



NOVATO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

1015 SEVENTH ST. • NOVATO, CALIFORNIA 94945 • TEL: (415) 897-4259 • FAX: (415) 897-4221

Leslie Benjamin
Public Information Officer

Shalee Cunningham, Ph.D.
Superintendent

September 9, 2013

CONTACT: Miguel Villarreal, Director
Food & Nutritional Services
mvillarreal@nUSD.org
707 338-7644

Congressman Huffman Visits Loma Verde Elementary School

(Novato, CA)... Congressman Jared Huffman visited Loma Verde Elementary School, served lunch to many students and heard about what they like and what they think about healthy, locally grown, organic food. While students were reluctant to try new foods, several reported, "This is really good!"



In the last 10 years, the number of students who qualify for free and reduced meals has doubled making nutrition and wellness a priority for the Novato Unified School District. If students are hungry, not getting the proper nutrition, or not getting enough exercise, their educational success is comprised. Many of these students do not have access to healthy food and other nutrition and wellness resources and that puts them at high risk for chronic illnesses, such as obesity and diabetes.

"America's future depends on our children being able to compete on a global scale, and schools like Loma Verde Elementary are ensuring they receive a world-class education that includes nutrition programs and wellness initiatives to keep them healthy and successful in school and beyond," commented Congressman Huffman after seeing firsthand how Novato Unified School District is addressing nutrition and wellness with its students.

Miguel Villarreal, [Food Service and Nutritional Services](#) Director, also hosted a forum with eight of NUSD's collaborative partners and a tour of the school garden. The forum with NUSD's collaborative partners highlighted how the district and community are working together to help change the nutrition and wellness landscape in the schools and in the community.

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"The Food and Nutritional Service Department (FANS) cannot just provide healthy food for the students and expect for the culture of wellness to improve," said Miguel Villarreal. "We must also provide families educational resources and training if we are going to see long-term sustainable changes in the health of our community. It is vitally important that we work with our community partners to enhance and sustain nutrition and wellness in our schools and in our community. "

Elena Gutfeld, the garden coordinator, provided an overview of the garden and how the teachers and students are incorporating what they learn in the garden to the classroom. Congressman Huffman observed students harvesting tomatoes and carrots which were then taken to the school cafeteria where they were placed in the salad bar. Organic greens and other organic vegetables from the local Indian Valley Community Farm and Garden are also part of the salad bar. As part of the Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools program, salad bars will be donated and installed at all elementary schools this school year.

Mrs. Eileen Smith, Loma Verde Principal, and Dr. Shalee Cunningham, NUSD Superintendent, were both appreciative that Congressman Huffman toured Loma Verde Elementary School. Dr. Cunningham stated that educating a child is no longer just reading, writing and arithmetic, today we are educating the whole child, both socially and emotionally, as well as making sure each child understands that good nutrition supports a healthy brain. She added, "We welcome opportunities to showcase the great work at our schools."



The Collaborative Partners who participated include [Joyfoodly](#), [Kaiser Permanente](#), [Lift-Levitate](#), [Indian Valley Community Organic Farm and Garden](#), [Crop Mobster](#), [Meatless Monday](#), [San Francisco\ Marin Food Bank](#), [Cal Fresh](#), and [Marin Organic](#). All these organizations work together and with NUSD to provide hundreds of families in Novato with nutrition education resources, health screenings, healthy food, farm tours, and many other nutrition and wellness opportunities.

To learn more about the Food and Nutritional (FANS) program and NUSD's efforts to improve nutrition and wellness in school and the community, please visit the [FANS website](#).

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