Cultivating Carrots, Community, and Health-Conscious Children: Investigating the Effects of Community Garden Implementation on Nutrition Attitudes of Elementary Students in the Los Angeles Unified School District

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Cultivating Carrots, Community, and Health-Conscious Children:

Investigating the Effects of Community Garden Implementation on Nutrition Attitudes of

Elementary Students in the Los Angeles Unified School District

A Thesis Presented

By

Hannah Tiedemann

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“My Happy Place” by Jacob, student of Huerta del Valle community garden
Abstract

Growing up in an urban food desert can significantly affect children's development, health, and well-being (Jencks et al., 1990; Leventhal et al., 2000). Compared to their more affluent peers, youth living in low-socioeconomic urban neighborhoods are at greater risk of experiencing poor-quality diets, food insecurity, unhealthy body weights, and mental health problems (Duncan et al., 1997; Sampson et al., 1997). Moreover, children living in food-insecure households are more likely to consume calorically dense diets high in trans fat and added sugar, putting them at risk for poor health, childhood obesity, and chronic, diet-related diseases as adults (Nielsen et al., 2002). As of July 2022, 24.3% of L.A. County households were food insecure in the past year (Bruine de Bruin 2022). About four in ten of the aforementioned families contained children highly susceptible to the damaging effects of food insecurity (Bruine de Bruin 2022). Nutrition scholars recommend developing effective nutrition programming and interventions in children to combat disease risks since studies have demonstrated that food choices regarding fruits and vegetables are formed at an early age and can be traced through adulthood (O'Dea, 2004).

Consequently, many schools and community organizations in L.A. County are looking for ways to reduce food insecurity in children and teach adequate nutrition knowledge. Community gardens and school-based nutrition programs represent a promising venue for nutrition behavior change, yet research specifically supporting youth gardening and its measured influence on young people is limited. Thus, this research proposal aims to explore the effects of garden-based nutrition education on children's fruit and vegetable consumption using a nonequivalent control group design. The following study will analyze the overall nutrition and nutrition attitudes of elementary students in L.A. County by comparing a control group to students who receive traditional classroom nutrition lessons and those that participate in hands-on, garden-based activities. It is predicted that the implementation of a community garden-based curriculum will significantly improve children's fruit and vegetable consumption and nutrition attitudes. The results of this study will have important implications for the possible inclusion of vegetable gardens within a school setting.
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Introduction

Background and Author’s Note

Inspired by courses taken to fulfill the Human Biology and Foreign Language major requirements, I founded the program "Little Sprouts" with the non-profit Lopez Urban Farm to teach elementary students about gardening, nutrition, and environmental stewardship. This experience has served as inspiration, preparation, and a case study for the ensuing thesis.

Every week, I coordinate with Lopez Elementary School and Lopez Urban Farm administration to teach groups of over thirty children about new gardening and nutrition concepts. These establishments border each other in Pomona, CA, a city only a short ten-minute drive from the five campuses that comprise the Claremont Colleges. According to the latest report published by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Pomona is home to just over 155,212 residents, 71.23% of which are Latinx\(^1\) (LA County DPH 2018). As I began to teach, I realized that the demographic composition of my classroom mirrored that of the surrounding city. Most of my students identify as Latinx and have parents who immigrated from Mexico, many of whom speak little to no English. At a very young age, these children were forced to learn how to traverse the invisible boundary between two distinct cultures while also creating an entirely new culture of their own design that combines the traditions, languages, and customs of both the United States and Mexico. With this in mind, I took the initiative to teach my classes in Spanish and English to engage every child. Now, many students readily converse with me in Spanish because it is what they are used to speaking at home and they are eager to

\(^1\) Throughout this thesis, I will use the gender-neutral and inclusive -x suffix to replace the gendered -o/-a ending of Latino and Latina, which are typical terminations of gendered words in Spanish.
learn an entirely new vocabulary indexing the exploratory process of gardening. Even the
cchildren that did not learn Spanish from a young age, have grown tremendously in their ability to
communicate with their Latinx classmates. Because of this mutual language and knowledge
exchange between my students, I have witnessed parents of entirely different cultural
backgrounds more readily interact with each other and share aspects of their lives. Before, they
would only wave before piling their kids in their car. This very experience is why I believe it is
so important to foster cultural exchange at a young age. Not only does it help children to grow in
community with each other, but it encourages their parents to do so as well.

In a bilingual environment that caters to their unique needs, my students learn about
complex topics through experiential learning that prioritizes hands-on experiences. Just last
month, we planted a pollination garden that helped solidify their understanding of the crucial role
pollinators play in both small gardens and the environment as a whole. I watched as students
who had never held seeds before dug their pudgy hands into beds of soil, quickly forgetting
about the caked dirt beneath their nails as they became completely immersed in an entirely new
world. I also actively work to involve the surrounding community and incorporate Latinx culture
into lesson plans when I can. For example, my students and I learned how to make pozole, a
traditional Mexican soup, using ingredients harvested from the garden.

For me, this program encapsulates the duality of my seemingly very different majors. I
am fortunate enough to teach children about health and nutrition, concepts I am passionate about
as a Human Biology major and aspiring nurse practitioner. Additionally, I do so in a language,
and with the cultural understanding, I have developed over the past four years at Scripps College
as a Foreign Languages major studying Spanish and Italian. I have studied food and health in
many of my biology classes, breaking down loaves of bread into chains of carbohydrates and
slices of avocados into chains of unsaturated fatty acids. However, the path that led me to pursue a dual major and, later on, this thesis made me realize that food is much more than fuel for our bodies. It is a way to meet new people, experience new cultures, and have a profound impact on those around us. Food is life in the sense that we cannot live without eating it, but it is also true in the sense that without food, there would be no life, no joy, within us. The same is true of language. It is necessary to use language (both verbal and non-verbal) to communicate with others, but it does much more for us than that. It allows us to experience community and share in love and loss. Throughout my educational career at the Claremont Colleges, I have learned much about human biology and language. However, more importantly, I learned about their essential roles in developing community which has become the goal of the following thesis: to discover, develop, and sustain a healthy community.
The Magic of Harvesting Carrots

“How did you do that? Carrots come from the grocery store,” - Sophia, Lopez Urban Farm Student, 6 years old

A class of thirty kindergarten students attending Lopez Elementary school crowded around a raised garden bed at Lopez Urban Farm in Pomona, CA. They watched expectantly as I buried my hands in freshly turned soil and occasionally held up worms and pieces of root for them to see.

"What are those weird green things, Miss Hannah?" one of my students inquired, his head cocked to one side, eyes wide.

"Yeah," a couple of others joined in, "Are they some kind of flower?" Almost at once, I could feel the presence of thirty sets of eyes on me, impatiently awaiting my response. But I paused and shrugged my shoulders.

"I don't know. What do you think?" I wanted to see if they could figure it out on their own, so I said, "Let's come up with a hypothesis together." For many, this was their first experience working in a garden, and I couldn't be more excited to introduce them to an entirely new world full of fresh fruits and vegetables. One of my most extroverted students retorted,

"There's no way those are flowers! They're too ugly!" The class erupted in laughter. Smiling, I pointed at the plants they were referring to: lush, frilly leaves that looked more like dill or parsley than anything else.
"These plants?" They nodded their heads fervently, almost in unison. "If they're not flowers, what could they be?" This time, they were the ones to shrug. However, one student timidly said,

"Maybe we could make some observations. Would that be ok Miss Hannah?" I have never been more proud than I was at that moment. I taught them about using their five senses to make observations the week before, and now they were applying that concept to real-life problems. I quietly observed as clumps of brave five and six-year-olds broke away from the group to touch and smell the leaves. Some students even pressed their ears into the moist dirt, trying their hardest to hear sounds that would clue them into the plant's identity. We spent twenty minutes (a lifetime when working with kindergarteners) simply making observations and comparisons with other known plants in the garden. When one student decided to experiment with their sense of taste, their homeroom teacher and I quickly ushered the class back to the main garden bed, where a few children were still poking and prodding the mysterious leaves.

"Well," I started, "what do you think?" Ten different hands shot up in the air, and I began fielding questions.

"It must be poisonous!" said one child.

"It can't be poisonous! I saw a bug eating it!"

"Well, it must be bug food 'cause it's green and green things taste gross." One by one, students shared their opinions, observations, and hypotheses with each other, and my timid group of kindergarteners grew into a loud, opinionated bunch that somehow concluded that these plants were sent to Earth by aliens. During this debate, I silently squatted next to the garden bed and tugged on the leaves, revealing the tangerine-colored carrot that had laid dormant beneath the soil for four months. At first, no one noticed, so I pulled on another carrot stem.
"Look!" Whispered one student pointing at the harvested produce, "Miss Hannah turned the leaves into carrots! She's magic!" Everyone fell quiet, staring at me in disbelief. Not a single one of them had witnessed a carrot being harvested before. They were quick to shout,

"How did you do that? Carrots come from the grocery store," rather than believe that the familiar vegetable grew in the ground. I took this opportunity to teach about root vegetables, how they are planted and harvested, and the benefits of consuming foods like carrots, potatoes, beets, onions, and garlic. Their eyes grew wide with wonderment and awe.

"Can we eat them?" One student asked. The rest of the group echoed,

"Yeah Miss Hannah can we?" I watched a group of kindergarteners, who did not know anything about root vegetables just ten minutes ago, harvest more than thirty carrots: their little hands covered in dirt, smiles of pride plastered on each of their faces. They were even more surprised to find out that carrots could be white, purple even. Laughter, shouts of triumph, and questions (so many questions) permeated the frigid air that morning in December. After washing our hands, we sat down around the stump of an oak tree, a makeshift table, and displayed all we had picked. Orange, white, purple carrots, a few beets, and even an odd head of garlic were arranged for all the children to see. One by one, they each took a carrot and took a bite. The cacophonous crunches intermingled with the occasional "Mmmmm" brought me more joy than I had ever experienced before. The students returned to class that day, discussing all they had witnessed in the garden: their minds full of new ideas and their arms full of carrots.

Despite returning to campus that morning and attending several classes, I could not stop thinking about the fact that my students were unaware of how carrots were grown. The simple sentence uttered by a six-year-old, "carrots come from the grocery store," plagued my every thought. It implied that before visiting Lopez Urban Farm, she did not have the opportunity to
learn where the food she eats comes from. To her, fruits and vegetables emerged as if by magic. But she is not the one to blame for this misconception.

Sophia lives in Pomona, CA, where 20% of its residents with incomes below 300% of the federal poverty level face food insecurity (LA County Public Health 2018). In comparison, only 11% of residents in the neighboring, more affluent Claremont, CA, face food insecurity (LA County DPH 2018). Moreover, less than half of Pomona's population lives in close proximity\(^2\) to a grocery store, and only 1.49 acres of public land are available for recreational space (LA County Public Health 2018). Together, these statistics highlight Pomona as one of the many food deserts in Los Angeles County. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines these spaces as places where food insecurity is prevalent, grocery store access is low, and healthier eating options are limited or nonexistent. When affordable and convenient food options are available, they usually come in the form of fast-food restaurants. In food deserts such as Pomona, grocery and produce stores are outnumbered by liquor stores, strip malls, burger joints, and Mcdonalds'. What are some of the factors at play? Poverty, housing, and race. Access to grocery stores that sell a variety of healthy foods at affordable prices has been shown by numerous studies to differ by both ethnicity and income in cities across the United States (note 1). Low-income households tend to be more food insecure than moderate and high-income households for many reasons. For one, limited access to monetary resources makes it challenging to provide adequate amounts of food (especially healthy food) on a consistent basis. Moreover, many families of low socioeconomic status do not have access to reliable public transportation and cannot afford a car. Consequently, these individuals are forced to walk to a grocery store which limits the amount and type of food they can buy due to the time and effort it takes to transport. Latinx residents comprise more than 72% of Pomona's population (LA County DPH

\(^2\) Defined by LA County Public Health Department as 0.5 miles
2018). Additionally, more than 20% of the total population is considered to be living in poverty (LA County DPH 2018). Thus, a large sector of the community where Sophia grew up is predisposed to being food insecure. Sophia was unaware of how carrots are grown because she had never seen them planted or harvested before. I later learned in a personal interview that this is one of the reasons why Sophia's parents decided to enroll her in a program at Lopez Urban Farm. "Nuestro apartamento está justo al lado del 10 (the freeway)" Sophia’s mother began "Hay concreto por todas partes y sé que es malo pero no tengo tiempo para cocinar. Tengo dos trabajos. Mi amiga me habló de este lugar (Lopez Urban Farm) y supe que mi Sophia necesitaba aprender sobre la comida. Comida real. Quiero que esté sana" [Our apartment is next to the 10 freeway. There is concrete everywhere, and I know it's bad, but I don't have time to cook. I have two jobs. My friend told me about Lopez Urban Farm, and I knew my daughter needed to learn about food. Real food. I want her to be healthy] (Virginia Personal Interview). After this interaction, I knew I wanted to delve deeper into this issue and find ways to give children like Sophia the best chance at becoming healthy adults who value sustainable living. Thus, my thesis aims to explore the ways in which community garden implementation and garden centered nutrition education at schools affects the nutrition attitude of children in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

While Sophia was mistaken in believing that carrots appear by magic, she was not wrong in realizing there is a certain magic when a child who has never handled fresh produce before harvests their first vegetable. It teaches them where their food comes from and, as this thesis will propose, helps the child to develop better attitudes towards healthy eating that will continue to serve them throughout the rest of their lives.
The Multifariousness of Health and Urban Greenspaces

“'I love the farm and I think, I think the farm loves me too! When I come here, I like it a lot because I feel happy. I smile really really really big’

- Patrick, Lopez Urban Farm Student, 5 years old3

Social Determinants of Health

Aside from the quality of and accessibility to medical services, many factors, from the individual to the international level, play a role in attaining and maintaining good health. The World Health Organization defines health as "a state of complete mental, physical, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease" (Ratzan et al. 2001). Health is not limited to physical maladies. It is multifarious in nature and encapsulates an individual's mental, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual wellness. Non-medical factors influencing health outcomes include the conditions in which individuals are born, grow, work, live and age. They may be biological, behavioral, sociocultural, economic, and ecological. In the past, mental and physical health challenges have been viewed by communities as personal problems that are best addressed through individual-based interventions. However, now, policymakers, health practitioners, and government officials are beginning to realize the vast impact environment can have on the health and well-being of not only individuals but a collective community as well. With growing knowledge about the social determinants of health conceptual framework, current health-related government interventions are more likely to incorporate environmental-based elements such as the implementation of green spaces like community gardens and urban farms. This framework

3 Personal Interview with Patrick at Lopez Urban Farm. Conducted on November 12, 2022.
challenges outdated beliefs that diseases (both chronic and acute) are outcomes of individual behaviors and traits. For example, under the old framework, unhealthy eating habits would be the sole culprit that causes obesity. However, the social determinants of health model now encourages us to consider "societal processes arising from structural factors" as variables that play a role in health and disease outcomes (Solar & Irwin, 2010). In the case of the aforementioned example, obesity might be influenced by factors such as that particular individual's socioeconomic and physical environment, genetics, education level, and cultural practices. These determinants can positively and negatively modify health and do so through biopsychosocial intermediary variables (Solar & Irwin, 2010). When an individual faces long-term social and economic adversity, they are at a higher risk for increased psychological and physiological stress (Marmot & Wilkinson 2006; Raphael, 2009). Consequently, they also experience an increased predisposition to disease as well as the development of unhealthy coping behaviors (Solar & Irwin, 2010). While it is possible for an individual to alter social and physical environments to support health and well-being, many do not have this luxury, especially families living in urban food deserts like Pomona. Consequently, social determinants of health highly influence health inequities which are defined by the World Health Organization as unfair and largely avoidable differences in health status seen within and between communities (Ratzan et al 2001.). To improve health and eliminate long-standing inequities in communities, we must appropriately address social determinants of health. Thus, a fully functional, equitable, and outstanding community system should account for all of these determinants when looking to support the health of its citizens.

In their most up-to-date conceptual framework outlining the nine social determinants integral to health and well-being, the World Health Organization includes "effects of
urbanization and associated living conditions" as a principle determinant and highlights the integral role of urban nature and vegetation in promoting public wellness (Solar & Irwin, 2010). By emphasizing urban greenspaces, the World Health Organization nods to the importance of a fast-growing and vast body of research and literature that strongly asserts that the presence of nature in urban settings greatly offsets disease risk factors associated with social determinants of health (Hordyk et al. 2015). During their "Healthy Cities" initiative that began in 1986, the World Health Organization stated that "cities themselves are 'habitats' whose conditions can be ameliorated with the goal of health promotion" (Ashton, Grey & Barnard, 1986; Hordyk et al. 2015). This campaign is still active today and continues to enact social change with the goal of "placing health high on the social and political agenda of cities by promoting health, equity and sustainable development through innovation and multisectoral change" (WHO 2020). The aforementioned approach to public health promotion shifts the sole responsibility and burden from health infrastructures toward preventive measures that commit to enhancing urban environments through community participation and intersectoral government collaboration (Ashton, Grey & Barnard, 1986). According to this framework, implementing community gardens and urban farms within urban spaces is a worthwhile endeavor as it supports the health of urban living spaces and their residents.
Defining a “Greenspace” and Its Importance

Throughout the world, very few natural spaces remain that have been unadulterated by human interaction (Cronon, 1996). Consequently, urban planners coined the term "greenspace" to refer to an urban, human-designed setting where vegetative elements such as grass, rocks, hills, trees, gardens, fields, forests, and parks are bountiful (De Vries, Verheij, Groenewegen, & Spreeuwenberg, 2003). In past literature, nature's impact in urban spaces has centered around the visual sensory experience. More simply put, the beauty nature can provide in the middle of a concrete jungle. However, nature's presence is much more than breathtaking. It can significantly improve human health. More recent research notes tactile sensory sensations (Koga & Iwasaki, 2013), soundscapes (Farina, 2004), and olfactory experiences associated with urban greenspaces as factors that positively support biopsychosocial well-being. In addition, three prominent theories within this body of research may explain why urban greenspace promotes wellness: stress reduction theory, attention restoration theory, and biophilia theory.

**Stress Reduction Theory:** This theory asserts that interaction with nature, in this case greenspaces within urban environments, reduces an individual's physiological state of stress. The proposed mechanism involves the activation of the parasympathetic nervous system, which is associated with decreased cortisol levels and allostatic load (Ulrich, Simons, Losito, Fiorito, Miles, & Zelson, 1991). Prolonged and repeated experiences in nature have been shown to have cumulatively positive effects on stress recovery and dopamine production (Jo, Hyunju, et al. 2019).

**Attention Restoration Theory:** This theory hypothesizes that the ability to concentrate may be restored by individual exposure to nature-filled environments (Ohly, Heather, et al. 2016). Additionally, research surrounding this theory supports that cognitive resources
that are depleted to support everyday activities and respond to stressors are revitalized by greenspaces (ART, Kaplan, and Kaplan, 1989).

**Biophilia Theory:** This theory argues that all humans have an evolutionary, genetic predisposition to be drawn to nature (Kellert, 2002). When this contact is revived through visits to greenspaces, like community gardens for example, it leads to biopsychosocial recovery (Barbiero et al. 2020). This body of research also notes that nature has been demonstrated to mimic an early child-caregiver attachment model (Hordyk, Dulude, Shem, 2014). Thus, individuals often experience nature as a "responsive and nurturing presence" (Hordyk, Dulude, Shem, 2014).

In addition to the benefits that each of these theories highlights, literature further emphasizes urban greenspaces as catalysts that promote healthy lifestyles (Bell, Wilson, & Liu, 2008). When parks, community gardens, and other communal greenspaces are made easily accessible, community rates of "heart disease, cerebrovascular illness, cancer, and obesity" decrease (Willis & Crabtree, 2011). Additionally, research demonstrates that green environments serve as a protective factor against "health inequality related to income deprivation" (Mitchell & Popham, 2008) as well as a space where social development is nurtured (Mass, VanDillen, Verheij & Groenewegen 2009). In response to the growing body of literature, it is no wonder that health policymakers have begun to recognize the importance of urban greenspaces as a vital tool in promoting personal and community health and wellness.
"Can you explain to me what a community garden is, Jacob?"

"I don't know for sure. It's just a place that makes me happy, and I get to play with my friends and learn stuff like how to pick vegetables. It's pretty cool. I wish I could live here cause it’s my favorite place to be. I think I like the garden more than Disneyland and I love Disneyland. You can ask my mom." -Jacob, Huerta del Valley Student, 8 years old

Defining “Community Gardens” and Relevant Academic Literature

According to an article published in 2001 by The Trust for Public Land, community gardens grew in popularity “at the turn of the 20th century and surged during the world wars in response to food shortages” (The Trust for Public Land, 2001). Though there is no standardized definition in previous literature surrounding this topic, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC 2022), the term "community garden" refers to a collaborative open space where community members come together to share in the maintenance and harvested products of the garden. Though these urban greenspaces fall under the umbrella term of "urban agriculture," they differ from other greenspaces like parks in the sense that they can cultivate affordable and healthful fresh fruits and vegetables. Some scholars categorize gardens that contain only flowers as community gardens. However, for the purposes of this thesis, when I refer to "community gardens" and "urban farms," I am particularly referencing food-producing spaces.
Before delving into the benefits of food-producing greenspaces, it is essential to understand the previous body of literature written on this topic. While collecting data for this project, I found that eighty-seven academic papers discussing community gardens were produced between 1985 and 2011. However, the majority of the literature was written between 2010 and 2011. Since then, the mention of community gardens in academic literature has been abundant. Much of the research, around 66%, is conducted in gardens within North America. Fifty-seven percent of those investigations were completed specifically in the United States. Following the United States, 6% of the literature comes from Canada, 2% from Cuba, and 1% from Mexico. Just as many studies were completed within the United States, many authors of community garden studies were from or affiliated with United States institutions. Within the United States, the majority of papers came from the east and west coast, with New York (33%) and California (20%) leading the pack. However, when looking specifically at the disciplinary scope that these papers index, most focus on "environment and city planning" as well as "society and culture." Only 9% focus on health and education, the topic I am most interested in. Additionally, most of these papers approached the research from a social science lens and focused on qualitative data. Only five studies utilized quantitative data. The propensity to use other types of data measurement, such as interviews and focus groups, could be attributed to the deeply personal nature of community garden implementation and the personal interactions with the community in question. Lastly, most published papers discussed challenges faced when implementing community gardens. The most common challenge among gardens in the United States involved difficulty and uncertainty in land access and maintenance. Some literature even discussed circumstances in which their past gardens were demolished for urban development. However, more than three-quarters of the papers reported positive outcomes from community garden
implementation. In summary, compared to other fields of work, literature on community gardens is limited in geographic and population contexts. Most examine gardens within the United States, and all studies involved adult participants. More research is needed to explore further the effects of these food-producing greenspaces on a more diverse and larger scale.
Centering Communities around Food-Producing Greenspaces

Both lack of physical activity and diets deficient in necessary micro- and macronutrients significantly contribute to the development of chronic disease (WCRF 2018). Moreover, in high-income countries like the United States, dietary risk factors are shown to directly contribute 5-14% to total death and disease morbidity (University of Washington 2020). Thus, government interventions to improve a community's dietary habits and increase physical activity are paramount when the goal is to improve public health. In response, a growing body of research suggests food-producing greenspaces like community gardens as a possible solution. During a personal interview Stephen Yorba, the founder and head farmer at Lopez Urban Farm, stated, "We need urban farms and community gardens to bring food production back to our communities where we can see it, experience it. So many people don't know where their food comes from and how long it's been sitting on the shelves of a grocery store. It's making us sick" (Yorba, Stephen. Interview. Conducted by Hannah Tiedemann. 13 November 2022). In another personal interview with the founder and head farmer at Amy's Farm, Randy Bekendam said, "The L.A. basin used to feed itself 100 years ago, and we've gotten completely away from that. So many people buy fruits and vegetables at the grocery store but have no idea what pesticides the farmers used. Even organic farmers use pesticides. If you want to eat healthy get produce from local farms or grow it yourself. Know what you're eating" (Bekendam, Randy. Interview. Conducted by Hannah Tiedemann. 11 November 2022). What are these farmers and environmental activists calling L.A. County to do? Center communities around sustainable food production. The ensuing research suggests several health benefits in doing just that.
Localizing Food Production Increases the Nutritional Value of Produce

One potential benefit of incorporating food-producing greenspaces is its promise to provide more nutritionally dense produce to consumers than store-bought fruits and vegetables. The most recent U.S. census data outlining geographic population distribution asserts that over 80% of the United States population lives in urban areas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). With this rapid urbanization comes the reality that many individuals are less likely to produce their own food or see it being grown. Most Americans do not have the space, time, or financial capacity to maintain home gardens capable of providing the government-recommended five to thirteen daily servings of vegetables and fruit year-round (Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2022). Instead, they are more likely to consume processed food or produce that has been transported long distances on a regular basis (Campbell, 2004; Clement, 2010). There are consequences to this reality that affects every individual, even those that can afford to buy organic produce at their local Whole Foods. In the United States, fresh fruits and vegetables grown in North America are likely to spend more than five days in transit following their initial harvest (Barrett 2008). Furthermore, during the winter, the United States purchases much of its produce from regions in the Southern Hemisphere resulting in transport times ranging from a few days to a couple of months (Rickman et al. 2007). Both fruits and vegetables are significant sources of micronutrients such as minerals and vitamins C, A, E, B-6, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, and folate (Barrett 2008). Additionally, they are a major source of macronutrients like fiber and phytochemicals such as carotenoids, polyphenolics, and glycosinolates, each of which positively affects individual health and nutrition (Howard et al. 1999; Barrett et al. 2007). Thus, it is no wonder why fruits and vegetables are encouraged as simple additions to a diet that can drastically improve health. However, in terms of nutritional benefits, it matters when these foods
are harvested in relation to *when* they are consumed. A growing body of research demonstrates that nutrient degradation occurs when fruits and vegetables are not consumed for a significant length of time following their harvest (Barrett 2008). This reality directly affects individuals living in urban environments that do not prioritize local food production. Urban residents are more likely to consume processed and fast food due to easy access. The study "Neighbourhood fast food exposure and consumption" found that residents of neighborhoods with more fast food locations, such as urban centers or food deserts, "were more likely to perceive fast food consumption in the neighborhood as more common and appropriate" (Van Rongen 2020). These individuals are already less likely to consume essential vitamins and minerals found in fruits and vegetables simply because they are not consuming as much as their non-urban counterparts. Thus, it is essential that the produce they do consume is at its peak nutritional value so as to maximize potential nutritional benefits. However, as mentioned previously, this is often not the case. The solution is as Stephen and Randy suggest: feed communities with the food they produce in local community gardens and farms. This way, residents learn how their food is grown, take part in its production and consume food grown only a couple blocks away from their residence. To better understand the amount of nutrient degradation that occurs in non-locally grown and consumed produce, it is helpful to analyze the loss of a particular vitamin overtime after a vegetable is harvested. Vitamin C is an essential nutrient that is not sourced in animal produce in significant amounts nor produced naturally by the human body. Thus, an individual must consume an adequate amount of Vitamin C by consuming fruits and vegetables or supplements though evidence supporting the effectiveness of supplements is still inconsistent. When an individual is deficient in Vitamin C can experience symptoms as mild as fatigue and as severe as scurvy (Johnson 2022). Consequently, it is essential to ensure adequate Vitamin C
intake. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United States (FAO), vegetables lose 15-77% of Vitamin C content only a week after harvest. The reason for such an extensive range is that the rate of loss varies from vegetable to vegetable. For example, mature spinach may lose up to 80% of its Vitamin C content after only three days (Dewhirst et al. 2017). Additionally, nutrient loss accelerates when produce is mishandled, exposed to unnecessary light and heat, or the extreme elements, all possibilities when transporting over long distances. This data demonstrates the importance of consuming locally grown food close to its initial harvest when looking to maximize nutrient intake. Consequently, implementing community gardens and urban farms that centralize food production in communities might be an effective solution in urban communities that consume more processed foods and fewer essential nutrients.
Community Gardens Increase Fruit and Vegetable Consumption in Adults

Participating in gardening, particularly when it takes place in communal spaces, is a dynamic activity that encourages experiences in nature and the development of social support networks (Lovell et al., 2014). As previous sections discuss in great detail, time spent in nature is correlated with numerous health benefits, such as stress reduction and improved mental state (Lovell et al., 2014). More promising is that food-producing greenspaces may also address "food and nutrition-related factors through fruit and vegetable production and consumption" (Kamphuis et al. 2006). Previous literature that has explored the effect of community gardening on food and nutrition-related outcomes is ever-growing. Garcia and colleagues conducted a metanalysis of twenty-four studies that investigated urban gardens and food nutrition outcomes among adults (Garcia et al. 2017). The results found increased fruit and vegetable consumption in participants, improved access to healthy foods, and improved perceptions of food that placed a higher value on cooking and organic produce (Garcia et al. 2017). In 2019, Audate and colleagues conducted a metanalysis of 101 articles that revealed the positive impacts of urban agriculture on nutrition outcomes, physical and mental health outcomes, and food security (Audate et al. 2019). Again, this study was limited to adult participants. McCormack et al. conducted a meta-analysis of 16 articles that reviewed the effects of community garden implementation in the United States. They found that both community gardens and farmers' markets have the potential to "increase access to fruits and vegetables, especially in low-income areas that have poor access to affordable, healthful foods" (McCormack et al. 2010). Lastly and more recently, Kunpeuk and colleagues conducted a meta-analysis consisting of 19 articles that explored the connection between community gardens, physical health, and nutrition outcomes among adults (Kunpeuk et al. 2019). Focusing specifically on BMI, they found that active
community garden participation decreased BMI by 0.14 kg/m² relative to residents without nearby food-producing greenspaces (Kunpeuk et al. 2020).

When considered together, these studies have promising results. However, as with most research indexing community garden benefits, they are limited to an adult population, often within the United States. Consequently, the proceeding research proposal will aim to address the question of community garden and urban farm effectiveness in positively altering nutrition attitudes in school-age children.
Proposed Research Study

Purpose

While it is true that other social determinants of health, such as family factors, play a significant role in child well-being, an abundance of research asserts that the social and physical contexts of a child's neighborhood greatly affect their health. Notably, growing up in an urban environment can significantly affect children's development, health, and well-being (Jencks et al., 1990; Leventhal et al., 2000). Poor urban neighborhoods are often plagued with inadequate community services, environmental hazards, food insecurity, violence, and limited access to nearby greenspaces and secure recreational places (Leventhal et al., 2000). Consequently, youth living in impoverished urban neighborhoods are more likely to experience poor-quality diets, unhealthy body weights, mental health problems, delinquency, criminal activity, and challenges obtaining employment compared to their more affluent peers (Duncan et al. 1997; Sampson et al. 1997). Additionally, changes in the food system in the United States within the last century have resulted in an increased number of fast-food chains, restaurants, and convenience stores, as well as an unhealthy shift in the types of food found within a child's home and their school lunch (Craypo et al., 2002). These changes in the American diet are paralleled by the drastic increase in childhood obesity prevalence across the United States as well as the unhealthy dietary tendencies among urban youth to consume calorically dense diets high in trans fat and added sugar (Lin et al., 2001; Nielsen et al., 2002). Studies have demonstrated that food choices regarding fruits and vegetables are developed at an early age and can be traced through adulthood (O'Dea 2004). Thus nutritional education and improved childhood nutrition can reduce the prevalence of obesity and, consequently, chronic, diet-related diseases later in life (O'Dea 2004). Nutrition
scholars recommend developing effective nutrition programming and interventions early in life to combat potential disease risks. In response to these recommendations, many schools and community organizations are looking for ways to teach children about nutrition and the food system and provide them with the tools they need to grow into health-conscious adults. Currently, in most schools in the United States, nutrition education occurs within the four walls of the classroom and has proven ineffective in raising conscious, intuitive eaters likely to consume a variety of fruits and vegetables. However, re-localizing agriculture through the implementation of community gardens and school-based nutrition programs represents a promising venue for nutrition behavior change. Yet, despite the potential of urban community gardens, research specifically supporting youth gardening and its measured influence on young people is limited. Additionally, current research focuses primarily on rural, affluent, Caucasian populations (Morris et al., 2002; Morris and Zidenberg-Cherr, 2002; Twiss et al., 2003). Sadly, this lack of diverse research makes it difficult for schools and community organizations to gain momentum and support when advocating for the implementation of food-producing greenspaces. Donors are less likely to support these community improvement projects if there is insufficient research that ensures their efforts will be worthwhile. Thus, my research proposal aims to fill the gap in this body of literature by exploring the effects of garden-based nutrition education on children's fruit and vegetable consumption compared to traditional, classroom-based nutrition education using a nonequivalent control group design.
Methods

The following study will examine the effects of garden-based nutrition education on children's fruit and vegetable consumption and nutrition attitudes compared to traditional, classroom-based nutrition instruction.

Subjects

For this study, subjects will be selected from elementary schools in Los Angeles County based on the school's percentage of students eligible for Free and Reduced Price Meals (FRPM). In California, students are eligible for FRPM if their family income falls below 185% of the federal poverty guideline. For example, children would receive FRPM if their family of four earned a total income of $48,470 (California Department of Education, 2022). In 2022, 68.7% of students in Los Angeles County were eligible for FRPM (California Department of Education 2022). This percentage is greater than 58% of all counties in California (California Department of Education 2022). As aforementioned studies have demonstrated, children of low-socioeconomic status will have lower baseline nutrition knowledge compared to their more affluent peers (Truesdale et al., 2019). Additionally, studies indicate that few children of low socioeconomic status consume high-quality, nutritious diets (Truesdale et al., 2019). Consequently, to observe the most apparent results in each treatment group compared to the control, this study will focus on subjects attending elementary schools with the highest percentage of students eligible for FRPM. Figure 1 below depicts data derived from the California Department of Education that indexes elementary schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District and their respective percentage of students eligible for FRPM. This study will randomly select participants from three elementary schools due to their high rate of
FRPM-eligible students. Given the data outlined in Figure 1, three possible schools would be Ann Street Elementary (100% FRPM eligibility), Compton Avenue Elementary (100% FRPM eligibility), and Watts Learning Center (99.7% FRPM eligibility). Each school's sample population will have a similar representation of ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic traits. A preliminary power analysis will be conducted to determine the number of subjects needed for the study. Subjects will only be eligible if they turn in signed parental consent and child assent forms.

Figure 1: LAUSD elementary schools and their percentage of students eligible for FRPM
Procedure

The following study will examine the effects of garden-based nutrition education on children's fruit and vegetable consumption and nutrition attitudes compared to traditional, classroom-based nutrition instruction. The study will take place over the course of the 180 days of an LAUSD school year. Study participants obtained utilizing the methods outlined above will be randomly assigned to three groups: Control, Treatment Group 1, and Treatment Group 2. Each group will complete a self-assessment and food-recall workbook at the study's beginning, middle, and end.

**Self-assessments and food-recall workbooks:** Self-assessments and food-recall workbooks will be administered in assigned classrooms by homeroom teachers. The food recall workbook is a nutrition assessment tool developed by Barbara Jendrysik and is used by most nutrition studies involving children and adolescents (Jendrysik 1991). These assessments will ask participants various questions assessing their overall nutrition and nutrition attitudes. Teachers will receive training regarding the parameters of the study prior to the experiment's start. Additionally, students will receive instruction on how to accurately report food intake and respond to the questions outlined in the workbook. Since this study will include participants with a wide range of ages and skill levels, workbooks will consist of age-appropriate instructions and illustrations when appropriate. When students complete the assessment, workbooks will be collected by an unbiased third party and checked for completeness. Only participants who complete at least two of the three required workbooks will be included in the study.
Treatment Groups:

1. Control: Participants in the control group will complete the assessments at the beginning, middle, and end of the experiment but will receive no further intervention.

2. Treatment Group 1: Participants in Treatment Group 1 will complete the assessments at the beginning, middle, and end of the experiment and will also participate in a classroom-based nutrition education program. This program will be taught by the homeroom teacher using a nutrition curriculum guide. This guide will provide lessons on nutrition and gardening.

3. Treatment Group 2: Participants in Treatment Group 2 will complete the assessments at the beginning, middle, and end of the experiment, partake in the nutrition education program and participate in hands-on, garden-based activities that coordinate with the nutrition concepts learned in class. Garden activities might include but are not limited to planting and harvesting produce, cooking, and composting. The garden utilized by Treatment Group 2 will be located on campus and paid for using grant money obtained for this study.

Variables

The independent variable in this study is the type of nutrition education the child receives (none, classroom-based, and garden-based). In comparison, the dependent variable is the child's attitudes toward nutrition measured using self-assessments and food-recall workbooks.
Statistical Analysis

Student food consumption and nutrient intake were based on self-reports provided by the food-recall workbooks. This data will be analyzed using Diet Analysis software. Subsequently, utilizing SPSS statistical software version 19.0, a repeated-measures one-way ANOVA test will be conducted using calculated daily fruit and vegetable servings, vitamin C (mg/day), vitamin A (μg retinol activity equivalents/day), and fiber (g/day) intake. These analyses will be conducted at the study's beginning, middle, and end in correspondence with the completion of student self-assessment. A P value of 0.05 will indicate statistical significance. A post hoc analysis will also be conducted.
Expected Results and Discussion

School and community gardening programs are emerging across the United States and for a good reason. They promise to provide children with food-secure environments and exceptionally unique nutrition education. However, despite there being nearly 5,000 school gardens across the United States, as reported by the USDA, there are still very few studies that quantitatively report the effect of community garden implementation on children's nutrition attitudes and fruit and vegetable consumption. Thus, the aforementioned proposed research study will fill in the apparent gap in this body of literature by exploring the differences between three groups: a control (no intervention), treatment 1 (classroom-based nutrition education), and treatment 2 (garden-based nutrition education). Given the overwhelming amount of studies providing evidence for the benefits of community garden implementation on adult health, as well as qualitative data collected during the interviews for this thesis, I predict that fruit and vegetable consumption and nutrition attitudes will improve significantly in treatment group 2. This will be measured by significant increases in the students' fruit and vegetable servings, vitamin A and C intake, and fiber intake. Additionally, there is expected to be an improvement in nutrition attitudes in treatment group 1 compared to the control. However, we do not anticipate that the observed changes in treatment group 1 and the control will be significant. The expected results of this study will help to quantitatively demonstrate the importance of community gardens and hands-on nutrition education as directly related to fruit and vegetable consumption in children. We also expect to qualitatively observe improvements in participants' self-efficacy in fruit and vegetable preparation. We hope this study will aid future research efforts in supporting community garden implementation and developing adequate nutrition curricula.
Limitations:

While we believe that this study will positively contribute to the body of academic literature detailing the effect of community garden implementation on children's nutrition attitudes, we recognize that it is not without limitations. Given that the study will only last for 180 days, it will be difficult to determine if community garden implementation results in prolonged behavior change. Additionally, the results of this study should be interpreted with caution since the data in this is entirely self-reported by students. Other factors, such as the nutrition attitudes of parents, could influence results. We suggest that future studies be done to test the hypothesis further that community garden implementation improves children's fruit and vegetable consumption.
Esta tesis fue una oportunidad increíble para practicar mi español y conocer a muchos individuos Latinx en mi comunidad circundante. Aunque por razones éticas no pude examinar únicamente los efectos de los huertos comunitarios en los niños Latinx en mi estudio de investigación, mis datos cualitativos (las entrevistas) se centraron realmente en la comunidad Latinx porque son los individuos más afectados por la inseguridad alimenticia en Los Ángeles. Además, los miembros de la comunidad Latinx son pioneros en la implantación de huertos comunitarios. De las entrevistas, he aprendido mucho sobre el impacto que los huertos comunitarios pueden tener en las comunidades, especialmente en la comunidad Latinx. Debido a una larga historia de racismo institucionalizado y de segregación residencial racial, muchas personas Latinx que viven en California se han visto obligadas a vivir en barrios no deseados de otras personas especialmente personas blancas. Esto incluye a las comunidades con altos niveles de pobreza, las situadas en desiertos alimentarios y en las proximidades de las autopistas. Esto no sólo limita la cantidad de espacios verdes a los que estas familias tienen acceso, sino que también las pone en riesgo de sufrir una pléctora de condiciones de salud perjudiciales asociadas a su mal ambiente de vida. Observé que muchas de las familias que participaban en las actividades de las tres granjas urbanas/huertos comunitarios que visité eran familias Latinx de habla español. Según los jefes de las jardines, también eran las personas que visitaban el huerto con mayor regularidad y estaban más dispuestas a ofrecer su tiempo para ayudar a mantener el huerto. Al hablar con estas familias, siempre mencionaban lo agradecidas que estaban por tener acceso a frutas y verduras tan cerca de sus casas. Algunos incluso dijeron que se habían convertido en personas más felices en su vida cotidiana después de participar en estos espacios verdes. De mi interacción
personal con esta comunidad se desprende que los huertos comunitarios y las granjas urbanas pueden ser una solución viable a la pobreza e inseguridad alimenticia en la comunidad Latinx.

A lo largo de esta experiencia he impartido clases de nutrición en español, he llevado a cabo entrevistas de una hora de duración en español y he transcrito las grabaciones de voces de las entrevistas a transcripciones en español. ¡Qué increíble oportunidad ha sido ésta! Mientras escribía esta tesis tuve la oportunidad de escuchar a muchas personas diferentes hablar sobre la comunidad y las diversas formas en que la han cambiado para mejor. Todos estos individuos se centraron en algo diferente. Por ejemplo, un jardinero creó un sentido de comunidad cosechando bellotas e incorporándolas a una dieta moderna haciendo tortillas, mientras que otro lo hizo creando pintura natural a partir de claras de huevo y tintes vegetales encontrados en el jardín comunitario de Buena Vista. Al observar a estos individuos aprendí que no hay una única forma "correcta" de encontrar y crear comunidad. Como me explicó el granjero Stephen, cuando nos sentimos llamados a hacer algo, algo que realmente estamos destinados a hacer, no estaremos satisfechos hasta que hagamos ese "algo" y compartamos nuestras experiencias con los demás. Así es como me sentí cuando visité Lopez Urban Farm por primera vez. Tuve ese "saber", ese profundo sentido de pertenencia y el deseo de formar parte de la comunidad de allí.

Inmediatamente después de asistir a la clase en Lopez Urban Farm, hablé con Stephen sobre la creación de un programa en el jardín para los niños de la escuela cercana. Creo que estaba predestinado porque Stephen dijo que una maestra de preescolar se había puesto en contacto con él ese mismo día preguntando si había alguien interesado en enseñar a su clase sobre jardinería. Estaba más que emocionada y no podía creer que se me presentara la oportunidad de hacer lo que me gusta: ¡enseñar a los niños! Desde el principio supe que quería enseñarles sobre el huerto y los alimentos que comen porque me he dado cuenta de la importancia que tiene el acceso a
alimentos sanos en el desarrollo de los jóvenes. El objetivo a corto plazo del programa que he creado es mostrar a los jóvenes que viven en desiertos alimenticios como Pomona los principios de la construcción de la comunidad y la seguridad alimenticia a través del cultivo, la distribución y la preparación de frutas y verduras frescas de un huerto autosuficiente. Mi objetivo a largo plazo se centra en mejorar las oportunidades sociales, emocionales, físicas y educativas de los jóvenes que de otro modo no tendrían acceso a estas oportunidades. También quería demostrar la importancia de aprender diferentes idiomas. Muchos de los niños a los que enseño hablan español en casa pero inglés en la escuela. Cuando empecé a hablarles en español durante nuestra clase, a menudo me respondían en inglés. Uno de los alumnos llegó a decirme que no debía hablar en español en la escuela porque no era correcto. Eso me entristeció mucho porque demostró que el español no se valora tanto como el inglés en un entorno académico. Durante todo el tiempo que he estado con ellos, he intentado mostrar lo valioso que es ser bilingüe y, francamente, lo genial que es saber más de un idioma. ¡Ahora muchos de ellos hablan español conmigo! Incluso los alumnos que no saben español intentan decir palabras y frases. Un chico muy dulce sólo sabe decir "como te llamas", pero eso no le impide decírmelo a cada momento. Yo también siento que he aprendido un nuevo idioma gracias a este proyecto. Antes de esta experiencia, no conocía los nombres de las plantas en español, ¡pero ahora sí! Mirando hacia atrás en mi proyecto, a menudo olvido lo mucho que me costó al principio. No me daba cuenta de la cantidad de organización y disciplina que me iba a exigir. Incluso antes de empezar mi proyecto y de conocer a los niños, tuve que preparar los planes de las clases, revisarlos, coordinarme con un socio docente y conseguir la aprobación tanto de Lopez Urban Farm como de la escuela cercana. La comunicación fue una parte importante de este proceso, y se pusieron a prueba mis habilidades para relacionarme y negociar con los adultos y las figuras de autoridad.
Aprendí mucho de este proyecto y también sobre mí misma. Mi carácter y mi deseo de trabajar con los niños de la escuela me proporcionaron la motivación y la energía necesarias para lograr mi objetivo, complejo y a largo plazo, y fue mi pensamiento crítico el que dio orden a mi proceso para lograrlo.

Estoy muy agradecida por haber tenido esta oportunidad. Quiero a los niños a los que he enseñado y con quien he hablado con todo mi corazón. Son excepcionalmente inteligentes, amables y cariñosos. Espero que mi proyecto continúe el año que viene y durante muchos años después. Realmente este proyecto ha cambiado mi vida.
Interviews and Conclusion Statement

One of the most significant and impactful parts of developing this thesis was conducting interviews with members of the surrounding community regarding their experience with three different community gardens/urban farms: Lopez Urban Farm, Huerta del Valley, and Amy's Farm. I spoke with children, their families, and the founders of the aforementioned farms. Some of the interviews were conducted in English, others in Spanish, and three lasted for over an hour. I later transcribed all of these interviews and included them in the section below. While it was a lot of work to create connections to find the individuals I would interview, coordinate schedules, conduct the interviews, and transcribe them, I would not trade this experience for the world. Through these interactions, I was better able to understand the issue at hand and realize that my completing this thesis would positively impact the lives of everyone I spoke to. It put a face to those affected by the problems of food deserts and food insecurities prevalent in Pomona, and I was able to witness firsthand how community gardens and food-producing greenspaces mitigated the detrimental effects of urbanization. It was clear that these spaces positively impacted the children and their families. This is why I am so confident in my expected results and discussion section. I have seen what the educational nutrition programs at Lopez Urban Farm and Huerta del Valley mean to the surrounding community. The work of Farmer Stephen, María, and Randy is astounding. Moments like when 9-year-old Leon shared with me that he used not to touch vegetables, but now he likes them because he learned how to plant them made it all worth it. "Because I mean, I know I don't like vegetables a lot. But I still like to harvest them. Yeah. It just feels like it's a nice experience. It's a nice experience," said Leon. "I used to not even want to touch them [vegetables] because they freaked me out but now I like them" (Personal Interview 2022). In another interview, five-year-old Oliver told me, "My favorite vegetable is swiss chard.
It's really yummy" (Personal Interview 2022). His father, George, later shared that Oliver would only eat fruit before coming to Lopez Urban Farm, and now he eats a plethora of vegetables. Other moments I will never forget like during the interview with Andrés, the father of eight-year-old Jacob, when he (almost in tears) said that he was so grateful to Huerta del Valley because it provided his son with a greenspace to live, to eat healthy food: "allí él [Jacobo] prendió a caminar" [Here my son learned to walk] (Personal Interview 2022). André emphasized that Huerta del Valley wasn't just a place to garden. It was a place to raise his family. Andrés continued by saying "Jacobo fue creciendo y como me miraba que yo plantaba plantas como lechuga o Broccoli o ponía semillas como cilantro y otras cosas más y él me decía, “Lo puedo hacer yo? Le digo, “Sí.” No más le enseñaba como hacerlo. Y él fue conociendo así las plantas. Las primeras que conoció fueron las fresas, los jitomates" [Jacob was growing up in the garden, and as he watched me plant plants like lettuce or Broccoli or put in seeds like cilantro and other things and he would say, "Can I do that? I tell him, "Yes." I would just show him how to do it. And he got to know the plants that way. The first ones he knew were strawberries and tomatoes] (Personal Interview 2022). The work of these urban farms is promising, especially when it comes to teaching students about nutrition. As Farmer Stephen said in a personal interview: "You can talk about ecosystems and how they work. But when they can actually come out to the farm, and experience and see and interact with this, this ecosystem that we have, that they can see how food grows in the field, and also plant seed themselves and grow their own food, I think that's really valuable. You know, you're taking the theory in the classroom and putting it into practice spaces like this. And if kids had this opportunity across the school district, I think that we would see, we would probably see a lot of things happen in terms of retention and learning. As well as the enthusiasm that kids have for going to school. And there's been a lot of research
about agriculture education, agriculture curriculum in elementary school" (Personal Interview 2022).

These gardens provide students with the invaluable experience of getting a hands-on education while also learning about adequate nutrition and sustainable food production. I hope this project serves as a jumping-off point for future research to explore the importance of implementing food-producing greenspaces at the heart of every community. As Farmer Randy said, "If you ever have children and the ability to grow food at home or in a community garden, do it. Be the example for the next generation" (Personal Interview 2022). I am so grateful to have had this opportunity. I love the children I have taught and spoken to with all my heart. And the community leaders Stephen, Randy, and María are inspirational. Everyone that helped me complete this thesis are exceptionally intelligent, kind, and caring. I hope my project will continue next year and for many years to come. Truly this thesis has changed my life.
Full Interview with Andrés (En español)

Andrés is the head farmer at Huerta del Valley community garden in Ontario, CA. After leaving his job working in a furniture warehouse, he was hired by María Alonso and planned to work as a farmer temporarily to support his family. Andrés quickly fell in love with farming and has worked with María ever since. His son, Jacob, learned to walk at Huerta del Valley and now knows more about fruit and vegetables than Andrés did at eight years old. I conducted the following interview in Spanish at Andrés' home on November 10, 2022. Andrés would like to note this his native tongue is the indigenous Nawat language, and he learned Spanish and English by reading and transcribing the Bible.

Hannah: Ahora sí ...cuál es su nombre?

Andrés: Ok. Mi nombre es Andres Niquario. Trabajo en huerta del valle lugar communitario y yo llegué en el 2013. Yo conocí a huerta dos mil veces porque andaba buscando una casa de renta y la señora Maria llegó allí en el parqueadero y nos dijo que si unos se nos interesaba**(tener)**un espacio de diez por viente

Hannah: Ok.

Andrés: Y este espacio era para nosotros.. lo que íbamos a sembrar y cosechar allí era para nosotros. Y sí, sí me interesó mucho. No, no, no, la pensé..lo que vamos agarrando empezamos a trabajar.. y nos empezamos a involucrar también con huerta y sí pues así conocimos a huerta.. y pues María es la fundadora del jardín. Y pues ya ya allí venia Jacob en el camino.

Hannah: Yeah?!

Andrés: Sí. Y él nació en huerta

Hannah: En el jardín, Wow!

Andrés: Y allí él prendió a caminar.
Hannah: Wow! Qué lindo.

Andrés: Se caía allí pero no le dolía porque había mucho “mulching” y se levantaba y así aprendió muy fácil a caminar.

Hannah: Sí

Andrés: Como que le servio mucho lo del “mulching” porque esta, sí (referring to the mulch softness) Yeah. Y así nos fuimos más y más involucrando y hasta que pues ya. Empece a trabajar en tiempo completo en el 2019. Yo tenía mi trabajo, trabajo aparte.

Hannah: Okay. y qué trabajo aparte tenía?

Andrés: Yo trabajaba en un wharehouse de mueblerías “furnitures” fork lift driver

Hannah: Okay. Este trabajo es muy peligroso.

Andrés: Yeah. Muy peligroso. Y yo entraba a las ocho en este trabajo, las ocho y media y salí a las cinco.

Hannah: wow

Andrés: En el lugar que llegar a mi casa, yo iba a huerta, llegaba a huerta.

Hannah: wow para trabajar más?

Andrés: para sí trabajar.. y a mi me ayuda bastante huerta todo el stress que traía de mi trabajo lo venía dejar en huerta. Y me sentía muy bien. Y si así fui más involucrando y ya después, María me ofreció que si quería un “part time” allá en huerta. Pues si les puedo ayudar. “Yeah.” En el 2019 me ofreció full time. Y yo no soy de esas personas.. yo no pensé en, en.. ¿cómo se dice? El pago? Lo del ***? Yo allá ganaba un poco más en mi trabajo aquí después sigue un poco menos pero yo le di gracias a Dios, y ahorita estoy ganando más.

Hannah: Wow. Felicidades!

Andrés: Después de dos años estoy ganando poquito más. Y ya.
Hannah: Y trabajo es más divertido, también.

Andrés: Es muy divertido el trabajo en huerta y se pasa el tiempo bien rápido. Más ganado, me gusta mucho la naturaleza, las plantas o sea darles como crecer... si como que te ayudan ...te sientes libre.

Hannah: Sí wow. Qué lindo.

Andrés: Ya esto es lo que es huerta. Voy siempre que les invito a la gente que vengan a huerta que traigan a sus niños. Y de allí pues Jacob fue creciendo y como me miraba que yo plantaba plantas como lechuga o Broccoli o ponía semillas como cilantro y otras cosas más y él me decía, “Lo puedo hacer yo? Le digo, “Sí.” No más le enseñaba como hacerlo. Y él fue conociendo así las plantas. Las primeras que conoció fueron las fresas, los jitomates.

Hannah: Mmmm me encantan los jitomates...

Andrés: Allá así él fue conociendo todas las zanahorias y digo que le haya ayudado bastante y de su salud, pues la verdad el nunca se enfermado mucho o sea seguido. O si se enferma, le pega la gripa... algo normal ... nunca se enfermado así gravemente.

Hannah: Gracias a Dios.

Andrés: Ya. Y yo pienso que eso le haya ayudado bastante también. Sí

Hannah: ¿Por cuántos años viven en Pomona...o dónde?

Andrés: Yo viví antes de conocer a huerta, vivíamos en Upland. En Upland.

Hannah: En Upland? Ok, siempre me olvido de los nombres. (Ja Ja)

Andrés: Vivimos dos años allí. Y después nos movimos a un **? muy cerca de huerta y allí nos vivimos cuatro años. Allí en un lado de donde esta huerta y ahorita vamos dos años también viviendo.

Hannah: Ok. ¿Le gusta el lugar dónde vive?
Andrés: Sí, es muy tranquilo. Muy tranquilo o sea nada de problemas.

Hannah: Hay muchos espacios verdes donde vive y también desearía que hubiera más?


Hannah: Perfecto. ¿Cree que nuestro ambiente puede afectar a nuestra salud?

Andrés: Sí lo afecta porque de lo que veo ya en las ciudades **donde entran los camiones, los trailers, y como el freeway, el 10 y el 60 hay mucha polución. Del ***del tren. No queremos que pasan esto, la verdad, puede causar muchos accidentes, el tren lleva muchas cosas. Yo pienso que lleva petroleo o cosas que pueda quemar muy fácil si pasa un accidente. Sí, todo eso afecta nuestra salud.

Hannah: Gracias. ¿Aparte de La Huerta del Valle, tienen ustedes y sus vecinos acceso a frutas y verduras frescas?

Andrés: Sí muy fácil en huerta. Todos tenemos acceso a la verdura o la fruta.

Hannah: Pero solamente huerta?

Andrés: Sí solamente Huerta. Todos tenemos acceso a la verdura o la fruta. Yo, prácticamente yo ya no compro en la tienda. La verdad yo nosotros estamos bendecidos ya no compro en las tiendas y pues no más lo básico lo que por ejemplo pues sí quiero uno comer como carne o así pues y también lo podemos tener en huerta o sea en otros lados mucho o sea tener carne orgánica o sea lo que uno produzca pues.
Hannah: Esta es una pregunta un poco más difícil, creo que el nivel socio económico influye la salud de esta persona. Y también la raza de una persona tiene un papel en la salud y la nutrición.

Andrés: Es un poco más difícil. No sé si es la pregunta que. Pues la, la la, o sea, la raza. ¿Te refieres a las razas de diferentes personas. Sí, a. Pasa mucho. No sé si es la palabra que. Es que no, no, no le entendí muy bien. Por ejemplo para mi trabajo una y otra vez. Yo también, por eso mismo me salí. Porque llegaban personas nuevas. Casi ganaban lo mismo que uno que trabajaban allí por más tiempo. En el trabajo, o sea. Cosa más años, no sé si esa es la pregunta.

Hannah: ¿Piensa que la raza de una persona puede afectar el acceso de uno con las frutas y verduras frescas. ¿O si la raza puede afectar una persona? (Asking Jacob for help re “amount” in Spanish. (Cantidad) Si una persona es pobre versus una persona con dinero... (Trying to clarify question for Andres)


Hannah: Por qué en las tiendas es más caro? Tiendas versus en el jardín?

Andrés: Porque huerta es por eso a... a dice María. Por eso a esta huerta, para ayudar a la comunidad. Y si una persona que tiene dinero, se le dice o qué cuesta tanto? ¿Pero si esa persona no lo puede pagar? ¿Ok? Puedes dar lo que tú quieras, o lo que puedas. ¿Y sí y si la persona le dice que? ¿No dice nada, OK? Lo paga. Es como ayudar a la gente que no tiene dinero y también tiene una opción la gente que tiene dinero, se le dice OK tanto. Ellos pueden pagar. Para apoyar las personas que no pueden pagar. Sí. Sí Yotro. Nosotros. A huerta. Todo lo que sacamos de
producción tratamos de no vender mucho en las tiendas..por ejemplo estamos Entregándole unas órdenes a Los Ángeles. Una tienda que es pura orgánica. Y un “bunche” de zanahorías pero lo pagan a 3 USD y lo dan $4.50. Sí. Tratamos de no llevar mucho mover la verdura para allá donde hay dinero si no que acá con la gente. Pero también, como te digo, se les dice si lo pueden pagar. Está bien para que huerta se puede llegar sostenible la huerta. Y eso eso es lo que se le dice a la gente. No sé si fue claro.

Hannah: Qué buen sistema.

Hannah: Ok. Sobre nutrición... ¿Cree que usted es sano porque si o porque no?

Andrés: Sí, yo me siento muy bien, gracias a dios, umm como te digo... yo me siento muy bien..el otro día Maria me dice..yo tengo otro hermano..ella (commmented on him being bigger than his brother even though he was the younger brother. tú eres el el mayor o el más dice pero te miras más o sea el mayor y) no sé si por el trabajo que hago en huerta o por lo que consumimos pero si yo me siento muy bien. Antes de llegar a huerta sí me sentía no no me sentía muy bien.. porque mi trabajo antes.. pero ahora me siento muy bien..diario con ganas de trabajar y seguir adelante.

Hannah: Y su familia? Está sana?

Andrés: Mi familia? Si yo pienso que sí porque pues nunca nos hemos enfermado que lleguemos al hospital gracias a dios que no y tampoco nunca ha llegado al hospital.. si una vez llegó porque si le pego una calentura muy fuerte y no más fue eso. Y su salud esta muy bien.

Hannah: ¿Cenan usted y su familia juntos y también cocinan mucho o comen en restaurantes?

Andrés: No Cuando andamos en huerta tratamos de cocinar... mi esposa pues tratamos de que cocinen huerta o cuando anda allí y andamos cansados compramos comida. Pero sí pues cocinamos allí en huerta como nosotros cocinamos mucho los frijoles sí y y pues lo normal..la
calabacita Zucchini y hacemos una salsa con jitomates con todo lo que es de huerta y unos huevos allí.

Hannah: ¿Hay gallinas en huerta?

Andrés: Sí. Tenemos gallinas. Se ponen los huevos...son muy buenos, muy sabrosos.muy frescos

Hannah: ¿Cuál es su tipo de comida favorita?

Andrés: Mi la comida que a mí más me me gusta.. me han preguntado varias veces... me gusta mucho la comida china... me gusta la verdura

Hannah: A mi también. ¿Cree que su cultura incluye en su alimentación comida la manera de comer?

Andrés: Sí. y cuando yo tengo una hermana aquí y cuando va a huerta, ella cocina allá. Tiene un sabor diferente que mi mama hace o mi hermana hace.. es un poco diferente de como nosotros cocinamos porque no sabemos los ingredientes.

Hannah: ¿Cuando era niño, su mama cocinaba todo el tiempo?

Andrés: Mi mama siempre cocinaba porque nosotros somos de un pueblo un rancho..ella cocina a las nueve de la mañana y otra vez a las dos o la una...y las cuatro o las cinco, la cena. Allá comen tres veces. Y todo eso lo cocinan y y como las tortillas ella tiene que poner el maíz para hacer tortilla o sea todo hacerlo a mano.

Hannah: Qué trabajo.

Andrés: Sí

Hannah: Y cuando era niño, ¿comía muchas verduras y frutas?

Andrés: Sí, cuando era niño, sabes lo que me me encantaba mucho? Las guayabas y las bananas. Esos dos.

Hannah: Y Los vegetales también?
Andrés: Y los nosotros casi no comíamos vegetales en México pues muy poquito pues.. de los vegetales elotes, y calabasas.
Hannah: pero estos son vegetales.
Andrés: Oh Ok. Elotes es como frijol frijol pero todavía verde ok
Hannah: ¿Cómo se llama el pueblo en México en donde vivías?
Andrés: El pueblo se llama ¿Torga del rio? E ah pues prácticamente yo no crecí yo no crecí allí porque nosotros siempre andábamos trabajando afuera. y otro como andábamos siempre afuera trabajando y yo nunca fui a la escuela yo no sabia leer ni escribir yo le doy gracias a dios qué sé leer y escribir aprendí por leer la biblia y así aprendí a leer. Aprendí a leer y escribir todo leyendo la biblia.
Hannah: Un poquito más sobre el jardín. ¿Cuál es su recuerdo más favorito de Huerta del Valle?
Andrés: Son muchas cosas que viene pasando pues recuerdos como mal y hay recuerdos buenos. Los recuerdos buenos es que cuando María me dijo que yo empecé que te puedes encargar de esta área siembras lo que tu quieras.
Hannah: Ahora usted es el jefe.
Andrés: Si, ahorita sí. Y pues eso es lo que son recuerdos que Recuerdos que qué tiene se quedaron y digo otros recuerdos que muchas veces quería salirme de huerta y me decía por qué te vas? Hiciste todo el trabajo Estaba desarrollado el jardín me regresaba y seguir adelante esos son los recuerdos que porque hay muchos muchas controversias entre para trabajar con la comunidad.. tienes que tener mucha paciencia saber cómo manejar las personas o entenderlas
más que nada. Y ahora, no se si es bueno decirlo porque ahora que empecé a trabajar full time porque en huerta hay una regla en los espacios de 10 por 20, cada familia el contrato dice que tiene que trabajar dos horas para la área comunal y des del 2019 lo están diciendo porque se dicen que Pues o sea a mí me están pagando estoy agarrando un sueldo y por eso ya no hacen sus horas.. y María dice que está bien no te preocupes. Pero hay uno en el contrato y esos son los malos que se van.. trato de hablar con la gente mas que nada que nada que entienda por qué no siempre nos vamos siempre queremos algo y que quieren esa persona aquí. Y pues y así porque siempre le les hablo o sea no me enojo no quiero yo no quiero tener problemas con nadie.

Hannah: ¿Como funciona el jardín hay espacios privados por las familias y también espacio comunitario?

Andrés: Esta área es la área comunal donde siembra huerta y de este lado hay otra área para que ellos pueden sembrar lo que ellos quieren.

Hannah: ¿Hay muchísimas familias que usan los espacios?

Andrés: Sí, si son 63 familias pero ahorita creo que hay 30 o 40. Y pues sí son estos los malos recuerdos pero siempre trato de siempre le pido a dios que me den entendimiento y es muy difícil, sí.

Hannah: ¿Huerta tiene algunos programas para las familias por los niños de cómo hacer tortillas o como sembrar las semillas...?

Andrés: Hay un programa que se llama Abejas este año no mas dieron como un mes de clases porque los otros años daban clases hasta como 10 niños cada sábado. Y ese es el programa que los niños aprendan como sembrar y conocer las plantas y ellos tenían su espacio también, donde ellos sembraban ellos todavía lo tiene o sea ahí está el espacio y esa es lo que huerta a ofrece a las familias y también cuando hay un evento siempre contratan a una persona que es que sabe
hacer tortillas que es personas del pueblo que saben hacer tortillas o saben hacer pan y dan clases, tenemos el horno allí para coser pan. Esto es lo que huerta hace.

Hannah: ¿Piensa que muchas familias que vienen huerta tienen el conocimiento de los vegetales y las frutas antes que vienen al jardín, o no?

Andrés: No, muchas familias vienen de visita y aprenden. No saben como sembrar y nosotros les ayudamos. Cada vegetal tiene su estación Pues por ejemplo no puede sembrar en invierno porque se seca yo tampoco sabía eso.. yo aprendí todo eso aquí en huerta y más que nada empece a investigar como ordenamos semillas en linea Catálogo aprendí más aquí.. lo que puede sembrar... viene en ingles pero lo traduzco en español Sí y eso lo que yo aprendo aquí yo le comparto a la gente que le interese porque hay personas que no no no quieren

Hannah: ¿En el rancho cuando era niño no habían jardines?

Andrés: Jardines pues había fuera del pueblo nosotros sembrábamos, mi papá sembraba Y yo me tocaba yo para cuidar las plantas porque había animales que comían las plantas.

Hannah: Pero todo lo que aprendió fue en huerta.

Andrés: Si porque todo lo que sembrábamos fue el maíz vegetales casi no sembrábamos calabacitas o lechuga o kale o chicharros nosotros no cultivamos esos. Todo eso yo lo aprendí aquí a huerta.

Hannah: ¿Piensa que los angeles necesita mas espacios verdes o algo así como huerta?

Andrés: yo pienso que Sí porque tuvimos una clase aquí en los angeles a un lado del aeropuerto era un seminario de tres días por huerta le tocó a presentar allí también presentó todo lo que lo qué huerta hace a mí me me sorprendí mucho porque llevábamos un “sample” (muestra) granada, guayaba la gente se lleno el salon. Tuvimos 200 personas para la presentación. Y mucha
gente tenia preguntas como hicieron este jardín en el medio de la ciudad y como pueden hacer jardines..quieren saber...quieren pedir ayuda.

Hannah: ¿Esas personas son personas normales, personas en la comunidad o son expertos de jardinería?

Andrés: No, hay personas sabe como hacer trabajo en la huerta pero no sabe donde conseguir ayuda. Donde ir. Con quien ir. Maria les dio un poco pero quieren saber mas.

Hannah: ¿tiene un comentario para mí o algo mas?

Andrés: Para que sepa yo no soy esa persona como ahorita. Cuando llegue a huerta tenía miedo de hablar durante los eventos y salí por otras partes cuando veía la gente hablando en grupo. Pero ya con el tiempo aprendí a leer la biblia.. Dios me ayudó bastante y empece a sentir mejor y mas cómoda hablando con la gente. No fue fácil o sea y muchas veces no entendí las preguntas pero ahora me siento mejor. Espero que le sirva.

Hannah: Gracias por compartir.
Leon (9) and Isaiah (5) are brothers that frequently visit Lopez Urban Farm and participate in the Junior Farmers Program offered during the entire month of November. Their mom notes how thankful she is for a place like Lopez Urban Farm that allows her children to run around outside, learn about gardening and try new foods. Leon suffers from autism and, according to his mom, would not touch vegetables before working with the Junior Farmers Program. Now he eats swiss chard!

Hannah: Okay, so your name is Leon. Right?

Leon: Yeah!

Hannah: And how old are you?

Leon: Nine. I'm about to turn 10 in January.

Hannah: That's double digits! That's crazy! Are you excited to turn 10?

Leon: Yeah!

Hannah: Have you ever gardened before Leon?

Leon: Yeah a lot of times a lot of times, except it's not always vegetables sometimes its fruits or some flowers.

Hannah: Oh, some flowers? Where did you garden before?

Leon: Yeah

Hannah: Whoa, that's crazy. Do you have a garden like that at your school or no? Like a little baby garden?
Leon: No, I don't think so.

Hannah: So then do you mostly you go to Lopez Urban farm a lot.

Leon: Yeah

Hannah: That's pretty cool. Do you like coming to the farm?

Leon: I love it!! It’s literally the best thing ever!

Hannah: What do you like?

Leon: Yeah I like it because it's like a nice experience. Like when sometimes we get to plant here. And it's cool. We get to harvest. Yeah. So that's pretty awesome.

Hannah: So you mostly plant and harvest things here? Do you do anything else?

Leon: Usually learn stuff.

Hannah: What do you learn about? Like, what's the coolest fun fact that you learned at Junior farmers?

Leon: Oh, one time before you guys came here we made like plant tea.

Hannah: Woah

Leon: Uh huh. It’s awesome.

Hannah: What is that?

Leon: Trust me. If you were there. It smelled very bad.
Hannah: Was it to make the plants grow stronger? Was it for you to drink?

Leon: EW! *giggles*I would NOT want to drink that. It smelled funny. It was for the plants.

Hannah: What did you put it in?

Leon: So let me think. We put coffee grounds, dirt, and grass. I think I don't remember. Yeah, definitely. coffee grounds. That's, that's what made it very. Oh, yeah. SMELLY! Its called Compost tea.

Hannah: That's very cool. Did you have worms in your compost, too?

Leon: No

Hannah (to Isaiah): Did you help make the compost tea Isaiah?

Isaiah: Yeah I did cause I’m a big boy.

Hannah (to Isaiah): Do you go to the garden a lot, or to the farm a lot?

Isaiah: Yeah.

Leon: Yeah, we used to come here every Wednesday to like get away from all the yucky stuff by our house. And then these lessons started and we got very interested in them. And then we just kept on going to them. And we never missed one.

Hannah: What's your favorite thing about the garden? Or the farm? Like your favorite thing to do here?

Leon: Plant and harvest plants
Hannah: How come?

Leon: Because I mean, I know I don't like vegetables a lot. But I like I still like to harvest them. Yeah. It just feels like it's a nice experience. It's a nice experience. Yeah.

Hannah: Do you think that you've eat more vegetables since planting and harvesting them?

Leon: Yeah I think so. I used to not even want to touch them because they freaked me out but now I like them.

Hannah: What's your favorite memory at the garden as a farm?

Leon: Playing here with like water with my little brother.

Hannah: That's awesome.

Leon: Yeah, I like it here.

Hannah: That's very cool. Are there anything else you think would be really cool to tell me or that's it?

Leon: I think that's it.

Hannah: All right. Cool. Thank you!
Olivia (7) and her mom frequently visit Lopez Urban Farm and participate in the activities offered there. Olivia gardens at home but enjoys the wide open space and variety of produce grown at Lopez Urban Farm. Olivia is a fairly picky eater but, according to her mom, has been more willing to try fruits and vegetables after picking them herself.

Hannah: Bien, hola. Sólo tengo unas preguntitas para ti y luego puedes volver a jugar. ¿Cuántos años tienes?

Olivia: Tengo siete

Hannah: Así que tienes siete años. Estás segura? *Olivia giggles*

Olivia: Sí!
Hannah: Ok. ¿Has cultivado un huerto antes de venir a la Granja Urbana López?

Olivia: Sí.

Hannah: ¿A dónde ibas antes? *Olivia shrugs*

Sophia (mamá): ¿Dónde cultivamos el huerto? ¿Lo hacemos en casa? ¿O vamos a otros lugares?

Olivia: En mi casa

Hannah: ¿En casa? Bien, ¿tienen un jardín grande en casa o un jardín pequeño?

Olivia: Un jardín pequeño

Hannah: ¿Cultivan algo?

Olivia: Frutas

Hannah: ¿Qué tipo de frutas cultivan?

Olivia: Guayabas.

Hannah: ¡Eso es impresionante! ¡Es un jardín muy chulo! Hay que tener guayaberas. ¿Qué más cultivas?

Olivia: ¡Peras!

Hannah: ¿Tenéis un huerto entero en vuestro patio?

Sophia: Un montón de árboles frutales.

Hannah: Eso es impresionante. ¿Cultiváis alguna verdura o sólo fruta?

Olivia: Sólo fruta en este momento

Hannah: Bien. ¿Dónde vives, hay muchos espacios verdes y parques?

Olivia: Uno.

Hannah: ¿También te gusta ir allí mucho?

Olivia: Sí.

Hannah: ¿Te gusta la granja de aquí?
Olivia: Sí

Hannah: ¿Qué te gusta?

Olivia: ¿El helado?

Hannah: ¿Te gusta el helado? ¿Qué más te gusta?

Olivia: Las manualidades.

Hannah: ¿Las manualidades? ¿Qué hacen?

Olivia: La manualidad del gusano

Hannah: ¿Qué es la artesanía del gusano? ¿Puedes hablarme de eso?

Olivia: Cogemos un papel y coloreamos el gusano.

Hannah: Oh, eso está muy bien. ¿También has aprendido sobre los gusanos?

Olivia: Sí

Hannah: ¿Qué aprendiste sobre los gusanos?

Olivia: Que no pueden comer cebollas ni papel.

Hannah: ¿Por qué?

Olivia: Porque no les gusta.

Hannah: ¿No les gusta? ¿Qué más hacen los gusanos? ¿Son realmente importantes?

Olivia: Sí.

Hannah: Sí. ¿Por qué son importantes?

Olivia: Porque se comen los bichos malos?

Hannah: ¿Vienes mucho a esta granja? ¿Te gusta venir mucho?

Olivia: Sí.

Hannah: ¿Qué hacéis cuando estáis aquí además de las manualidades y los helados? ¿Tenéis que jugar?
Olivia: Sí

Hannah: ¿Hacéis algo más? ¿Plantas alguna fruta y verdura o no realmente?

Olivia: Sí, me encanta plantar frutas y verduras

Hannah: ¿Qué plantas?

Olivia: ¡Lechuga! Antes no me gustaba pero ahora sí. Es como una planta así que la cortas y la pones en una ensalada.

Hannah: ¿Las comías antes?

Olivia: No.

Hannah: ¿Te gusta comer muchas verduras?

Olivia: Más o menos. Más ahora.

Hannah: ¿Qué tipo de verduras te gusta comer?

Olivia: Guisantes.

Hannah: Eso está muy bien. Eso es genial.

Hannah (a Sophia): ¿Crees que [Olivia] está más dispuesta a comer verduras después de venir a la Granja Urbana López? ¿O se ha quedado igual?

Sophia: Sí, definitivamente. Es una comedora quisquillosa en general, pero vinimos hace un mes a plantar verduras y estuvimos explorando todas las verduras y luego llegamos a como, coger los pepinos frescos. Sí, como que normalmente ella no haría eso. Y ella estaba como, era un poco raro, pero luego simplemente comenzó a comerlo. Ella está más emocionada por ello. Creo que, en general, como cuando ella ve las verduras creciendo, está más emocionada por querer comerlo. Sí, eso es seguro.

Hannah: Eso es increíble.

Sophia: Sí, ella es un poco tímida, lo sé, tiene más respuestas allí.
Hannah (a Sophia): ¿Te gusta venir al jardín?

Sophia: Lo hago. Sí, es como mi lugar feliz. Tenemos un patio trasero de buen tamaño y todo eso, pero mis hijos pueden explorar aquí. Así que puedo ver como se divierten. No me importa si se ensucian, lo que quieran. Sí. Así que me gusta. Sí, seguro.

Hannah: ¡Muchas gracias!
Randy Bekendam operates Amy's Farms in Ontario, CA. This 10-acre property that he founded over 15 years ago focuses on growing organic and sustainable fruits and vegetables. For over thirty-five years, Bekendam managed a cattle-feeding operation. However, at fifty-five, he pursued his dream to raise organic vegetables on an acre of his ten rented acres. Amy's Farm is the only organic farm in the Ontario Valley and, for obvious reasons, is a prime field trip destination for nearby schools. If you would like to support Amy's Farm's mission, you can volunteer or donate. More information can be found at https://www.amysfarm.com.

Hannah: Perfect. Let’s get started. I’m not sure how much you remember, but just in case, I’ll tell you a little bit about myself and why I am interviewing you.

Randy: Good. I’m old and forget a lot of things now.

*Randy and Hannah chuckle*
**Hannah:** I go to Scripps College, and I'm writing my thesis this semester. My majors are human biology and foreign language, Spanish and Italian, and I'm writing my thesis about how community gardens can change children's attitudes towards nutrition.

**Randy:** A thesis?

**Hannah:** Yeah, my thesis is kind of a summation of everything that I've done in college so far. And so I have a couple of professors that are my readers for it. And they will read my thesis when it’s finished. So that's Professor Ferree and Professor McFarlane, those are the two human biology ones. And then Professor Perez-Mendiola is my Spanish reader because parts of this thesis have to be in Spanish, and a lot of my other interviews are in Spanish as well.

**Randy:** Oh, ok. That’s exciting.

**Hannah:** It is! I really like my topic and all of my readers. So even though it’s been a lot of work, it’s been really fun too. Would it be ok if I started asking you questions?

**Randy:** Yup. Do whatever you gotta do.

**Hannah:** Perfect. So, I know that Amy’s Farm is not a community garden, but you do a lot of community outreach, and so I wanted to pick your brain about the topic and talk about what Amy's farm’s mission is and what your role is as the founder and head farmer. Would that be ok?

**Randy:** Sure. I’ll try my best. Go on ahead.

**Hannah:** So I guess for the recording, if you could say your name and then a little bit about yourself, like where you're from, and how you got into founding Amy’s farm? Is that alright?
Randy: Yes. All right. So my name is Randy Beckendam. I'm a fourth generation farmer. Did I get that right? *Randy pauses to think and counts on his fingers* I’m a third generation farmer. My daughter Amy would be fourth generation. My grandfather emigrated from Holland. And he became a dairyman in Cerritos. Then my father followed his footsteps. And I went to Cal Poly and majored in animal science. I pursued a career in cattle raising, but I not for dairy. And after 20 some odd years in that career, we had a bankruptcy. And then we were looking to reinvent ourselves. And so it's there's a lot of details in that journey *Randy chuckles* but we eventually started growing food. And then we wanted to get more involved with the community and started doing educational field trips for school children. We called that effort Amy's farm. And now we are very intentional and passionate about practicing and promoting regenerative farming, okay. And regenerative farming is a big deal. Yeah, I have a lot to say about that.

Hannah: Could you explain a little bit about what regenerative farming is?

Randy: So we like the word regenerative versus organic. That’s very important to me. So, where do I start? *Randy pauses to think* The earth is completely built on regenerative practices so that if there were no Humans, the Earth would sustain itself just fine. So you can picture that. So what we want to do with regenerative farming is cooperate with those regenerative practices and not think we're smarter than the Earth. Which we tend to do when we think through science, we can figure out all kinds of innovative things which seems good at first. But when you impose those into a natural system, over time, it often pollutes it [the natural system] and disrupts it. And the result is. Today, someone shared with me a podcast, after World War Two, when they were promoting nitrogen and urea, and so on. And they, they would say, just try this. Look at the results. 30 days from now. And yeah, the grass is a foot taller and three times greener, and nobody's measuring what that extra nitrogen is doing to kill microbes and things in the soil. So
it's an artificial. So it's, you could you could call it a benefit. But really, if you would dig deep, it's not a benefit. But it looks well, a foot taller and three times greener. That kind of stuff. It's been relentless, the last 50 years and now look at the planet. So the only solution is to go back to regenerative methods, which is how farmers have farmed for millennia. And just bite the bullet and say, no, no, no chemicals, no artificial, anything of this nature use any of that you go to a jungle or a forest. It's, there's no chemicals being used. There's billions of bugs, and everything is finicky. Nobody's trying to kill this bug or that bug. So. So any kind of farming it the farming itself is is a disruption of the natural system. But there's room for farming, just cooperate with the natural system. And yeah, you're gonna have all kinds of plants that would normally grow there. If you weren't there, you're going to call them a weed. And you're going to want to get them out of your way so that you can grow food, that's fine. But be content to get rid of them without chemicals. Somehow mechanically, we just do things by hand here, because we don't want even to bring a tractor into the we do things by hand again, which farmers have done for millennia. Just fine. It just takes a lot of hands. Yeah. But when you diminish manual labor, when you look at farmer as a profession that's doesn't have dignity and nobody wants to be a farmer. Nobody wants to work hard out in the sun. You've got problems. Yeah. So how do you encourage people to be farmers? And how do you kind of re instill that dignity in the profession? I've been at this for 15 years. That's a whole nother story. But I came to this late in life and I have utterly failed yet that? I don't, I don't know. Yeah, I absolutely don't know how to inspire your generation to be the kind of farmer that we need. I don't know what it will take. Because usually, they're looking for a 40 hour workweek and behind the screen, and 60 hours out in the field. Are you insane? Yeah. So unless you were born into it, and and had parents who actively cultivated you with a vision to be a farmer and the dignity of that and that this is the solution to climate
change and carbon sequestration and all of that, if you haven't been programmed. I believe that there's people floating out there who have a calling to farm. It's what they were created to do. But I've met almost in the last 15 years. I don't know that I've met more than a handful I can only think of one. And she was. She was our first. The first person we hired in '09. And she was a graduate of Williams College. She had left premed to become a farmer intentionally turned her back on everything her parents wanted. And she said, No, I'm going to be a farmer. I'm going to change the system by providing healthy food. And she's 38 years old now and still pursuing it. That's one. Yeah. That's the only one I can point to. Yeah, in the last 50 years that have come across my path. But that rate, we're not going to solve the problem. Yeah, we need an army of young farmers.

**Hannah:** You mentioned that she wanted to kind of turn away from putting a bandaid on problems and start at the root of that. How do you think healthy food helps with an individual's health in general?

**Randy:** I mean, that's not even a question that there's any debate about it's getting people to practice what they know. In her case, she was a counselor at a summer camp. During college or high school, I forget. It was not too far from when she made her decision. And the food at the camp was beyond horrible. Yeah. And at the end of that three months, she was sick. That food was so hurtful, harmful to her and, and the other students can't be. She said, this. Can't be doing this to ourselves. So she experienced it firsthand, that was a big motivator for her to be stuck at a camp where you only can eat what they're bringing in. And it was just horrible. Yeah, the worst of the worst. You know, can process whatever, you know. So that was her experience. Young people are generally healthy, they can eat anything, and feel just fine. They're resilient. They can live without sleep. They feel indestructible. So they're probably not going to have that there's
probably going to be nothing in their life that is warning them. But 30 years later, they'll realize
you know, I really poorly and now I'm paying for it. Yeah. So you just have to teach it and
preach it. And people have to believe it. Yeah. And I don't know how you experientially, I don't
know, maybe you could take about a trip somewhere, or if they can see it before their eyes
sometimes. This stuff is it's cumulative. It's it's slow. It's seductive. I mean, I didn't even start
eating healthy. eating the food that we're growing till I was 60. Because I didn't start growing it
till I was 54. Then it took me five years to figure out I should eat it. And now I'm at 70. I have
type two diabetes. And and I'm thinking that's not fair. I'm eating as healthy as can be. But for 60
years, I did and yeah, it was either fast food or whatever we could buy at Costco.Yeah. And that's
kind of what's around us, too. That's all you have. I mean, you can't, if you don't grow it yourself,
you can't. What you said what you see in this store you can't buy because use the best you can
get as organic and organic does not mean chemical free, nor does it mean regenerative. It just
means they're using a class of chemicals. I think it's FDA, is saying those chemicals are safe for
humans. So the organic farmers can it's a long list of chemicals that organic farmers can use, and
they're killing the microbes in the soil. Yeah, and the food is compromised. It's not as pure as it
could be. It's not as nutrient dense as it could be. And nobody knows this. Yeah, they they've
been taught that organic is what you need to eat. It's better than conventional. Conventional uses
worse chemicals. Yeah. But the regeneratively grown food is, unless you do grow your own. It's
hard to source. You can go to farmers markets. Usually it's not the farmers selling. So you ask the
seller, can I go to your farm? And take a tour and talk to the farmer and and just view your
practices? I've never done that. I don't know what percent would say yes. Generally, farms have
no trespassing signs. Yeah, for a reason. They don't want the public around. Yeah. Yeah.
**Hannah:** So why is organic, so expensive compared to other stuff, because I'm working at Lopez urban farm right now. And a lot of the families are Latinx families coming from poor socio-economic backgrounds. And so Lopez urban farm is, really, their only access to healthy food. And I work specifically with preschoolers and kindergarteners. And they saw the tops of carrots and they were asking, they're like, What is that what? What kind of plan is that, and I had them use their five senses, and they walked around the garden, we came back 20 minutes later, and they were all debating on what they thought this carrot was. And while they were debating, I pulled up the carrot. And one girl went, Oh, it's magic, she turned a plant into a carrot. Because they didn't know that that's where a carrot came from. And one kid, I'll never forget it. He said carrots come from the grocery store. They can't come from the ground. And I was like,

**Randy:** That's crazy. But that's classic. Yes, it said, and we see that here all the time. And why aren't the teachers, the schools doing a better job? They'll come here and call a cow, a horse? Or a horse or cow. And but the answer your question is, that's that's actually complex. Sometimes I wonder if it's all a scam, and just a way to charge more money? Because you would think but they're not using chemicals. So they're spending less money. It should be cheaper. Yeah. And so they would guess, I don't know, because I don't live in that world. So you're right. It's more expensive. Maybe I do. So if you start from that from a negative outlook, okay. So what is it they cannot use? So they cannot use the worst offenders. So somehow not being able to use the worst chemicals? Is making their operation more expensive. Does that mean they cannot spray for weeds? And so this would mean they get less yield? Because he can't use the worst chemicals. See, I don't know I don't live in that world. Yeah. Here. I can tell you why. Our costs are high. We do everything by hand. Yeah. Our labor costs. They do everything by machine.
**Hannah:** I've heard that it's also the accreditation of becoming organic is expensive. And I think it takes at least 10 years.

**Randy:** That's right. It's a five year process. That's right. It costs money. There's paperwork, there's fees. So yeah, forgotten about that. So that adds to your cost. Yeah. Yep.

**Hannah:** So then, in addition to having places like a nice farm, which is a lot bigger, what would you suggest as a possible way to help families who can't buy organic and want to buy something better than organic? Like what if you could have a perfect world? What would your vision be for sustainable and regenerative farming practices and healthy foods?

**Randy:** So if I was mayor of Pomona where I think all the opportunity is in Pomona. That's where the all the all the opportunity is because there is space. The mayor and the whole council of Pomona is open to urban farming. They, they're embracing the idea of food security. They know that there are food deserts all over their city. They acknowledge it. Yeah. They don't deny it. I could go on. So there's a lot of vacant lots in Pomona versus other cities. Claremont is completely built out. Caramon has too many trees. You need sunshine to grow food. Most people's yards in Clermont cannot grow food because there's too many trees. If you want to buy a home in Claremont and grow food, you gotta have to really, really search for that. Yeah, hard to find. So Pomona I would have a city policy, I would, I would give a tax break. If you grew food in your yard, front and back, I would have a program of taking out lawns and growing food. Instead, I would give everybody a free sub meter for their water bill, and have all that water that you use to grow food be half price, an agricultural rate for water use. I would I would get as creative as I could with any incentive I could think of, I would, I would decree by executive order that a certain percentage of all school property be growing food, a certain percentage of all public parks be growing food, there's open space everywhere. I would create a whole
department, you have parks and recreation. You can have food, whatever you named it. And you have special training. And so you have everybody that's working in parks and rec be knowledgeable. Also in food growing. So they they spend so much money on pruning trees, on maintaining the parks and all of that it's a huge, huge budget. None of that open space is growing food, all of those wood chips, we use wood chips for making compost, I would change the code. So that manure was legal in the city. And I would set aside land for composting and provide free compost to every citizen and promote a food growing culture citywide. And declare that by 2050. This city will be food secure, we're going to grow enough fruits and vegetables to feed everybody in Pomona. And they could do it by 2050. Yeah, you should be made. Well, I don't live there. Yeah. No, I live in Ontario. And I did consider running for mayor just out of frustration with the politics here. So Pomona is where all the opportunity is. That's where Lopez is.

Hannah: And in your hypothetical plan you mentioned that in addition to everyone having their own gardens in their houses, the two places outside of that you mentioned were schools and parks? Why do you say that?

Randy: It's just open space. Unused? Yeah. Just walk through. Make it a personal project, just go drive around at…Let's say, 3:30? Okay, kids are all out of school, right? Just drive around all the parks and see how they're being used? See how many kids are out? Yeah. Not a lot. You know, where they are? On their laptops.

Hannah: So how do we encourage children then? Because if we're trying to create a food-secure future and cities like Pomona, how do we encourage children to be a part of that? Because they
are the future generation that would be continuing that? And if they're behind screens, how do you get them involved in that?

Randy: If the parents don't lead, you know, it'll never happen. Once in a while, a teacher can make a difference. But it's rare. It starts in the home, every teacher will tell you, the discipline starts in the home. The high achieving students are because the parents are engaged and you're doing homework. If the parents don't have a vision for it, and they're working two or three jobs, so I'm not optimistic. I'm quite pessimistic. And I'm sad that as I age, I'm losing hope. But I've been trying really hard when I was 15 years in. We've had we've made progress. The fact that Lopez exists for kind of exists. There's a lot of hurdles there. But it's it's still standing. Yeah, I mean, you're there. So we need to be grateful for that. But we have no success stories in the city to speak of really. We need we need some real success stories and just boots on the ground, growing plots everywhere. A storefront somewhere shelling this pure food, just like my store. I mean, obvious things that we can point to Yeah. And they don't exist. As we speak.

Hannah: Do you have any type of programming at Amy's farm to get kids involved in the farming process and teach them about that?

Randy: So everything here is word of mouth. So we're, we're, we're highly known for our field trips, okay. So we have, we have 1000s of kids come here. And from that, every, every family students, whoever come whoever's on a guided tour, so they're told about volunteer opportunities, so parents can bring their kids in, get involved. So we have a steady flow of parents who are engaged, who are bringing their kids here to volunteer, and maybe they're growing food at home. I have hope for those kids. And they, those parents are being intentional. So that their their children know where the food comes from, and that kind of thing. So we, and
it's all informal, because we don't have any money. We don't have staff. And, and I'm instinctually opposed to programming to spend a lot of money on staff positions. I believe in more volunteerism or programs like you're involved in, we're tapped into the court ordered community service. Steve has to but doesn't use it that much. So they have to work eight hours community service for their DUI, and speeding tickets, and so on. So we get a lot of work done with with court ordered individuals. So because you can hardly make any money selling food, you've got to figure out ways to promote this that don't cost money. As soon as you get into that realm of programming, and staff in grants, that you need a grant writer, and you hope the money keeps coming you you've entered, you're spending so much energy, yeah. Stress and everything else in this, this needs to be. Or it needs to just happen. It needs to catch on. People have to catch a vision. I mean, it's so inexpensive. A seed costs almost nothing. It doesn't cost that much to buy composted soil from us, but you can compost at home for free. You can even tear out your grass and grow in whatever soil you have. And you'll get food and then you just make that soil better amended. Naturally don't buy anything. So it's so we promote that. We promote that.

**Hannah:** You talk a lot about volunteers but other than that you don’t have staff. How much do you work everyday?

**Randy:** For our own sanity. We close on Monday and Sunday. And so my whole life, I've practiced Sabbath. And I don't think humans were created to work more than six days a week. You need a day of rest. So that's, that's always been Sunday for us. And so we are closed on Sunday. And then we added Monday. Yeah. So that we can do extracurricular things. I can go get a haircut, get my truck serviced, or spend time with my grandson go fishing. So five days a week is enough. Yeah. Let's see he I think he's caught. He's caught with that weekend. People want to come on Sundays. Yeah, I'm not gonna tell him what to do or not do. Yeah. But if I was running
it, you'd be closer. Yeah, you know, and so everyone would say, But Randy, you're limiting half of your energy. That's, that's a perception. And I would say, Well, we haven't found that to be true. And in these farms, if you just tell people look, we're close on the Monday, five days a week are wide open. We get, we get enough volunteers. people adapt, we thought I thought was the COVID COVID didn't kill us. But it did a number COVID was rough. But we thought, well, we might as well close. Yeah. And so we did. That was the best decision we ever made. And people adapt.

**Hannah:** And you need the rest tot! You deserve it.

**Randy:** Well. So you got a day of rest. You got up. You got a personal day. Yeah. And then you hit it hard for five days. Yeah. That's good balance. Yeah. And I'm afraid a lot of these efforts get burned out because they just go seven days a week and you can't do that unhealthy. Yeah.

**Hannah:** How do you implement places like Amy's farm and Lopes urban farm in cities that are more built out like you said, Clermont, or cities in like, inner Los Angeles, I worked. I'm a girl scout. And so for my Girl Scout Gold Award, which is like the same thing as an Eagle Scout project, I built and founded a community garden in Venice, California, on Venice Boulevard for homeless youth. And we had a plot of land there, that I partnered with a homeless shelter, and we built out beds and everything. And now it's a self sustaining garden. A lot of the homeless youth. So, how would you implement community gardens in places that are more built out? Do you just then have like, if, for example, in New York City People don't have front yards to use?

**Randy:** Yeah. New York City has a lot of urban farming, and they, they do have vacant lots that you can research and so there, and there's, there's I wouldn't call it redevelopment, but there's things get torn down. And then there's a vacant lot. Yeah, so vacant lots are kind of the way to
capitalize on that. And so to give you a vision for how easy it is to take a vacant lot. There's a video you could watch called back to Eden. And I think it's still you can find it for free on YouTube. Got back to you. But in a nutshell, if you have a vacant lot, usually, so anything that's open in New York City, probably had a building on it at one time. So then they tear him down and you have these. So so the soil is not any good. It's it's the some soil. Yeah. So what you do is you covered with woodchips about two feet deep. So it doesn't matter what condition that soil is you just covered with woodchips. Then on top of the woodchips, you build your beds out of composted soil. And any any good composted soil will work. So, so you have an interesting farm. Because usually the woodchips are free. And, and often, the compost can be free. We donate a lot of this soil. So you spread the woodchips you make your bed she started going food. Yeah. So with that, it's as easy as that. And that's the method I would use anywhere. So if someone called me up and said, we've got this vacant lot, I would say Okay, first is you want to call call tree companies and get get wood chips done to their and I will tell them what not to take, I have a couple of types of things that are not good my palm branches. So and then rent a tractor or get a tractor from wherever you can park on the tractor and level it. And then if you can rent a dump truck, we have soil for sale in or if you have absolutely no budget, we could donate, but you have to come get it. And we can we can come and show you how to farm the beds and do the thing. It's so simple. Yeah. And this it's clean, it's beautiful because the widgets are are clean. If if the lot has it a trash on it, I wouldn't remove that. If there's tall weeds, I would chop them but just let them lay flat. You didn't have to haul them away. Just get the trash off and get everything level covered with woodchips if there's uneven spots on it, maybe rent a tractor to level it. And then just bring in woodchips.
Hannah: I guess my last question is, what are some of the difficulties of running a farm or a community garden? And what makes it worth it? Like why do you keep waking up every day and doing what you do?

Randy: So we have a vision for providing pure food for people we know all the benefits of eating that and we know all the benefits of volunteering on a farm and we know how to grow a lot of food with volunteers and minimal paid labor. So we know how to do that. Excuse me. What was the other part of the question?

Hannah: Like the difficulties of doing what you do.

Randy: Yeah, so whenever I ask people what they think are the biggest hurdles of running a farm, they never get the right answer. Because it's not land, it's not water.

Hannah: It's a labor.

Randy: It's labor. So finding qualified farmers is next to impossible. Yeah. And that gets back to the point of raising a generation that finds farming a dignified professional, you can find people who want a job. But you know, and then and they want to make a living wage, but they don't turn out fine, versatile. They hadn't grown up into it. They don't know what it's like to work eight hours with the shovel out in the hot sun, that that manual labor can be a killer. Unless you're acclimated to it and grew up in that environment. My workers are all Hispanic, but they grew up in Mexico. So they are farmers. They are naturals. They all work landscaping besides working. Because that's the go to job for immigrants from Mexico who have those skills.

Hannah: And would you say that's largely the demographic of LA County as well?
**Randy:** Yeah cause we are right on the edge of this Inland Valley.

**Hannah:** How do we encourage more people to farm?

**Randy:** What’s the biggest holdup, the reason there's not a movement, like why isn't this proliferating everywhere? We don't, we just don't have enough farmers on the ground who are true farmers have a colony to farm who have caught the vision for urban farming, the possibilities of urban farming, which are actually pretty substantial. Like if you're, if you're willing to work hard. And you can handle 60 hours a week. And your if you have a calling to be a farmer, you're also an entrepreneur. Yeah. And so in urban farming, there's no middleman. So you have to be able to grow the food. And you have to be able to market it. Yeah. That's going to be having your own store or farmers markets, or something like that. And, and that's, that's, that's a tall order. It's hard to find individuals with that gift package. Yeah. Because Because if if you're an entrepreneur, you want someone else to do the grunt work. But in farming, there's the money's not there. Yeah. So you you have to be you have to be a farmer. You have to be working hard yourself. And then maybe you can hire some part time help. But it's it's driven primarily by the labor of your own two hands. Yeah. But just know that you have to also sell it you have to grow it and sell it. So you have to carve out time to go to farmers markets, or figure out a store. So another website you can look up is spin farming SPI N and that's an urban farm farming model. You can even buy help to book Clip from them. And so. So if you're willing, if you know how to grow through the economy to be a farmer, you can handle the physical work and your entrepreneurial. You can make it probably make 60,000 a year. Yeah. So if you can find out figure out access to land in affordable housing, you can probably make it hard to pay a mortgage on that. Yeah. So Southern California is a huge challenge. But we have a vision for public private land conservation, affordable housing and creative created programs where you could provide
Land and Housing and recruit farmers and give them access, say, to five acres or something, and just say, look, here's the land, here's the house, all you have to do is grow food for this region. You know, grow it and sell it. You don't have any land costs, you don't have any housing costs. From there, you know, figure it out. And then recruit farmers who would so they have tenancy for the lifetime tenancy, they can pass it on to their kids. So it's as good as owning it.

Yeah. So you this is all in contracts with? Do they app they actually have the land without having to buy it? So if they're true farmers, they won't care. But but a lot of people have in the back of their mind, well, I'm going to buy land, and I'm going to fire but someday I'm going to sell that land and be rich. Yeah. And that's not Yeah, you take money out of the equation. Yeah. Here's land. Here's a house. No, everybody around here needs good food. And you're a farmer. So just, you know, farm. Yeah. Be content with farming. Yes. You're not You're not going to cash in on this land. Someday and be a millionaire. Yeah. This land we're sitting on his 10 Acres is worth a million an acre. Yeah. Because of warehouse pressure. Yeah. Artificial. It's, it's a house of cards. It's a bubble that's gonna burst in. The last time this happened. It peaked at 500,000 and anchor, you know, seven. And overnight, it went to 100,000 an acre. So right now, it's a million an acre, but the whole world could implode tomorrow. Easy, yeah, everything would collapse. And what would this lesson be worth? All construction which stuff? And it could be anything. It could be Putin launching a nuclear or it could be a new pandemic could be anything. And then this land will not be worth anything except for being what would it is fun? Yeah. So I live in that world.

So you've got to take the land, out of the speculation market. You've got to take really you just have to have a vision that the leadership has to have a vision for food security for the nation. Yeah, we need we need farmers who will grow regeneratively we got to figure this out. So that the farmers can farm they have access to land is affordable housing.
Hannah: Well, that's all the questions I have. Do you have any last comments or questions?

Randy: You've got to eat pure food, just find it however you can. But the thing about that food is that it's nutrient dense. So you actually eat less, and it satiate you longer, the empty calories, that you so easily, it's at hand at all the fast food places, yeah, it but again, you're young and strong, you don't feel it, but you would even at your age, you're, you're gonna feel better if you can find nutrient dense food. And, and, and don't eat the fast foods that the empty carbs as much as you can. And it's amazing thing that the benefits are, you can feel it, you know, you're gonna have more energy and sleep better, the whole nine yards. So that's my parting message is you know, build those habits. And then if you ever have children and the ability to grow food at home, do it or find community content or something. Be the example for the next generation.

Hannah: Thank you so much.
Full Interview with Stephen Yorba

Stephen Yorba is the founder of Lopez Urban Farm, located in South Pomona, CA. The 2 ½ acre lot near Lopez Elementary School is one of the few public green spaces in the city where children can get their hands dirty, plant seeds, and eat what they grow. Stephen emphasizes the importance of educating young people about sustainable food production and enjoys teaching weekly classes to elementary school students. The mission of Lopez Urban Farm is to "secure food access, nurture community education, and increase urban green space." If you would like to support Amy's Farm's mission, you can volunteer or donate. More information can be found at https://www.lopezurbanfarm.com.

Hannah: Could you state your whole name and then talk a bit about what Lopez Urban Farm is and how you founded it?

Stephen: Yes. My name is Steven Yoruba. I'm the lead farmer here at Lopez Urban Farm and the Executive Director of Community Partners for Innovation. At Community Partners for Innovation, we focus on establishing partnerships with like-minded organizations in the community that have shared values with [Lopez Urban Farm] around community wellbeing. And so our focus is creating urban green spaces and urban farms, or urban farms that act as urban green spaces. And educational centers are kind of a threefold mission, and that is to create green
space for families, grow food, and provide education to the next generation of eco-conscious human beings.

**Hannah:** That’s wonderful! Could you tell me more about Lopez? I know a lot about it because I work here every week *both Stephen and Hannah chuckle* but my readers have never heard of this place before.

**Stephen:** We took on Lopez Urban Farm about two years ago. This is a three-acre parcel in South Pomona that is owned by the school district, Pomona Unified School District. And so the challenge for urban farmers is always land access, right? When we bring the production of food into communities like this, the question becomes, where are we going to do that? What space is available so that we can actually create a farm, grow food, and provide education? So we have to get creative around land access. And in this example, we're working with Pomona Unified School District, which is one of the largest landowners in Pomona. And basically, they have this three-acre parcel that is very beautiful and has well-established oak trees and space for growing and education. And it's right next to Lopez Elementary. So we thought two years ago, maybe two and a half years ago, we presented the idea of Lopez Urban Farm to the school district. And they liked the idea. They especially liked the idea of Lopez Urban Farm providing space to educate their students, especially those from Lopez Elementary.

**Hannah:** Why do you think that was?

**Stephen:** I think at some level, they understand the importance of outdoor education. Especially coming out of the pandemic. The pandemic was difficult for, for students and for families. It was difficult for kids to have them out of school for you know, two years or so however long it was. And I think kids were struggling because of that and trying to come back to school was difficult
and the needs that they had after the pandemic were different than we’ve ever seen before. You know, social integration and things like that. I think the school district understood that, not just in light of the pandemic, but I think they get at some level the importance of the kids being outdoors, the kids learning outdoors, the role of Ecological Education and the idea that they can take what they learn from the classroom out into the farm and learn. They can put learning into practice, and take what they do on the farm back into the classroom. It’s a beautiful cycle. I think they get that, yeah. They don't have a lot of opportunities to do that, you know, there, there are a few school gardens. But there's nothing like a three-acre farm attached to a school. I think they [school district], I think they get the importance of agricultural education for students. I think they understand how beneficial it is to students to be able to come and be in nature, to activate a green space to learn how to, how to grow food, how to live healthy lives, how to be active. You know, I think that's the reason why they gave this [Lopez Urban Farm] a chance. Yeah. And we're really happy that they did. And they're really liking it. You know, every week. The Lopez students come through, we have about 350 students who come through on Thursdays, and the kids absolutely love it. You know, I mean, you can tell that it's a win for everyone. Kids love it. The teachers love it. Administration loves it. And the school district from the superintendent down, they they love it, too. They see the benefit of it. The new superintendent of schools has been here. And he shared some of his personal history with me. He grew up in Arkansas, on a farm. And so he worked as a farmer with his family. So he knows how to drive tractors and, and grow food and all of that's in his background. And so I think because of that, he really gets how important it is for kids to be in spaces like this. Yeah, it can create an environment of learning that you can really just can't get in the classroom. Yeah. And so yeah, they've been fully supportive. And so once we got an agreement established with them, we set out to create
programming for not only for kids at Lopez Elementary, but also the community. So we have our junior farmer training program for kids two to twelve. And we just established the sensibility space for kids with special needs, different learners. And, yeah, we run a lot of programs that we found. We were always engaging young people and their families. I think it's really important. I think there's something about spaces like this that really bring kids to life, you know, yeah. And their parents love it. Yeah. You know they do because you teach them!

**Hannah:** I do! It’s the best thing in the whole world.

**Stephen:** You’re really special. What you do with those kids and how you teach them. Not a lot of kids your age want to do that. I know I tell you all the time but you are changing these kids lives.

**Hannah:** Thank you Stephen. I’m not sure if I’m changing their lives but that’d be pretty cool if I helped one kid learn how to garden. You know?

**Stephen:** I understand completely.

**Hannah:** Do you think there's a difference between community gardens that exist just as a greenspace that people can come to compared to ones that have programming as well?

**Stephen:** I think, you know, it just I can speak from our, our viewpoint of what we think it's important. As an urban farmer. Of course, we're we're establishing an urban farm, right. And so part of our responsibility is to grow food. Because that's what farmers do. To create an access point, to fresh food, locally grown is important. Especially because we exist in a food insecure community [Pomona]. Yeah. But I also think that we have a responsibility to allow the community to access this space in different ways, right. So we’re not just growing food, but
we're providing educational space for programming and cultural events. So we're opening the space to the community so that they can access it, in whatever way feels comfortable to them. Okay, you know, I think, probably, honestly, speaking, programming is the first and foremost important thing that we do. Yeah. You know, we grow a lot of food. And that's important. But the farm itself is a perfect environment for families and their children. To connect again, with nature, and, and to provide learning for them, and a place for them to play. And experience the peace and just rest in a space like this. I think this vision is really important. So we put we put a lot of value on the programming that we run, right? It's not just about, it's not just about growing food. Yeah, like, even the food is a tool, right? Just bring community together. Yeah. We farm together and we grow food together. And the community has access to that food. But it really is a space where families can come and they can learn and they can grow, they can rest. They can connect again, with nature and themselves. Families can bond together in so many different ways. I think that should be the goal every time we build a farm. That's the kind of space where we want to create.

**Hannah:** That was beautifully said. Thank you! Ok so my other question is, in an ideal world, every school like Lopez elementary would have a Lopez Urban farm attached to it. Do you think there's a difference between having an urban farm versus a garden attached to it? Do you think there's a difference between having an urban farm versus a garden that school? Or do you think that it's just as good to have a garden on campus as well?

**Stephen:** You know, I think I think school gardens are important learning space. They're important learning features for any school. In a perfect world I think every school should have a school garden. It's, it's just I know that school gardens are often difficult to establish and maintain. You really have to know how to establish a school garden in a way that will be
sustainable in the long haul. And that takes everybody to be on board, you know, from administration all the way to the teachers, you know, and not just one teacher who's interested in starting a garden with her students. Because sometimes if that student that teacher moves on or retires or whatever, then the garden kind of falls apart. It has to really be embedded in the life of the school. And it has to be utilized by teachers, administration, classes and kids. So to answer your question, yes, they [community gardens] can be valuable if they're run properly. And used as a teaching tool. Yeah, by teachers. And teachers need to know how to access spaces like that, how to utilize them, right for teaching purposes. And if you have a school that knows how to establish that, and sustain that, I think they're really really important. But for Lopez Elementary to have a three-acre farm attached to it, I think it's something that is super, super special. Yeah. So what we're really creating here is not ultimately not just for Lopez Elementary, although in Pomona Unified School District Lopez Elementary is really special. Because they can claim the fact that they have a three acre farm attached to it [the school], but the school district also has told us that they want to do field trips here. Yeah, for the rest of the school district. So we're really trying to gear up and lay the infrastructure to be able to run field trip programs for other schools, so that students from across Pomona have a chance to come and access the same experience and education that Lopez elementary students have. And when that happens, that's going to be really special. Yeah, right. So I see Lopez Urban Farm as kind of a supportive space for learning, but also a supportive space for other schools. We can help support other schools who may want to establish a school garden. Yeah, we can give them support, we can show them how to do it. And we can be a support for them. We can bring teachers and faculty and staff here and educate them on how to run school gardens. There's so many things that we can do at Lopez Urban farm to support agricultural learning and eco justice learning across the school district. I
think every school should have a green space like this. Every school, yeah, every kid should have
the opportunity to access a space like this. Because from my years of education, learning models
that access community, that have kids outside the classroom, in real world and in environments,
green spaces like this, I think the learning grows exponentially. Yeah, you know, I think there's so
much learning that can happen in spaces like this, that really can't happen in the classroom. Yeah,
in the classroom, you can talk about how things grow. You can talk about ecosystems and how
they work. But when they can actually come out to the farm, and experience and see and interact
with this, this ecosystem that we have, that they can see how food grows in the field, and also
plant seed themselves and grow their own food, I think that’s really valuable. You know, you're
taking the theory in the classroom and putting it into practice spaces like this. And if kids had
this opportunity across the school district, I think that we would see, we would probably see a lot
of things happen in terms of retention and learning. As well as the enthusiasm that kids have for
going to school. And there's been a lot of research about agriculture education, agriculture
curriculum in elementary school. And high school. Yeah. It creates more benefits for the
students. Yeah. And learning and learning.

**Hannah:** If you were to create your ideal plan for a city like Pomona would it involve having a
urban farm like Lopez, Urban Farm, and then little, community gardens at each school that
Lopez is supporting? Or how would you envision, it, if you had all the money in the world?
What would your plan be?

**Stephen:** Not just that every school, but every community? Yeah. You know, the, the the first
time I visited Huerta del Valle in Ontario, Arthur Levine was the farm manager along with Maria
and, you know, I remember Arthur's saying that we needed something like a community garden
every square mile, that's what their goal is still and that's what my goal is now. And I always
thought that that was an important idea. Yeah. Takes a lot to get there. But I think we need to have, you know, green spaces like this in every community. Yeah. And by that, I mean, you know, urban farms like Huerta or Lopez. They can also act as, as green space. You know, in Pomona we have our parks. We have 26 parks, right. But there's something special about an urban farm, like Lopez, where people can come and just hang out. Yeah. And just sit or have a picnic or get involved or learn. I think there's something really special about looking at urban farms as active green spaces in the city. Yeah. Right, especially when we talk about the need for green space and community wellbeing. Yeah. And studies have shown that Pomona is way behind the amount of green spaces compared to other cities. Our park systems does not provide enough green space. Yeah. For our community, we're way behind on the amount of green space. And why is that important? Because when we live in urban centers, most everything has been paved over. Yeah. And so it's hard for us to even find a space where we can sit in nature, you know, in a natural spot. Not only that just sit and play, but we can activate it with programming. There's something really important about that. People thrive in green spaces like this. That's why we're always craving to go outside and looking for places like that. Natural places where we can hike, or bike or camp, we're always looking for spaces like that. And if spaces are hard to find in urban centers, then it creates a lot of stress on the human body to live in concrete all the time, in traffic all the time. So places like this allow for human beings to rest, to release stress. And so we need more spaces like this. I don't think we need more parks. Parks oftentimes are not very ecologically friendly. They provide a lot of turf, that takes a lot of water resources. And parks take a lot of money to build, and they take a lot of money to maintain. What we're arguing for is urban farms as a way of creating natural organic green space and alternative park systems. We should include these spaces [urban farms] as green space in our city planning. They're much
cheaper to build and maintain. And I think they're much more accessible to the community.
Yeah. And they're growing food, and they're providing education. You don't see that in the park system. And so I think the city needs to wrap their mind around urban farms and the importance of them, and how they lend themselves to community health and well being. And so therefore, I think, not only should we have school gardens at every school, but we should have community urban farms, in every community in every community. You know, the way I see that system is kind of you have your bigger hubs, like Lopez Urban Farm. We have three acres, right? And so we have the capacity to help other people start something in their community, right. And so, the goal is for every community to have some kind of organic green space or an urban farm or a community garden, that that is built by the community, with the community for the community, where they can grow food, where they can provide programming, cultural events, and where the community can come and rest, play grow together. Maybe we need larger hubs like Lopez to help support other communities start their own organic green spaces. And they may look different. They may operate differently so that they meet the needs of every community. But every community is supporting each other and the city itself is supporting this model by helping to fund and maintain these spaces. Yeah. You know, I told the mayor one time I said, Tim, you know, imagine if we had 1000, green spaces like Lopez throughout Pomona? Yeah. In every community. Can you imagine the amount of difference that would make the difference that would make? Can you imagine a city that supported that type of community in their city planning? A vision like that? Yeah. I think it would put Pomona on the map. I think it would do it. The greening of Pomona. A city that dedicates itself to creating these urban green spaces throughout every community…

Hannah: makes a statement.
Stephen: Exactly. But it makes a statement not only ecologically, you know, in terms of addressing climate change, but also provides a model of creating community resilience and health and well being around you know, around this idea of greening our communities, you know?

Hannah: Could you talk a little bit about the population that mostly comes to Lopez urban farm, and then how you incorporate their culture into programming here?

Stephen: Well, I think those who come to Lopez Urban Farm for whatever reason are mostly folks from our immediate community. And, you know, if you look at the demographics of where we're located in South Pomona, you know, it's majority Latinx, you know, a Spanish speaking, immigrant community. And that's, that's what our programming looks like, that's what our events look like. And this is who we're serving. This is who we're doing all of this *gestures to the farm* for. And so that's who we find here at the farm. Yeah. Those from our community. Also a community that is tremendously resourceful and has a lot of communal assets. But it's also a community that has been historically red lined, right. Yeah. And has been cut out of resources, you know, or cut off from resources. Right. Yeah. Especially around food and education. And so there is a high level of poverty in Pomona. There's a high level of renting in Pomona and low homeownership, which is, which is important, you know, people don't own their homes anymore, and they're struggling with high rent.

Hannah: And that affects whether or not they can garden at their home too.

Stephen: Yeah, exactly. Right. And so we're doing all of this in the midst of a community that, you know, I'm not sure can take on this idea of you know, building urban farms in every community, because it does take resources, it does take extra money, you know, but I think with a
city that supports that, it can happen in communities like this. It's the communities like Pomona that need it the most. Not Claremont. They have enough trees. Because there's not a lot of extra time among Pomona families. Yeah, there's not a lot of expendable income. You know, there's, there's not, oftentimes people don't have the space to do it. Yeah. But, um, so yeah, we serve that community. And those are the folks that find themselves here. That's why it's important for us to create access, because access is an issue in communities like this. Yeah, access to fresh, locally grown food, access to any good food, right? There's an abundance of junk food and fast food and liquor stores and all of that, right. But what we're doing is we're creating an access point, access to green space, access to food, access to education, in a community that struggles with finding access. And so in that we want to make sure that our community is able to access what we provide. So we are committed to free programming. All of our programming is free, we don't charge for anything. That means we have to find funding on the back end, right, which is a lot of work for a small nonprofit. And it's the same with our food too at our at our weekly market, farmers market. We operate on a “take what you need pay what you can” economy. Yeah. It's all by donation. Right. And we do that deliberately, right? We want to create access so that everybody has the ability to access what we provide here. We're not into providing these things [programming, food] in order to make money and support our budget. Yeah, we're not growing food and then selling it so that we can support our budget. We're not providing programming and then selling it, you know, to the community so that we can fund our budget. We find other ways to fund our budget. And then you know, there's cultural ways in which we support our community. We live in a Latinx community, oftentimes Spanish speaking. So we try to do little things like, you know, Spanish translation and weaving in cultural components into our curriculum, providing space for community events and cultural events, right. We just had our Dia
de los Muertos day right here at the farm, which was supported by Latina Latino roundtable. It was a beautiful event. And, you know, we had about 300 people here. And, yeah, it was attended by many people in the community that had never been to Lopez Urban farm. They came because of the deep ritual, spiritual meaning of that, that event, that holiday. We provided a rich cultural opportunity for the community. So we try to support things like that. Yeah. And so that when people come, they'll feel familiar with what they see and what they hear.

**Hannah:** Thank you. Besides that, I don't have any more questions. Is there anything that you would like to share as a parting thought or anything like that?

**Stephen:** Yeah. I just think in order to make something like this happen in a community we need to understand who we are helping. Serving. I think we've spent years sitting and listening to the community [Pomona]. Instead of dropping into it not understanding the people who live here. I mean, I'm from Pomona, born and raised in Pomona. But to sit and listen to the community, come alongside them and listen to what the needs of the community are, and then move forward. We will succeed if we are directed by that idea. Creating a space where the community feels like this is their space. And allowing their voice to be heard and recognize that this is something I think we're constantly moving towards. Folks should feel like this is their space, like they have a voice that their voice is heard in the space. But it takes a lot a long time to cultivate that kind of trust. And build that communal report. I think is really, really important. Then to partner with other organizations that are like minded, that have shared values. Organizations that understand this community. We live here and respect the needs of the community and operate from that level. Right? I think is really, really important. So listen, more than you speak.

**Hannah:** Thank you, Steven. That was awesome.
María Alonso is the executive director of Huerta del Valle community garden in Ontario, CA. She is committed to providing local food and improving the health of her surrounding community. She wishes to see a community garden like Huerta every mile in urban neighborhoods. She asserts that this is her life's mission. María’s leadership has grown in response to her family's health challenges. Her husband's diagnosis of type II diabetes and her son's ADHD led her to search for healthy foods. She was frustrated to find that the food her family needed was miles from her house and too expensive for her to purchase. At times she would have to debate whether to pay rent or support the health of her family. María started Huerta del Valle with a handful of students in the Pitzer College and ten families in Ontario. She is now the executive director of seven thriving community gardens and urban farms. Huerta del Valle, says María, is about growing leaders and a community as well as food.

Hannah: Hay 600 familias [en el jardin]? Wow. Y cada familia tiene su propio espacio?

María: Si su espacio de 10 pies por 20 pies ellos siembran ellos cosechan ellos se comparten entre ellos. Ahorita esta poniendo un poco frió pero normalmente suelen a hacer sus grupitos por aquí, para alla. Se sienten todos aquí. Una vez por mes hago la reunión mensual Este mes se me llenan de los participantes. Trato de hacer lo mejor para ellos. Al final del día somos humanos, cometemos errores y desafortunadamente hay personas que no están viendo lo bueno si no los errores..soy humana cometo errores, no digo que no… hay que empieza..Sorry sorry (overwhelmed and begins to cry). Pero no era mi intención hacer error.. no era mi intención eso
lo viste de esa manera pero no fue mi intención hacerlo de esa manera pero hasta es bíblico no si lo malo lo bueno crece entre lo malo entonces tomar un Balance

**Hannah**: Es muy hermoso. Esta parte este es es para cada familia y esta parte es comunitario?

**María**: De este arco para acá, y los 2 espacios vacíos que está enfrente porque a la calle salen otros 2 pedazos como una cremas pero desafortunadamente la gente de la comunidad no ha querido que los sembremos para allá entonces esto para acá es jardín comunitario de aquí para allá es área educacional o área educacional donde hay la visión de hacer estructuras como un anfiteatro una librería un kitchen demo y una sombra para lavar el producto y empahear el producto. La librería es para poder preservar semillas este, guardar libros de la justicia ambiental de la justicia de comidas y de la justicia social cómo guardar como almacenar ese tipo de libros para que y en español porque el 95% de nuestra gente es hispana.

**Hannah**: Sí, ¿es la verdad con a Los Ángeles también?

**María**: Sí, entonces tener ese tipo de biblioteca de librería para guardar semillas primeramente el enfoque semillas.

**Hannah**: En paquetes?

**María**: En paquetes e guardar semilla poder ser un proveedor de semillas y este y luego el kitchen demo es para hacer “un catering” un demo de la planta al plato de cocinar y la idea es tener la cocina certificada

**Hannah**: Oh wow! Que impresionante

**María**: Para certificar esa cocina y por ejemplo Conchita hace de comida en lugar de hacerla en su casa hacerla aquí y distribuir a sus clientes. Nosotros aquí a este arco es como a visualizarlo y hacer eventos aquí.

**Hannah**: Ok. Eventos como una boda?
María: Una boda, unos 15 años, una graduación.

Hannah: Con las luces también?

María: Sí poner decorar bien bonito de luces poner esto con manteles se supone que por ejemplo Scripps ¿de qué color es verde?

Hannah: Verde.

María: Poner sus manteles negros con verde o blanco con verde y con flores silvestres todo silvestre y poner como lavanda romero entre esas flores para que te este estés comiendo y estés está conectando con tu ser. Estas luces muy muy arregladas porque ahorita están caídas pero ya bien arregladitas con este esto y hacer eventos aquí que huerta del valle con lo que tiene de productos haga una comida en la cocina y tenemos los..no los desechables y no los de porcelana y no es como que toda del mismo.. es variado que yo he pedido a todas las familias si tienes platos extras, vasos extras.. tráemelos tráemelos y estoy almacenando almacenando entonces esto me da el sí tengo para una fiesta para cien personas yo tengo el material para hacerlo: tengo los platos, tengo los vasos, tengo los tenedores, tengo las cucharas  tengo todo para hacer…los manteles…tengo todo. Para el día de 14 de febrero hicimos un evento del día del amor y la amistad y vendimos 75 boletos. Si. Entonces aquí tuvimos todo con rojo con las luces muy bonito, bien romántico.

Hannah: Wow! Si necesita ayuda, yo puedo ayudar.

María: Gracias, gracias. mañana vamos a tener un evento!

Hannah: ¡Sí! Andrés me dijo. Pero tengo otra junta en la mañana, pero termino…pienso que las cuatro y el dijo que el evento es desde el dos hasta el cinco. Quizás una hora?

Hannah: Bueno. Pues, yo pienso ¿qué hay una hora? La señora esa, con la que hablé ahorita, va a estar haciendo tortillas, ¡hechas a mano!
Hannah: ¡MMMMmm! ¡Me encanta las tortillas!

María: Vente! Vente a comerte una quesadilla! Sí, aquí te esperamos mañana! No importa que sea las cinco, las seis. Guardo un poquito de masa para echarse una tortilla.

Hannah: Gracias, gracias.

María: Sí, sí.

Hannah: Mi hermana va a visitarme hoy, ¿pues, ella pueda venir?

María: ¡Claro! ¡Vengase! ¿De dónde viene tu hermana?

Hannah: Ella ahora esta estudiando en Occidental, en Pasadena, pero somos de Torrance.

María: Oh, no esta lejos, Torrance no es lejos.

Hannah: Mis papas viven en Torrance, con mis dos perritos.

María: Solitos tus papás con los dos perritos… ¿nada más son ustedes dos?

Hannah: Sí, dos hijas.

María: Dos hijas, ¡qué bien! Qué bonito. Pues, felicidades Corazón, no todos nacimos con ese privilegio.

Hannah: Sí. Yo sé.

María: Felicidades y de verdad este es una gran bendición y qué bueno que ustedes lo aprovecharon..*? de dar hacia adelante lo que su padres han hecho por ustedes, uds. también sigan delante de lo que sus padres han implementado en ustedes. Para nosotros como primer generación de inmigrantes, es bien difícil. Hasta apenas ahorita como que estoy viendo ya y por todo lo que pasé pues ahora sufre por los que están atrás de mí! Si porque uno llega este país hasta para buscar un hilo, para buscar una aguja ¿dónde la compras? Y aparte de dónde la compras, con salarios mínimos que uno trabaja? O pagas renta? Y fíjate que eso fue la
inspiración para mí, el jardín: yo necesitaba la comida orgánica para mi hijo que me lo habían diagnosticado y pues donde la compraba? Hasta ocho millas?

**Hannah**: Y es muy caro.

**María**: Retirado de mi casa y cuando la encuentro, cara. Y digo, mi esposo y yo trabajamos pero por salarios míimos que hacemos con salarios míimos? Pagamos renta? O compramos comida? Entonces pues esto me ha cambiado la vida con mucho altos y bajos ***? Me ha cambiado la vida: mi hija y mi nieta.

**Hannah**: ¿Sí?

**María**: ¡Bere! Vente! (Yelling to her daughter) deja secarme mis lagrimas.

**Hannah**: Gracias por compartir.

**María**: No, gracias a ti, por escucharme.

**María**: (Talking to her granddaughter)


**Hannah**: ¿Cómo estás?

**María**: Este es mi hija Berenice.

**Hannah**: Mucho gusto.

B: Mucho gusto.

**María**: Ay mi niña preciosa thank you, thank you, mi niña preciosa.

**Hannah**: ¿Qué hermosa!

**María**: ¿Quieres ir a ver las gallinas? Llévala a ver las gallinas estás. Taking to see the hens and the goats.
Hannah: ¿Cuál es el nombre de ella?
María: Ariana.

Hannah: ¡Qué linda!

Talking to the goats.. making goat noises

Hannah: ¿Y cuántos años tiene?
María: Un año, ocho meses.

Hannah: Me encanta los niños.
María: Yo pensaría, nueve.

Listening to the rooster and the goats making noises

María: Es muy bonito esto.

Hannah: Estos cabritos son suyos?
María: No, son del vecino

Hannah: Pero el jardín usa como se dice, *?
María: *? No lo usa para él mismo porque tiene mucho espacio, tiene arboles y él lo procesa para él. Esta bien su espacio porque tiene desde *?lap parte de la calle hasta acá. Y su casa esta seccionada *? Es puro terreno y siembra mais, mucho vegetal.Y él lo usa para el. Es bueno también. La que saca la gente de sus terrenos ahí se los lleva a los chivos, eso sí.

Hannah: ¿Cómo compra esta tierra?
María: No la compramos Corazón.

Hannah: ¿De verdad?
María: Es un acuerdo entre la ciudad voluntario y Huerta del Valle de tener la tierra por diez años y automáticamente se renueva a cinco, pero ahorita estamos haciendo la propuesta de cambiar ese tipo de vocabulario porque cuando hacemos una beca nadie nos quiere apoyar
porque nada más son cinco años. Después de los cinco años, que va a pasar? Ahorita estamos hablando de que se nos haga por perpetua, la tierra. Se vence para abril del siguiente año.

Entonces que se nos haga perpetua y pues ya entonces huerta del valle ahorita la ciudad paga el agua, la luz, la basura este y no pagamos nada de terreno pero si se nos hace perpetua, entonces nosotros pagaríamos la luz, el agua, la basura, todo.

Hannah: Hay un escuela cerca de aquí? O solamente un parque?

María: Sí está aquí por esta calle misma aquí está el parque pero caminas dos bloques por la misma calle y está la escuela, los niños se vienen caminando a tours aquí caminando.

Hannah: ¿Hay programas aquí también? ¿Para los niños?

María: Tenemos el programa de Abejas, es un programa de niños de cuatro años hasta 15, 16. En un currículo de justicia social, justicia ambiental, justicia de comida y nutrición y arte.

Hannah: Los niños antes saben mucho de la nutrición y todo o no?

María: No de hecho para muchas mamás ha costado trabajo involucrarlos a comer los vegetales este que el brócoli que el kale que el coliflor le ha costado trabajo y he oído testimonios de mamás que a través de la visita huerta y el probar los productos de huerta a ellos han cambiado su expectativa en comer productos en comer vegetales.

Hannah: Wow. Muy impresionante.

María: Sí, sí muy buenos testimonios que las escuelas vienen de segundo de primero y segundo año y los paso les doy un tour y por ejemplo si veo pues brócoli les corto pedacitos de brócoli si veo raspberries(frambuesas) les corto raspberries lo que veo en el camino les corto para que ellos experimenten los sabores y ellos se quedan, Wow! Y ya después dicen oh ya ya comen o ponen sus comentarios en las redes sociales en Instagram los papás y dicen Wow! La experiencia que que tuvimos y mis hijos ahora están viendo más por por comer vegetales.
Hannah: Especialmente cuando los niños les ayudan a sus padres a plantar las semillas y todo.

María: sí sí sí hemos tenido mucho muchos comentarios así y pues Jacobo es una muestra viva.

El Jacob trabaja al nivel que trabaja este Andrés, y que tiene? Solamente 8 años, 9?

Hannah: Ocho.

María: Y él trabaja al pie de su papá si su papá está haciendo un hoyo él está ahí haciendo si su papá anda con la máquina su papá suelta tantito la máquina y “el bye”pass(sound) la agarra y sigue con la máquina y yo me quedé WOW! Hay varios vídeos varias cosas donde él anda trabajando al nivel de su papá.

Hannah: El es muy inteligente, Jacobo.

María: Sí. Nada más lo único que como que no le no le gusta no le agrada la escuela y el agrada más andar acá y esto pero sí he hablado con él le digo, “Mi hijo, necesitas prepararte, ese trabajo esto está muy bueno y qué bien que lo sepas hacer y que te fortalezcas en todas las áreas pero tienes que llevarlo de la mano con tu educación.” Necesitamos necesitamos este educarnos necesitamos la escuela y a veces tenemos que hablar de decir eh te vas a ganar esto o te vas pero échale ganas a la escuela.

Hannah: Pienso que él le gusta a leer pero tiene miedo de hacer

María: Y si voy de acuerdo porque pues es que lo que transmitimos transmitimos a nuestros hijos luego Jacobo vea muy tímido y él también es así (referring to Andrés, his father).

Anteriormente llegaba alguien y Andrés desaparecía y yo, no, no. <Vente aquí, ven te voy a presentar…pero que me da pena… no te debe de dar pena… y le digo todos somos igual, este es por ser humano.>

Going into the bushes Mira! Andale.

Hannah: Les parece gemas
María: Gemas, gemas preciosas, has oído la canción? Piensa le encanta la verdad mira <Eh Bere, trae Ariana por favor. Mira Ariana, mira mamacita. Quieres seguir viendo las chivas corazón? Sí, quiere seguir viendo los chivos.

Hannah: Cuáles son los dificultades en creer un jardín como así?

María: Es mucho las finanzas. Ahorita con el sistema ahorrí últimamente hay muchos apoyos financieros para este sistema para este ramo de trabajo. Lamentablemente para huerta del valle su fundador o su director ejecutivo tiene mucha limitaciones y no puede como no he podido como rescatar todas las clases de ayuda. Más sin embargo tenemos ayudas financieras.

Talking w someone she knows in the garden.

María: How are you today?

Man: Huh? I’m good.

María: You want some?

Man: What is it?

María: Pomegranites

Man: Yes, thank you.

María: Arturo is a volunteer he is from Arizona. Oregon, I lived at the Grand Canyon for three years in Prescott, Arizona. What are you doing, volunteering?

Hannah: I’m interviewing her for my thesis.

Man: Oh, okay.

Hannah: It’s okay. It’s very casual.

Man: Is it for school?

Hannah: It’s for my thesis, for school.

Man: What’s your course of discipline?
Hannah: Human Biology and Foreign Language.

Man: Wow, cool. Human Biology, what’s that all about?

Hannah: I study the health of humans so kind of like healthcare a little bit and then just like the processes of biology for humans.

(Phone rings, he excuses himself)

Hannah: el es muy interesante. Le gusta el Tie Dye

María: Si. Viene, creo los martes y los viernes cada semana.

Hannah: Hay muchos voluntarios como él?

María: Como él, no. Porque él viene por él mismo porque este chico viene por créditos de la escuela y por créditos de escuela vienen unos 15 sí 15 también viene un grupo de pixel college y este grupo es un club que se llama Sunrise y este club viene cada sábado son como ocho integrantes y por su cuenta porque ellos no no es por créditos sí por su cuenta sí pienso que es mejor sí pero sí sí tenemos últimamente porque nos afectó mucho el (pandemia) los 2 años de pandemia si no llegaron voluntarios nos atrasamos mucho, sí.

Hannah: Sí es muy difícil de mantener un jardín sin personas sí.

María: Sí sí pero ahorita ya ya Empieza a regularizarse

Hannah: ¿Y a dónde viva usted?

María: Yo vivo aquí a 3 minutos estoy pegado al freeway 60 y está mi mobile home. Vivo en un mobile home. Está por sobre la Filadelfia (Philadelphia) y la Yuclid. Estoy muy cerca.

Hannah: Wow. ¿En en el tema de los freeways, piensa que el ambiente que vivimos afecta a nuestra salud?

María: Sí bastante, bastante desafortunadamente. Vivimos en un en un área de cercas del freeway y pues nuestro cuerpo bastantes a metales, metales pesados entre dentro de nuestros
sistemas dentro de nuestro sistema y este y nos afecta la salud. El medio ambiente en sí no nada más es el freeway, pasan por aquí camiones y camiones y camiones y toda esa cantidad de camiónes también nos vienen afectando el sistema del medio ambiente, el aire el aire entonces nos la verdad no tenemos oxigenación más que en esta área, en esta área es donde respira profundo y todo por qué porque lo que llega a aquí los arbolitos y las plantas lo mueven, pero alrededor de aquí bodegas, pega el freeway, el freeway 60 aquí el freeway 10 acá el freeway 15 de ese lado bodegas alrededor de nosotros.

**Hannah:** Hay muchos espacios verdes?

**María:** No.

**Hannah:** Solamente huerta?

**María:** Ahorita tenemos aquí huerta y ha crecido otro jardincito en será como que como cuatro millas que está por la cuatro y la Montain. Está Yuclid como salida del freeway: Yuclid y Montain y vas por toda la Mountain antes de llegar al freeway 10 en la cuatro está otro jardincito más chiquito que.. muy chiquititito pero está otro jardincito y esta otro en Rebecca’s Garden que es por la san Antonio entre en medio de de Yucatán y Mountain está la calle San Antonio y está por la San Antonio y la cinco antes de llegar al freeway 10 también esta Rebecca’s Garden que también es otro ayudadita a bajar los contaminantes pero sí no hay muchos jardines no hay muchas zonas verdes.

**Hannah:** Andrés me dijo que el meta de huerta es para poner un jardín en cada milla.

**María:** Sí, esa es una parte de la visión de huerta.

**Hannah:** Que es el plan para hacerlo?

**María:** Es precisamente levantar este a su potencial y luego a educar a la gente bajo la sombrilla de huerta del valle educar a la gente en nuevos agricultores porque ahorita se sufre para para
encontrar agricultores no hay personas que quieren trabajar dentro de la agricultura. En primera a
veces porque nos faltan los conocimientos y en segunda porque también es un trabajo muy, muy
duro. Entonces y mal pagado porque no se aprecia no se paga el valor. Esto influye mucho para
pues nadie voltear a ver este tipo de trabajo. Entonces si fuera mucho trabajo pero bien pagado,
yo creo que valdría la pena y mucha gente tomar el interés de él pero no. Entonces, solo retos
que tenemos bajo huerta del valle tenemos un programa educativo que se dice Nuevos
Agricultores y ese programa es diseñado para los jóvenes vayan tomando el conocimiento de la
agricultura urbana y agricultura ecológica y poder llevarlos a otro nivel. Ya una vez que se
gradúan bajo huerta del valle tenemos un programa que se llama incubación y tenemos once
acres que no se ha facilitado el candado de Riverside, y esos once acres toda la persona
graduada puede tomar un medio acre, ¼ de acre o cierta cantidad de tierra y desarrollarla para su
propio negocio y entonces allí es como vemos como el micro jardín comunitario desarrollándose
y al mismo tiempo micro business, negocios pequeños eso es lo que estamos haciendo para llegar
a la meta de crear jardines en cada milla.

**Hannah:** Wow. Qué impresionante. ¿Piensa que hacer programas en el jardín es necesariamente
para educar el público o el jardín de solo está bien?

**María:** No, es mucho muy importante crear programas para educarnos porque si no nos
educamos nunca tenemos la conciencia de lo que estamos haciendo y tener a conciencia es a
fomentar un mejor ambiente una mejor salud una mejor relación y comunicación no nada más
crecemos como los productos o la comida sino también crecemos nuestras relaciones porque
estamos en otro nivel de capacidad de conciencia donde en lugar de pelear nos unimos en lugar
de estar pues criticándonos o esto nos tenemos compasión de unos a otros.
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