



P A J A R O V A L L E Y  
**COMMUNITY**  
**HEALTH TRUST**

## 2017 GRANTS

The Pajaro Valley Community Health Trust recently announced the recipients of \$185,000 in grants to organizations addressing health issues in the Pajaro Valley. Fifteen organizations received grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$15,000 for projects falling within Health Trust's four strategic program areas: ***Diabetes and Its Contributing Risk Factors; Access to Care; Oral Health; and Health Professions***. The Health Trust also provided \$10,000 this year in ***scholarships*** to students from the Pajaro Valley pursuing careers in the health professions. Scholarships were given to students from Aptos High School, Pajaro Valley High School, Watsonville High School, Watsonville/Aptos Adult Education and Cabrillo College.

The following organizations received grants:

### **Diabetes and Contributing Risk Factors**

**Community Agroecology Network (CAN)** \$15,000- CAN's Community-Based Action Research approach activates a knowledge-sharing process in which community members, Mesa Verde Gardens gardeners and youth analyze and discuss research results, identify the most pressing problems they face related to food & health, and make recommendations they can implement to promote healthy lifestyles. Furthermore, youth gain valuable transferrable skills in communication and creative problem-solving, while local residents witness the strength of applying data to advocate for positive changes that foster a healthy community.

**Digital Nest** \$12,744- The funding will support the hiring of a nutrition consultant and an intern to expand the Nest's current food program – 'wellNEST' – into a more robust and nutrition-focused education initiative that is well-integrated with Digital Nest's overall mission of positive youth development and workforce education. The focus of wellNEST will be to use education and activities to establish the strong connection between youths' own dietary habits and choices and workplace wellness.

**Ecology Action** \$10,000- Health Trust funding will help support a larger effort to reach a total of 38 classrooms at 6 schools – approximately 1,140 students – in Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD) with pedestrian safety education (Walk Smart) for 2nd graders and bicycle safety education (Bike Smart) for 5th graders. These in-depth education programs promote and encourage student biking and walking in Watsonville.

**Extended Learning/Fitness 4 Life** \$15,000- This project will use garden-based nutrition education within the context of a community service-learning program in which high school students train to become Youth Wellness Leaders who help teach K-5 students. The program engages the students in learning about healthy food experientially, exposing them to a wide variety of whole foods and basic cooking skills that emphasize culturally relevant, whole foods-based cooking.

**Food, What?!** \$15,000- This project will provide youth empowerment and food justice education that uses food and farming as the vehicle for growing healthy, strong and resilient teens. Activities involve Watsonville youth and their families and include empowerment and leadership development centered around the food system; distribution of healthy, organic fruits and vegetables in weekly summer produce boxes; and stipends for youth to take on leadership roles as Junior Staff and Community Educators.

Green Ways to School \$12,000- This project will offer a free educational and recreational program that provides bikes to middle school students and instructs them in the basics of bike repair, cycling safety and nutrition education. At the end of each program session, participants leave with their own bicycle, helmet, lock, bike lights and portable tool kit. Teen graduates of ROP Bike Tech classes work with their younger peers to provide information, skills and opportunities to make biking and healthy eating social norms.

Natividad Medical Foundation \$7,500- Grant funds will be used for the *5 Steps to Prevent Diabetes Program*, a community-based, scientifically proven health promotion education program for safety net populations with varying levels of English proficiency and health literacy, and differing cultural values and beliefs. The curriculum serves as a validated diabetes prevention education program for at-risk populations, emphasizing content proven to result in increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, daily physical activity, and use of strategies that increase access to healthful foods for those living in poverty.

Second Harvest Food Bank \$12,000- Passion For Produce empowers participants to take control of their health through good nutrition and physical activity. Passion for Produce classes feature farmers market style distributions of produce and lesson topics that include: Reading Nutrition Labels, MyPlate, Rethink Your Drink, and the 52-10 Healthy Living Campaign. In addition, the classes include physical activity demonstrations of Zumba, yoga, walking, and kids' exercises that show how fun and energizing active living can be.

United Way of Santa Cruz County \$15,000- Jóvenes SANOS will continue to have a presence at the Watsonville Farmers Market, offering healthy hydration education and discussing the negative effects of sugar-sweetened beverage consumption. Jóvenes SANOS educates and supports community members to make healthier choices and be aware of the negative effects of sweetened beverage consumption. The group helps youth develop leadership skills and provides them with knowledge needed to lead healthy lives.

Watsonville Family YMCA \$15,000- In 2017, the Watsonville Y will launch Youth Fit for Life (YF4L) for children ages 5-12. Designed for after-school sites, YF4L is an evidence-based, licensed program with proven efficacy in reducing obesity and preventing diabetes. It consists of cardiovascular exercise three times a week through non-competitive activities and cooperative games. Results include significant improvements in BMI, body composition, strength and endurance, and other positive outcomes.

## **Oral Health**

Dientes Community Dental Care \$12,000- Funding will support an Oral Health Educator who will increase awareness of the importance of proactive oral hygiene by educating “influencers” – such as primary health providers, pediatricians and other health professionals – on the relationship between oral health habits and health outcomes.

Salud Para La Gente \$11,000- This project will subsidize the costs of providing dental care to uninsured low-income residents served by Salud Para La Gente's Dental team.

## **Access to Care**

Family Service Agency of the Central Coast \$12,000- This project will support the Open Arms/Brazos Abiertos initiative. The initiative provides free or low-cost mental health services to Pajaro Valley residents through distinct types of culturally appropriate services for Latina cancer patients, child sexual abuse survivors, seniors, and low-income Latinos and their families. Requested funds will support 135 individuals to access care/services.

Hospice of Santa Cruz County \$5,756- The Children's Grief Support program provides youth ages 6-17 with bilingual individual and group grief support, counseling and grief education, as well as a bereavement focused camp. The program uses a variety of techniques to help children move through feelings of loss in healthy and positive ways: role play; games; sand tray; journaling; in-school grief

education; and community-based grief education. Camp Erin offers children experiencing grief a weekend-long experience that combines fun camp activities with grief education and emotional support, all led by professionals and trained volunteers. All services are offered free of charge.

### **Health Professions**

Watsonville High School Health Academy \$5,000- This project supports students from Watsonville High School Health Academy to participate in semi-annual mentor-student dinners to expose students to professionals working in health careers of interest. Seniors also have an opportunity to conduct job shadowing at Watsonville Community Hospital each spring. The academy provides hands-on training that prepares students for careers in health and science-linked professions.