

Teen Kitchen Project

Teen Kitchen Project was founded in 2012 when Executive Director Angela Farley's four-year-old son had a bout with cancer. As a result, she was inspired to start a free healthy meal delivery program for families struggling with serious illness. The Teen Kitchen Project's mission is extremely simple and powerful – **to create healthier people, healthier communities, and a healthier environment through healing food and empowering the next generation.**

In the program, teen chefs are invited into a commercial kitchen to learn from professional chefs how to prepare healthy meals and in the process develop valuable life skills. The meals they prepare are delivered to individuals throughout Santa Cruz County who are medically fragile or in crisis due to a life-threatening illness. The food is personally and medically tailored for each specific client. The program not only provides food, but for many of the very isolated clients, it provides a much-needed connection to another person, someone who cares. Clients served by Teen Kitchen Project feel nourished and cared for during a challenging time and their hundreds of volunteers feel connected to their community and each other as they cook and deliver nutritious food. Teen Kitchen Project also hosts youth cooking classes and camps and provides affordable catering services for community events.

As soon as the COVID-19 crisis hit, Teen Kitchen Project jumped into action, playing a key role in Santa Cruz County's emergency food response. Many people who were receiving in-home support services previously are without this support now, and Teen Kitchen Project has stepped up to deliver them meals. They have increased their services 100% and have modified their eligibility criteria to address the needs of the most vulnerable in our community. They have added staffing to provide this incredible level of increased service, while remaining closed to all volunteer support to minimize risk of infection. They are also training a second line of chefs so that, in the event that someone gets sick, they have a backup staff ready to jump in. And while

volunteers cannot help in the kitchen, additional “delivery angels” are being trained as back-up to their robust volunteer team of delivery drivers.

For being creative and tenacious – meeting the needs of the community in a huge way and truly making an incredible impact for the people they serve as well as the teens who learn the value of community service, we could not be more impressed or proud to give this award to Teen Kitchen Project.