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Carrots Over Candy Bars

Grant plants the seed for youth nutrition program.

By [Kera Abraham](#)

Thursday, June 3, 2010

Everyone's Harvest has launched four Monterey County farmers markets, hosted almost 100 educational workshops and held dozens of cooking demonstrations in its eight-year effort to inspire healthier eating. But one little upstart's comment made Nicole Charles realize she needed to do more.

"What sparked it was hearing a kid say to his mom, 'Don't buy those carrots – they're dirty!'" recalls Charles, educational events manager for the Marina-based nonprofit. "There's a lack of awareness of nutrition and where our food comes from, particularly among low-income communities. Access to fresh fruits and vegetables wasn't enough."

So she spearheaded a new initiative: Edible Education for Healthy Youth. A Nancy Buck Ransom Foundation grant of more than \$22,000 funds the pilot program: three series of six free sessions over two months, mostly at markets in Greenfield, Marina and Pacific Grove.

The program aims to stave off youth obesity and Type II diabetes. Despite the county's abundant fresh produce, 21 percent of teens were obese in 2007, according to the 2008 Monterey County Health Profile.

"It sounded like a good pilot," says Jan Shepherd, the foundation's executive director. "Certainly nutrition is important to everyone."

With the help of guest speakers and mentors from CSU-Monterey Bay's Service Learning Institute, Charles will lead 9-to-15-year-olds as they interview farmers, do "vegetable yoga" – not the couch-potato pose, but broccoli-inspired asanas – and finally, present their own nutritional cooking demos.

"When the kids are learning where vegetables come from and cooking them," Charles says, "they're more inclined to eat them."

Learn more at www.everyonesharvest.org

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