

making healthier communities

youth

to watch



CALIFORNIA
CONVERGENCE
LINKING YOUTH LEADERS

YOUTH TO WATCH

Making Healthier Communities

All across California, young people are living the reality of their environment every day. Youth engaged in reducing the disparities and inequities they see bring tremendous insight, strength, and dedication to the work of creating healthier environments. They hear the voice of their communities, and they have developed and implemented innovative solutions that bring about real change.

In the work that we do, we support and empower youth to seek long-lasting environmental and political change that contributes to the greater health of our society. We connect youth to policymakers, and we recognize that their engagement strengthens the democratic process.

The eight Youth to Watch we profile here represent multiple initiatives and organizations throughout the state of California, working to improve access to healthy foods and physical activity. They are a few of the many young people taking an active role in bringing about positive change.

This publication highlights some of their amazing work. You will find:

- A profile of each youth leader.
- Sidebars (Get Involved) offering ways to get involved or learn more.

Join these young leaders as they advocate for change. They seek our engagement, along with other teens, parents and neighbors, community leaders and legislators. Together, we can make a difference in the health of California.



POWER OF YOUTH **Agents of Change**

Youth speak out passionately and effectively on issues that need to be addressed in their communities. Youth mobilize communities door-to-door, and through creative social networking. They bring data and proposals before planning commissions, city councils and state legislators.

When youth are empowered, supported with the right tools and skills, and connected with a support network, they can activate entire communities, and be part of the solution.

California youth are community partners, as we all develop real, effective, action-oriented solutions to prevent obesity and chronic disease, through changes in the environment for food and physical activity – locally and at the regional and state level.

When youth speak, we pay attention. They are the voices of our communities, and the agents of change



GET INVOLVED

Take Action

CANFIT (Communities, Adolescents, Nutrition, Fitness) – Culturally resonant technical assistance for community-based and youth-serving organizations

www.canfit.org

SYBOP (Statewide Youth Board on Obesity Prevention) – Training and support for a “youth voice” in statewide programs and policies

www.californiacenter.org

California Convergence – Network catalyzing momentum to support healthy communities, through social networking and resource sharing

www.CaliforniaConvergence.org
www.CaliforniaConvergence.Ning.com

MOProject.com – Video contest for youth on improving the

health of their communities: see contestants and the honorees

www.moproject.com/ownyourhealth

JointUse.org – Resources for development and management of shared-community use of school facilities

www.JointUse.org



AFFILIATIONS:

- HEAC (Healthy Eating, Active Communities) Youth Ambassador
- CX3 (Communities of Excellence in Food, Obesity, Exercise) community survey
- Walk San Diego – making neighborhoods more walkable

IMPACT: We teamed up with community leaders in a youth-led initiative to improve Lauderbach Park, which had been trashed and was hardly used. Over 400 people came to

Gerard (Jerry) Garcia

{AGE: 18}

Student @ Castle Park High School, Chula Vista

celebrate, when we reopened the refurbished park after a cleanup, and a redesign to fit the neighbors’ needs. We did an assessment, drew up a plan for funding, met with the local church and neighbors, and advocated for changes with elected officials. All of us who worked on this project are connected to our community, and want to continue making changes. Now when I walk by the park, we see soccer games and lots of activity.

“We are the future. We will be living here. We want to make the world better and create more opportunities for people like us.”

WHY HE GOT INVOLVED: My dad influenced me to begin community service to help people improve their lives, and I wanted to do something for my community. Walk San Diego taught us to see our community in different ways, and to consider what affects our perception of safety. My friends and I used to play at Lauderbach Park as kids, and we wanted it to be safe for our community again. HEAC, CX3, Walk San Diego, and the promotoras offered us training

and guidance to make changes, and to be better leaders in our community.

FUTURE PLANS: College for civil engineering. I want to work on urban design in public works, and return to Chula Vista to make changes for our community.



AFFILIATIONS:

- Named California’s “Young Champion for Change,” at the *Network for Healthy California annual Conference*, February 2010 (nominated by Kern County Network for Children)
- Greenfield Walking Group, a founding member
- CCROPP (Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program)
- BHC (Building Healthy Communities) Steering Committee
- SYBOP (Statewide Youth Board on Obesity Prevention) Area Representative

IMPACT: We renovated Stiern Park so it would be safer for little kids, and got a great new playground. We started by cleaning up the park and building a walking path. Then we facilitated meetings with neighbors, looked at PhotoVoice photo albums on playground equipment, and worked with Kaiser Permanente, Game Time, Bakersfield Recreation and Parks, and local youth to design an accessible playground that is what the community wanted.

WHY HE GOT INVOLVED: My motivation is to help my community, and to inspire my little brothers and sister to do the right thing and have a safe place to play and exercise. We started by walking with my family, and doing exercises to prevent obesity. Then we cleaned up the park, and did videos showing a dump where kids play after-school soccer when schoolyards are locked. Now we’re working with other communities to see how we can make our communities better.

FUTURE PLANS: College and I will continue to be involved with my community.

“Teenagers can make a difference by getting together with a group of friends, working with the community, and totally change a local park.”

Oscar Encinas



{ AGE: 17 }

Student @ South High School, Bakersfield



GET INVOLVED

Take Action

HEAC – Healthy Eating, Active Communities – Model communities reshaping the food and physical activity environment
www.HealthyEatingActiveCommunities.org

YAAO (Youth Activism Against Obesity) – Youth-led obesity prevention campaign; website created by youth from Baldwin Park HEAC
www.WereFedUp.com

Mandela Marketplace – Cooperatively owned West Oakland full-service grocery
www.mandelamarketplace.org

MarketMakeovers.org – Toolkit to develop corner market conversions to healthier food options, developed by youth from Baldwin Park HEAC
www.marketmakeovers.org

RootedInCommunity – National grassroots youth network, training and fostering healthy communities through food justice
www.rootedincommunity.org



AFFILIATIONS:

- HEAC (Healthy Eating, Active Communities) Youth Ambassador
- YAAO (Youth Activism Against Obesity) and SYBOP (Statewide Youth Board on Obesity Prevention) youth leadership
- We're Fed Up.org – youth website on ways to fight obesity
- California Task Force on Youth and Workplace Wellness, member

Britanni Marie Dighero

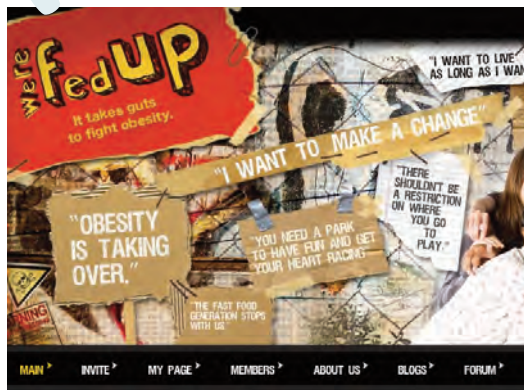
{ AGE: 18 }

Student @ Wallis Annenberg High School, The Accelerated School, South Central L.A. (2009)

IMPACT: We weren't quite done with a corner store conversion in the South Central L.A. 'food desert,' bringing fresh produce to the front of the store, painting the mural, when a mother came up, so excited to be able to get fresh fruit here. We filmed our process, and created MarketMakeovers.org to share the steps with store owners, community leaders and youth wanting to make changes. To get the message out virally to teens at a mass level, our group of teens set up WereFedUp.org; and now we

"We've created an 'aha!' moment for parents, students and community leaders. There is a problem with the food available to us, but we can create solutions in our community."

have users from all over the world.



WHY SHE GOT INVOLVED: My 'aha' moment was when HEAC showed a video at my high school, talking about youth empowerment; then I realized that there was a lot of food injustice in my community. We noticed that basic necessities were scarce at our corner store, like water (rather than sodas) for athletes after games. We had workshops and cooking classes at the school, and our mentality was that if

we got parents involved and enthused about this, their children would be exposed, too.

FUTURE PLANS: Now a Santa Monica Community College Theater Major. I am passionate about theater, which I learned from my work with HEAC. I want to be in front of or behind the camera, and to continue the food justice movement in L.A.

AFFILIATIONS:

- Kettleman City CCROPP Council (Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program)
- CCROPP Leadership Program
- SYBOP (Statewide Youth Board on Obesity Prevention)
- MoProject Honorable Mention for video on local community conditions, Walk Me Home

IMPACT: We changed our local store, bringing fruit and vegetables to the front, moving candy away from the kids, cleaning and painting the store, so families would have better food choices. Now we're meeting with the community and local officials to plan for changes that make it safer for kids crossing Highway 41 traffic to get to school.



WHY SHE GOT INVOLVED: There is a lot of obesity in our family, so I got involved in changing our community conditions, and persuading other kids to be more active. We have no sidewalks, no playgrounds, no places to exercise, no stop signs. Our Mo Project videos showed how the stores used to look, and where kids had to play. We want other teens and little kids to have better choices at the store, and more things to do after school.

FUTURE PLANS: Bring stoplights to the Highway 41 intersection in town, so it's safer for kids to get to school. I expect to go to college to become a social worker, so I can help people and help our community.

Wendy Botelle



{AGE: 16}

Student @ Avenal High School, Avenal



"We took pictures and made videos to show how people spend time in Kettleman City. We've met with local officials and state legislators to show them the conditions, and the changes we want to see."

GET INVOLVED

Take Action

CCROPP – Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program – Creating healthier communities in the central valley

www.csufresno.edu/ccchhs/institutes_programs/CCROPP

James Berk

HEAL – Healthy Eating, Active Living – Practical tools to facilitate and support community efforts for improving nutrition and physical activity

www.cthaned.org/HEALRT/highlights.htm

BHC (Building Healthy Communities) – 10-year initiative from The California Endowment, with 14 California communities planning for a healthier future

www.calendow.org/healthycommunities

Food What! - Program of youth empowerment through sustainable agriculture and health.

www.gardenclassroom.googlepages.com



{AGE: 19}

Student @ Ralph Bunche Academy, Oakland (2008)

AFFILIATIONS:

- Worker-Owner, Mandela Foods Co-op (MFC) cooperatively owned grocery store in West Oakland
- Outreach Specialist for the nonprofit Mandela Marketplace (MMP), that focuses on leadership incubation and entrepreneurial opportunities for low-income people and minority farmers
- WYSE (West Oakland Youth Standing Empowered), youth project supported by MMP
- Ashoka Youth Venture program participant. Ashoka has a network of over 2000 social entrepreneurs across more than 80 countries.
- CX3 (Communities of Excellence in Food, Obesity, Exercise), West Oakland survey of food access and walkability

IMPACT: I'm working to make healthy food and education available to the 20,000+ residents of West Oakland. We planned and implemented the opening of Mandela Foods Co-op, one of the few sources of locally grown, healthy food in West Oakland. I am now a worker-owner of the grocery cooperative.



"Food is one of the biggest factors determining how long you live."

WHY HE GOT INVOLVED: I'm motivated by a belief in the value of equality: That everyone should at least have access to the basic resources. I have worked with MMP since I was 15, starting with the CX3 survey of the local community (survey measuring the health of the environment and identifying opportunities for improvement).

FUTURE PLANS: Right now, my attention is focused on food access and education.

AFFILIATIONS:

- Youth Organizer for Rooted in Community, a national grass-roots youth network fostering healthy communities through food justice
- Intern with Food What! Program of youth empowerment through sustainable agriculture and health

IMPACT: Making healthy food and healthy decisions a normal part of teens’ lives. Training future leaders: I’ve led RootedIn-Community workshops for 150 youth from across the country, to support local actions for healthy eating and sustainable farming. We’ve brought fresh produce to the Santa Cruz Teen Center from a local farm run by high school students, and got youth to cook with us.

WHY SHE GOT INVOLVED: My work is deeply rooted in my family’s relationship to food. In a lower-class, single parent household, our options were limited and we ate fast food often. Now working on the ‘food revolution,’ I have done extensive research around food access, local access to healthy food, and am excited about bringing it to scale.

FUTURE PLANS: Community college and college. I want to challenge all of us engaged in this work to ignite this revolution of youth and adults as a mighty force.



Maya Salsedo



{AGE: 17}

Student @ Branciforte Small School & Cabrillo College, Santa Cruz



“Changing food culture is a huge lever for improving our national health, particularly when it comes to youth!”

GET INVOLVED

Take Action

Network for Healthy California
 – California Department of Public Health – Program linking communities working to improve the health of low-income Californians through increased produce consumption and physical activity

www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CPNS

Cerina Aragonés

CX3 (Communities of Excellence in Nutrition, Physical Activity & Obesity Prevention) – Measuring the community nutrition and food environment and opportunities for change
www.Ca5aday.com/CX3

Walk San Diego – Reclaiming streets to make our neighborhoods more walkable
www.WalkSanDiego.org

PPH – Partnership for the Public's Health – Partnering with local collaboratives to support change to promote health and social equity, and reverse the tide of chronic disease
www.partnershipPH.org



AFFILIATIONS:

- Youth Empowerment Team, Network for a Healthy California – improving school nutrition
- Del Norte High School Nutrition Department
- Del Norte High School Leadership Student

IMPACT: A new youth-led after-school program ('Warrior Overtime') will identify, research and advocate for changes in nutrition at our school that can improve student schoolwork, sports and health. We made a video with internet clips on nutrition to recruit students who will select a focus for our work and move it forward. This is the first time this type of student group has focused on improving nutrition at our school. We will present our findings to the School Board for action, this spring.

{ AGE: 17 }

Student @ Del Norte High School & College of the Redwoods, Crescent City

WHY SHE GOT INVOLVED: Students here often do not eat breakfast, may not exercise, and there's not a lot of access to drinking water. We learned that other schools had made changes, using the Network for a Healthy California model for action. We will be doing university-level research, analyze the data, and work with the school's Nutrition Department to find a solution that improves Del Norte.

"We made it personal, assembling videos from the internet to show the impact of nutrition, and how it could make a difference at our school."



FUTURE PLANS: College mathematics. I will be a 3-year high school graduate. I want to teach math at underprivileged high schools and at community college, and become a math professor, to help those who might not be getting quality education.

AFFILIATIONS:

- West County HEAL (Healthy Eating, Active Living) Collaborative at North Richmond - improving the environment of workplace, schools, community and healthcare
- Pacific Institute - environmental research and policy

IMPACT: Surveys of Richmond city parks that led to our advocacy for park improvements at the Planning Commission, and one student’s presentation to the City Council. We used a Pacific Institute survey tool to assess parks in all demographics of Richmond, and found parks in all sectors were in need of some improvement. Our follow-up survey a year later showed some improvements, including a refurbished Nevin Park. We raised the awareness that is the first step in making changes.



WHY HE GOT INVOLVED: I’m a lifelong Richmond resident, my father is a pastor in North Richmond, and I’ve been involved in community service through my church. I’m especially interested in how government works, and how to advocate for change. Now I’m focused on ways to get people to be more physically active and change, working with people who advocate for improving health through opportunities for health and fitness.

FUTURE PLANS: College with an emphasis on arts and science. Should I become a foreign service officer, I want to help overseas, and come back home to help my community in whatever way I can.

Wyndford Williams, Jr.



{ AGE: 17 }

Student @ Middle College
High School, San Pablo



“This work has opened me to ‘environmental justice,’ looking at socioeconomic disparities and advocacy for different opportunities.”



YOUTH TAKE ACTION

Contact Us

Partnership for the Public's Health

Project of the Public Health Institute
180 Grand Avenue, Suite 750
Oakland CA 94612
510.451.8600
www.PartnershipPH.org



CANFIT

2140 Shattuck Avenue, Suite 610
Berkeley, CA 94704
510.644.1533
www.CANFIT.org



Center for Civic Participation

1220 H Street, Suite 102
Sacramento CA 95814
916.443.2229
www.californiacenter.org

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