an easy, 10-minute or less online application for CalFresh. More people are easily able to get through the online process of applying for benefits. Dave has also worked to develop a site dedicated to making it easier for the SSI population to apply for benefits. More and more food banks are also using GetCalFresh in their CalFresh outreach programming, helping them help more people apply for benefits and get through the process in a timely manner. Food banks are also leveraging the ease of use of GetCalFresh as an incentive to get other community based organizations to work on application assistance.

Dave has always centered his work on the client/user/customer, be it someone searching for food resources on google or an outreach staff at a food bank. This strategy, combined with his collaborative nature and the drive to iterate are what have made GetCalFresh so successful.

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PHFE WIC Program Heluna Health

The PHFE WIC Program is proud to be a long-standing partner with the Los Angeles (LA) County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) in helping to increase access to CalFresh, increase CalFresh participation and help our mutual population maintain these benefits as we align our efforts to reduce food insecurity and improve the health of low-income families. In addition, PHFE WIC provides leadership in numerous policy arenas that support CalFresh. Kiran Saluja, the Executive Director of PHFE WIC, actively participates in the CalFresh Advisory Task Force; Denise Gee (Deputy Director) sits on the CNAP steering committee and participates in the planning for CalFresh Awareness Month. PHFE WIC has a long history of working with DPSS beginning over 20 years ago by providing space for Eligibility Workers (EWs) to provide Medi-Cal and CalFresh enrollment services in WIC sites. We currently host EWs from DPSS and other CBOs in 31 of our WIC sites in both LA and Orange counties. Referrals are made by WIC staff for enrollment, troubleshooting and for clarification of renewal requirements (SAR-7) which helps with CalFresh benefit maintenance. This co-location of services has helped thousands of WIC families access both Medi-Cal and CalFresh in WIC sites.

In addition, computer stations in WIC sites are readily available for families to access CalFresh information online. Recently, WIC focused on an improved partnership with DPSS. WIC developed the campaign "WIC + CalFresh = Better Together" and collaborated with CNAP in both LA and Orange counties to begin sharing this message

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countywide. This powerful tagline has prevailed and has been adopted throughout California.

In May 2018, in recognition of CalFresh Awareness Month, DPSS hosted its annual CalFresh Public Charge forum at the Adams and Vermont Farmers' Market. This was at the time when the changing definition of Public Charge was creating mass confusion among end users. DPSS invited PHFE WIC to participate in this event, which convened media outlets and community leaders to help combat misinformation about CalFresh among the immigrant community. Kiran Saluja, the Executive Director of PHFE WIC, spoke passionately and convincingly about WIC and CalFresh as a "Better Together" partnership while dispelling rumors about Public Charge. As we are now planning for the summer 2019 FMNP, we have been assured by DPSS that they will expand their presence at the markets, thereby enrolling more eligible hard-to-reach families. To ensure that WIC staff are prepared to answer questions about CalFresh, WIC provides ongoing training and updates to our 600+ staff. Our staff intranet provides resource and referral information (including the Code for America website for CalFresh enrollments) so that staff have this information ready and available for WIC families. PHFE-WIC is more committed than ever to our CalFresh collaborative efforts. We are confident that these partnerships will continue to grow and strengthen to meet the changing needs of our families.

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Robin Ronkes

Public Health Nutritionist, San Bernardino Department of Public Health

Robin is excellent at promoting the CalFresh brand. She is always relaying the latest information through emails and meetings or events that she attends.

Robin has a kind soul and works tirelessly to make a positive impact on the community she serves. She brings every possible resource she can to provide information and support to her CalFresh families. She urges people and organizations like ours to attend meetings that we would not normally attend and provide information about our services that could benefit CalFresh families. She shares information about the CalFresh program with the community at Summer Feeding BBQ events and activity days that we hold in this summer.

During our Summer Feeding Program in Rialto, Robin joined several of our events and promoted both Champions for Change and CalFresh at her booth. She viewed our program as an excellent resource for CalFresh families. At these events Robin and her team were able to speak directly with the community and explain to them what these programs were and how they could benefit their families.

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Brandi Simonaro

Program Manager, CFO Program, Far North & California Higher Education
Center for Healthy Communities

Brandi has been involved with the Center for Healthy Communities (CHC) CalFresh program for over four years. She began as an intern and is currently a lead trainer for CSU, UC, Community College and private college systems in Southern and Central California. In addition she presents at summits, meetings and conferences all over California. She has created a role for herself in Southern California as a liaison between the counties and the colleges. Brandi trains organizations on outreach to food insecure college students and empowers them to create a system within their organizations that supports students applying for CalFresh and maintaining benefits. When she began this work, CHC worked closely with seven campuses—she currently helps to train and coordinate 39 campuses. In a few short months, Brandi organized 34 on-site CalFresh Outreach trainings in addition to providing technical assistance for 10 Southern California campuses. She is well respected at the trainings due to her vast experience in this area and her approachable and professional manner in which she connects with our partners. Due to Brandi's efforts, CHC is expecting a large increase in the numbers of students applying for and receiving CalFresh benefits over the next three years.

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Matt Smith

Interim Associate Vice President of Student Affairs, CSU Dominguez Hills

Matt has been inexhaustibly supportive of the burgeoning CalFresh Outreach program at Cal State Dominguez Hills. Under his leadership, the program has become a stable and connective force on campus, uniting the efforts of the Health Center, Women's Resource Center, Multicultural Center, Toro DREAMers Success Center to provide better access to food for all students. He was also influential in expanding the Hot Meal Card program through cooperation with CalFresh Outreach as part of the Basic Needs Committee's action items for the semester.

Matt makes a point of fostering an environment that is student-centered and supportive. When I approach him with a seemingly wild idea, rather than refuse it outright, we are able to massage it until it can become a reality. Having been himself a food-insecure college student in the very recent past, Matt is deeply aware of the importance of innovative solutions for navigating difficult food environments. His passion for food justice and willingness to enact change are palpable and a refreshing sight in the administrative suite.

Matt's encouragement of creative food solutions has yielded an incredible network of programs across campus. This has been the case with the collaboration between CalFresh Outreach, the Campus Urban Farm, Campus Dining, and the Food Recovery Network under the Office of Sustainability's initiative for a Sustainable Food System. The cross-promotion that these programs are able to attain under his leadership

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increases the viability of all programs and prioritizes our most vulnerable students for receiving free food on "FRN Fridays."

Darlene Spurgeon

CalFresh Program Manager, Placer Food Bank

Darlene has gone above and beyond to make sure we have strong partnerships with our senior apartment complexes, low-income apartment complexes and Food Bank Partner Agencies. Because of Darlene's leadership, we have been able to continue application assistance and bring CalFresh application approvals up!

Recently she has been able to reach out to many complexes we previously were not able to assist, she has strengthened those partnerships and scheduled outreach to assist those on SSI to understand the new changes coming this summer!

Koji Uesugi

Dean, Student Services, Mt. San Antonio College

Koji was able to spearhead our institution's goal of increasing access to CalFresh and promoting the CalFresh brand at Mt. San Antonio College. Koji, within his work to address food insecurity amongst our students, created the Mountie Fresh Food Pantry last spring which included a campus wide outreach push to help our students apply for

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CalFresh. County CalFresh workers from Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside assisted our students in attendance in applying for CalFresh. Since then, CalFresh workers from LA County have visited our campus monthly to engage with students, help them apply, and answer any questions related to CalFresh.

Koji has created a multi-disciplinary team and has combined all of these efforts to provide our students CalFresh through a campus-wide coordinated effort. He has introduced key terms like "Financial aid for food" and "Mountie Fresh" to engage campus community in conversations about CalFresh. Koji's work has allowed students at Mt. San Antonio College to feel supported in regards to issues of food insecurity.

Yaceth Virgen

CalFresh Outreach Coordinator, Second Harvest Food Bank—Santa Cruz

Yaceth has been actively doing CalFresh outreach in Santa Cruz County for over three years. She has gone to food distributions all over the county, looking for clients who potentially qualify for CalFresh, and enrolling them in the program. Increased CalFresh participation is the number one priority on Yaceth's radar and part of her yearly goal. Over the last 3 years, she has helped over 800 families apply for CalFresh, with an approval rate of 65% on these applications. Yaceth is a passionate advocate at heart, and her primary goal has been to increase the CalFresh participation rate in this county and bring food security to all low-income families. She does direct outreach at different partner agencies, soup kitchens, shelters, food distributions, and satellite offices and

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has participated in group discussions, as well as led agencies to increase the participation rate in CalFresh through innovative ideas. She also helps clients stay on benefits by assisting them in filling out and submitting their semiannual reporting.

Yaceth has worked alongside county managers to implement talking points for Benefits Representatives to use when speaking with clients about public benefits in a friendly way. As well as connect with new agencies to bring up their knowledge about CalFresh and assist with promotion and enrollment of new clients into the CalFresh program.

SSI Cash-Out Reversal Advocate of the Year

Janny Castillo

Seniors for Hope & Justice Program Coordinator, St. Mary's Center

Janny has remained dedicated year after year to educating, organizing, and inspiring her senior advocates on SSI and CalFresh. For four years straight she has organized and coached seniors to tell their compelling stories to legislators multiple times a year in Sacramento at budget hearings and legislative visits.

The impact of Janny's work and the advocacy of the Seniors for Hope and Justice uplifted the issues of seniors and those most vulnerable to hunger and the ravages of poverty to California's legislators. She has helped the voices of seniors and people with disabilities living in poverty be heard.

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Andrew Cheyne

Director of Government Affairs, California Association of Food Banks

Andrew has been spearheading the statewide effort to end SSI Cash-Out for the last three years. He has worked with legislators, testified countless times at hearings and coordinated and led grassroots advocacy efforts. He not only has been critical to the policy change, but he is working closely with DSS on implementation so that it is as seamless as possible for SSI/SSP recipients to enroll in CalFresh. He was also instrumental in securing the hold harmless provisions necessary to end Cash-Out in an equitable way. Andrew's work has galvanized recipients and advocates, locally and across the state, to ensure that their voices are the forefront of all conversations.

Diana Jensen

Senior Policy Analyst, San Francisco-Marin Food Bank

Diana has been engaged with this work since the very beginning. Her years of experience in both the systems at play and the underlying data positioned her as a natural leader when the SSI Cash-Out reversal opportunity arose. She has such a keen sense of the dynamics behind the relationships within and between counties, community-based organizations, and clients. When Cash-Out was reversed, Diana immediately began mobilizing stakeholders. She provided preliminary data analysis to stress the scale and importance of this opportunity, and was characteristically thorough in her approach to engaging all relevant stakeholders. She convened and has been

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leading a work group through the San Francisco Food Security Task Force, and has used this vehicle to engage leadership citywide in the planning process. She has an unmatched skill for drawing the best ideas out of a group and then tenaciously following up to ensure they are executed.

As a result of Diana's tireless commitment to maximizing the SSI Cash-Out reversal opportunity, both the counties we work with (San Francisco and Marin) are taking active steps to improve accessibility and improve administrative processes that will help all CalFresh recipients. The strategies she is employing are not new, but her ability to bring all the same players into a room and through her facilitation, inspire them to think creatively is exceptional.

DOGFITE

CA4SSI Coalition

DOGFITE played a vital role in the CA4SSI-organized and led statewide campaign to restore SSI/SSP grant cuts, while maintaining conversation about Cash-Out Reversal. They attended countless hearings, organized recipients to participate in lobby days and held numerous meeting with Administration officials.

Their stories of the struggles of SSI recipients and how they often went hungry were instrumental in getting the Governor to support an end to Cash-Out and the

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establishment of hold harmless programs. Their creative, persistent advocacy centering the work and voice of people on SSI was invaluable to the progress made last year.

Ronald Nagby

Hunger Action Los Angeles (HALA)

Ronald shared his personal story as an SSI recipient with numerous legislators, and when he couldn't be there in person he let us use a simple video he helped create to play for legislators, to explain the particular importance of himself as an SSI recipient to be able to get enough funds to buy healthy food and combat his diabetes. He explained how when he was occasionally hospitalized, his blood sugar would go down due to the improved diet while in the hospital: once back out his diabetic issues returned as he couldn't afford a proper diet. Ronald took advantage of a simple video on handheld devices in the palms of a dozen SSI advocates from different parts of the state to carry his voice and image to diverse legislative offices.

Ronald's story was a perfect illustration of the need and potential impact on hundreds of thousands of Californians of either increasing the State Supplemental Payment, or ending Cash-Out—or preferably, both. He helped make the connection for legislators that combining health and nutrition makes financial sense both from the recipients' point of view and from the health care budget point of view.

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Frank Tamborello

Executive Director, Hunger Action Los Angeles (HALA)

For years Frank has fought for California to change the SSI policy to help more people put food on their tables. He emerged himself with knowledge about the changes and educated many community members and advocates. Because of the work he has done, thousands of Californians will now receive CalFresh, many of whom are served by HALA in LA County.

Frank organized community members to participate at Hunger Action Day in Sacramento in May 2018 to advocate for the end of SSI Cash-Out in California. He gathered and inspired many SSI seniors to attend local legislative meetings and speak with their district representative. He also mentored undergraduate nutrition & dietetic students on a SSI-Cash-Out presentation project at California State University, Northridge. He encourages people to use CalFresh at Market Match programs in and around Los Angeles to increase spending power and improve overall nutrition, while improving the financial wellbeing of Southern California farmers. Frank also provides trainings and distribution of The People's Guide, a booklet with resources for those that need it, which includes CalFresh and SSI information.

Congratulations to ALL the Nominees!

You are an inspiration to us all, and we are honored to work beside you to improve the reach and impact of CalFresh!

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