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Excerpts and Summary of the **63rd Community Hunger and Nutrition Forum**
Wednesday, February 8, 2006 12:00PM –1:30PM
Trinity Lutheran Church, Fresno

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California Dept. of Health, Cancer & Nutrition Section, CA Nutrition Network

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Occidental College, Center for Food & Justice

Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission Refugee Rural Initiative

Forum Focus: **A Taste of the Farm**
Report on Farm to School/Farm Fresh Wednesdays Pilot
Evaluation by Participants: Local Schools, Nutrition Education, Farmers

The following is a summary of the reports made at the forum compiled by Jeremy Hofer and Carey Berend.

Hunger and Nutrition Forum **Wednesday, February 8, 2006**

Edie Jessup: Today we are going to hear the results of the Farm Fresh Wednesdays program, which is a Farm to School pilot program that was done with a number of different partners here.

We were going to do a legislative update, and as you know, at the federal level the Congress passed the reconciliation budget by two votes. Generally we were not particularly happy with the thrust of that budget. That is for this year and we have a new budget from the president that has come out and people are looking at it very closely. Our concern around food is that programs not be cut because we know here that people are mightily dependent upon those programs to be healthy and to eat, so we will be looking at that closely. **Budgets are really moral and priority documents**, so we'll be keeping track of the issues we're quite concerned about, particularly with seniors and folks about what is happening with the budget right now, but all folks in general.

Farm to School efforts are about the good health of our kids. They are about getting good quality food into the hands of our children and teaching them the importance of eating healthy.

Jeremy Hofer: I am here to report back to the community on a pilot program that I coordinated last year from September to November with the Fresno Unified School District and the Selma Unified School District, called Farm Fresh Wednesdays.

Program Goals

In June of last year we formed a steering committee, which informed us in program development. What came out of that three-month planning period were two goals: to **increase students' consumption of fruits and vegetables through both in-class nutrition and agricultural-based education, Farm to School education in the classroom, and featured produce offerings in the cafeteria by local farmers partnering with school food service.** We felt that it was really important to have both, that you can teach a kid what to eat but unless you give them access to healthy

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food at lunchtime they're not going to make that connection and who knows if their parents will buy it for them. **The second goal was to develop a transferable protocol for linking teachers to food service and the local agricultural community.** We understood that as coordinators, we would be initiating the program, but eventually we hoped there would be a systemic approach where school districts were able to get taste tests from local farmers or from produce vendors for specific classrooms. **For example, a teacher wants to conduct a taste test in a couple weeks; they could make one call and be able to get a taste test in their classroom.**

Partners

There were five major partners. **Fresno Metro Ministry** provided a 50 percent full-time coordinator and a 50 percent outreach staff for the project and we mainly dealt with the program design, convening of the steering committee, materials development and dissemination, classroom visits, volunteer recruitment and training and the overall program coordination. **Community Alliance with Family Farmers** was our major funder and a lot of this program was based on some work that they had done up in Atwater in a school there. Stephanie Johnson did produce sourcing and distribution as well as providing farmers for the classroom visits. The **University of California Cooperative Extension, Fresno County** did a lot of work in developing the curriculum and making sure the curriculum fit with state standards. They assisted us with the teacher training and orientation as well as the program design and evaluation. They were a very important part of the classroom visits as well because they knew what they were doing and they had relationships in both of the schools. The two other partners are **Fresno Unified School District** and **Selma Unified School District**. I just wanted to list the additional resource partners, which were **African American Farmers Association, California Clean Growers, California Food Policy Advocates, California State University, Fresno Agriculture Department, California Table Grape Commission, California Tree Fruit Agreement, Corrin Farms, CSUF Social Work Internship Program, Dave Lewis Farms, Fresno County Farm Bureau, Fresno County Master Gardener Program, Fresno County Office of Education, Tulare County Office of Education, and the WIC Dietetic Internship program.**

4 Components of Farm to School

There are four main components of Farm to School: **food service, classroom curriculum**, which are on the school side of things, **local farmers** that are providing the produce and hopefully visiting with the schools and having schools tour their farms, and **community volunteer involvement**.

Program participants

The participants included two food service departments in Fresno and Selma and the directors; **very important to program success are the site managers at the schools. They are the ones that deal with the produce and get it to the kids.** We found that when there is buy in from these site managers, the program runs a lot smoother with better communication – less headaches. The two elementary school principals, Misty Her and Tim Smith, were very supportive of the program. And of course, the teachers are important partners. There were 16 teachers: 13 at Roosevelt in Selma and 3 at Burroughs in Fresno. Because of the difference in the school participation the needs at each site were very different. At Burroughs we only allowed three classes to join we had a much more controlled setting which was easier to coordinate. At Roosevelt we were looking for about 7 or 8 teacher – however we had 13 teachers sign up, this made for some tricky coordination. In total we had 21 class visitors: 3 interns, 10 farmers, 3 master gardeners, 2 nutritionists, and 3 community volunteers.

School Demographics

Burroughs and Roosevelt are very large schools. In fact, I think they are the largest elementary schools in their respective districts. **At Roosevelt there were over 300 students participating: almost half of the school, while at Burroughs a very small portion of the school participated, about 60 students.** They're both very high poverty schools.

Program Design

The program was a 10-week pilot. **There were five sessions and focused on grapes, plums, kiwi fruit, sweet potatoes, and salad items, which turned out to be carrots and broccoli.** We didn't necessarily have the complete plan when we set out and so we adapted as we went and the plan evolved. For example, we didn't know how we were going to serve the sweet potatoes until about halfway through and we tackled that bridge when we came to it. **Turns out that raw sweet potatoes are very tasty, like carrots but sweeter. These were one of the favorites for the kids.** So we adapted and we depended a lot on the feedback that we got from the school food services and volunteers. **Each session included a visitor presentation, a taste test, an activity, and then a question and answer period. There were also ongoing curriculum and activities.**

My favorite part of the program was the locally grown produce that was offered in the cafeteria. **It was great to tell the students, "Okay, at lunchtime eat your veggies or eat your fruit. What you just tasted you will see on your tray at lunch!" I think that connection was important for the students.** That's a picture of Mr. Smith's grapes on the tray here. Mr. Smith provided the grapes for both schools. Again, **the whole school received the produce item, although only a segment of the school had actually received the in-class visit earlier.**

Curriculum

The core curriculum, called **Reading Across my Food Guide Pyramid**, is a curriculum that's already in use in about 175 classrooms throughout Fresno County, it's the curriculum that UC Cooperative Extension promotes and recruits teachers to conduct, so we felt we didn't really need to reinvent the wheel. **We supplemented this curriculum with Farm-to-School-oriented activities, fact sheets, books, and then the taste testing and farmers visits.** It came out to about an hour a week commitment for the teachers over the ten weeks, so **it wasn't a huge commitment beyond the visits and taste tests.**

Classroom Visits

The classroom visits were 30 minutes long and volunteers went to three or four different classrooms each Wednesday morning and so you can imagine as a coordinator **there was complexity involved with coordinating 5 visitors in 16 different classrooms in one morning.**

School Garden

We involved parents that are part of the CBET program at Burroughs, which is an English program at FUSD, in garden preparation. The next day we were out there with 60 students, each student got to plant one plant in that small garden, but it worked, amazingly. **We had students line up in three rows and one by one they got to plant a plant and it was a lot of fun.**

Program Evaluation

There were four ways that we evaluated the program. We did a **time-of-visit show of hands** in which visitors asked, "How many of you like it?" and the kids that liked it raised their hand. We asked, "Have you tried it before?" which was real interesting because some of the items **a large majority of the kids had not tried - like kiwi or raw sweet potatoes.** We did a **cafeteria waste evaluation** where we compared two groups of students at Burroughs Elementary. We did a **teacher and administrator survey** in December and we have some of the feedback on that in the report that is in front of you. Then there was an **ongoing process evaluation.** After every visit I would send an e-mail out to the teachers and ask, "How did it go? On a scale of 1 to 5 how was your visitor? What are some suggestions to make it better?" Of course, at the beginning it was comments like "Needs to be better organized" or "We need to get the kits on time." There were some things that we had to sort

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out at the beginning, but it was really helpful to get that feedback because by kiwi fruit we were off and running.

We only did the time-of-visit student evaluation with three of the items and what's interesting here is the majority of the students had not tried kiwi or sweet potato and a vast majority wanted to eat it again, so that boded well for whether they were going to eat it in the cafeteria later that day. **So we introduced students to new foods and hopefully they will continue to eat those new foods.**

This was the waste evaluation. What we did was separate the produce from the two groups and put them into separate bags and weigh them and we came up with an amount of waste per student. This waste evaluation didn't quite turn as well as we had hoped. **With the broccoli and carrots the control group had twice the amount of waste as the intervention group, or the Farm Fresh kids. That boded real well for our goal of increasing consumption among the Farm Fresh group of kids.** However, in the other three trials that we did there wasn't so much of a significant difference there and there may be a couple of reasons for that. One, we may need more students to be part of the groups. We may need to do several trials in a row to get a better sample. Another possibility is that items like grapes and plums and to some extent the sweet potatoes are very likable items by most kids, especially the grapes and plums, so you may not have quite as significant a difference when you just promote the items to the students that day than with broccoli and carrots.

What came out was that the teacher results were very favorable. The teachers had a wonderful experience and a lot of their comments I've included in the report. There were comments that the program created hype around the Wednesday, which was our hope from the start: **by calling it 'Farm Fresh Wednesdays' kids would look forward to Wednesday and learning about a new fruit or vegetable. Teachers felt that it helped students become more aware of their food choices and make healthier choices at schools and most teachers also felt that it helped students eat healthier snacks.**

Barriers

As far as some of the barriers that came up, the **lack of kitchen space and facilities** was a big issue, especially at Roosevelt. **At Roosevelt school they served two different schools out of that one kitchen. There are about 1500 students between those two schools and the kitchen is designed for 450 students.** That's almost a three-fold difference between what the kitchen was designed for and how many they're serving, so there were **issues with being able to store fresh product in the refrigerator, they had issues with having to prep things, and even dealing with the slight additional time commitment.** We started out asking them to help us distribute the actual taste kits that went to the volunteers and that became too much of a headache for them. **Food service needs carrot sticks, not carrots,** so we had to actually do some minor processing beforehand. **For this we contracted with a local produce company to process the items.** Also, **the low reimbursement by the federal government was a big issue. Schools have about ten cents per serving of fruits and vegetables.** The advanced menuing became an issue, especially with the kiwi fruit, because kiwi was harvested late this year. The availability was low and the cost was high and so we had to subsidize the kiwi fruit a little bit in order to make it fit their budget. As far as classroom visit barriers, as I mentioned, there was a lot of complexity with scheduling visits for multiple classrooms. **There was some difficulty in recruiting farmers to visit the classrooms because harvest time is the busiest time of year for farmers.** First-time visitors sometimes struggled with addressing the students at their grade level, so more **training was needed for those first-time visitors.**

We were able to get 21 volunteers to go into classrooms for a total of about 70 visits by volunteers,

After a farmer had visited I asked for a show of hands from the students of how many kids wanted to grow up and be a farmer. These are third grade students in inner city Fresno, and

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about 75 percent of them raised their hands. You don't think that that's possible in this day and age but I believe that with these types of programs we can actually engender an excitement about farming.

Farm to School in the Fresno Unified School Wellness Policy

Edie Jessup: Two years ago there was a summit on childhood obesity and all the right players were there yet afterwards there was no followup. The **child nutrition group got together and decided the one thing that would impact kids fastest and the most kids would be to change the environment on school campuses**, so for the last couple of years a small but mighty group has worked on a comprehensive Food and Physical Activity Wellness Policy for Fresno Unified School District. This was a **group of 25 stakeholders from both schools and the community**. A really important thing has happened out of that. We are on our way this month. The policy is due to go to the school board and will probably be voted on then in March and it **will make Fresno Unified the first school in California, we think, with a comprehensive policy that isn't piecemeal, that is directed at good health through healthy eating and physical activity and will be a real model for the rest of the state**. We had a lot of discussion about how the transformation of fresh produce, which of course is our resource here in Fresno, how to get that into the schools given the things that Jeremy was talking about in terms of what their reimbursement is, what they can actually pay for things, the difficulty of a large school district that can't make 100 calls to get enough grapes for 80,000 meals for today, and what the issues are around that. What survived in the Wellness Policy is some really good language. You can see, **"Fresno Unified School District aims to teach, encourage, and support healthy eating by students. Schools should to the extent possible provide nutrition information and engage in nutrition promotion that includes enjoyable, developmentally-appropriate, culturally-relevant participatory activities such as contests, promotions, taste testing, farm visits, and school gardens, promotes fruits and vegetables, whole grain products, low-fat and fat-free dairy products, healthy food preparation methods, and health-enhancing nutrition practices and that link school meal programs and other school foods and nutrition-related community services. Schools are encouraged to source fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers where practical."** This is really important for our local farmer. They have the solution to many of the health issues that we're seeing with our kids with the development of diabetes and overweight and hypertension in elementary age kids that we're seeing. So as a business issue and as a wellness issue we're very excited that the intention of doing that is going to be in the policy.

Curriculum

Sara Candalaria: Good afternoon. In the program that I coordinate out of the **University of California Cooperative Extension, the Youth Nutrition Education Program**, we work with teachers in kindergarten through 8th grades and we provide them with a research-based curriculum that's linked to California contents standards in language, arts, math, and science, and it is nutrition education and physical activity education curriculum. We work with the teachers to provide them with training and support so that they're able to implement this curriculum and they make a **commitment to our program that they're going to use it for at least six hours during the school year with their students. That doesn't seem like it's very much, but considering the strain that teachers feel around meeting those benchmarks and getting the students to achieve on their tests, that is a big commitment from teachers and many times they're accomplishing it in small increments and practical ways**. Farm Fresh Wednesdays was a perfect fit to work with our program because we were already out in Fresno County working with teachers to do nutrition education. In the two schools that we worked with we had some teachers that we're familiar with and had done nutrition education before and we recruited additional teachers that had never done it before, **so it was a good partnership in that it grew my program and it also created some excitement around nutrition education in these schools**. What we used was a curriculum called *Reading Across My Pyramid*, and it's a literature-based curriculum. It has 11 lessons and the teachers fulfilled about five or six of them during the Farm Fresh Wednesdays period of time. Each of the lessons is introduced by

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children's literature that introduces the topic, for instance, *The Ugly Vegetables*. They read this with the children and then they explore the food topic that's introduced. So they were using this curriculum as kind of a base of nutrition education and then in a pretty short period of time I had developed lessons that went along with it – and I'll give you a few examples – that really featured and honed in on the specific commodities that we were featuring and explored other topics that we wanted the children to really grasp like how important a farmers market was and that the produce that they ate didn't come from a grocery store, it came from a farm. **Many students have a total disconnect. They have no idea how fruits and vegetables grow, where they really come from, and that they're completely surrounded by them.** To give you an example, my favorite activity from these featured ones was an outside activity where the children had a relay game and they were learning that the school and the farm were just a hop, skip, and a jump away, so they were hopping from this cone to this one and jumping to the next one and then skipping to the rest picking up bean bags that were supposed to be fruits and vegetables and then hopping, skipping, and jumping back, and then they had a discussion around the different colors of the beanbags and what fruits and vegetables come in those different colors. The teachers were doing these ongoing activities and then the classroom visits were happening intermittently with farmers and some of our staff and other volunteers.

An interesting point is my best friend happens to be a teacher at Roosevelt Elementary School, she did not participate in Farm Fresh Wednesdays but her daughter is in first grade at that school. I see them at least weekly and every week her daughter would give me all the information that she had learned from Farm Fresh Wednesdays. **She could tell me detailed information about every commodity that had been featured and that she had tried them and that her friends had liked them and, yes, it was served in the cafeteria. I could see in that one individual student that there was an impact, that they were gathering that information, they were utilizing it, and they were able to connect it to something practical and real in their own lives.** So that was a fun and interesting experience.

I want to give you just a little bit of feedback from the teacher evaluation about the curriculum. There were several things that I found very encouraging. The teachers were able to really feel prepared, that the curriculum had given them equipment and tools to be able to promote agriculture and the food system to their students. They really felt that the curriculum prepared them to link what they were teaching to agriculture and also to the cafeteria as a tool for nutrition education, and I thought that was excellent, that teachers were making a link to the cafeteria. You may not be aware of how difficult it is to get teachers and food service to talk to one another, but it can be very difficult. It depends on the personalities, how it's set up, but many times there's not a relationship there. Some schools are able to achieve that and it's wonderful when it happens. The other thing was that they really emphasized the fact that it increased the student interest in nutrition education, in agriculture, and in the food system. One teacher shared with me in the classroom that because it was every other week that they had visits, it wasn't every Wednesday, the students would forget. She said when she wrote it up on the board on the list of activities for the day the excitement level immediately went really high and she had to kind of bring them down and calm them down because they were so excited about having someone come and visit their classroom, so that was a really excellent piece of this.

One recommendation that they had was because we had teachers from first grade all the way up through fifth grade in the Roosevelt school and the curriculum was really focused on kindergarten through third grade and the activities I developed were really geared to maybe late second grade or third in terms of standards, **the teachers really wished that the curriculum had focused in more on grade level.** I think that's an important lesson for us, that teachers really need something that is going to be easy to implement that they can just take and use and they don't have to adapt, they don't have to try to create links between where the activity is and where they need to be by grade level. I think that that's something we can easily accommodate should we try something like this again.

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I was also very interested to see what the impact on the students was. I shared the individual example, but they also had on their teacher evaluation 100 percent favorable agreement ratings in the three student learning areas, that the students had learned about their local food system, that they had learned about health and diet-related issues, and they had learned about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables. I'd like to see if we did something like this again a pre- and post-test so that we can really see the increase in knowledge, but by teacher observation they gave favorable ratings to that. Then also they had strong favorable agreement that the students actually had a change in behavior, that they were able to eat healthier snacks more often and that they were making healthier food choices, which is a real difficult one, and became more aware of their food choices that were available at school because in schools, even elementary schools, there are still lots of choices that the students have and they were able to identify what the healthier choices were, particularly fruits and vegetables, and make those choices more often. So we were really happy with the feedback from the teachers about the curriculum and the visits and were very happy to be a part of this project.

Participant Comments

Kenny Kearns: I'm a third grade teacher at Burroughs Elementary, and I was real pleased with the program. My principal was very supportive. We had to change some of the days and it worked well. **To me the actual farmers, I think, were the big excitement for the kids and how they tied it in actually where the food is grown and how they actually get it.** Some of the kids didn't know how grapes grew on vines or how they grew at all and they were just real pleased to see that. Meeting the actual farmers was just very fun for them. Like it was already mentioned, **it got real exciting when the Farm Fresh Wednesday was coming around, more exciting than just seeing me all the time I guess.** The fact that they learned about new foods that they hadn't seen before in my perspective was very good. We actually planted some things and I just checked on them today and they're growing and the kids can see that when they come back next week. So I had a great experience and the other teachers in the program passed on the same thing. It was a really good experience.

Al Smith: You might say if you compare me to Gallo that I have a little backyard of grapes, but if you compare me with somebody that has a backyard of grapes I have about 100 acres. **Right now farmers are kind of a dying breed.** I'm considered a young farmer and otherwise and I'm a black farmer and there just aren't that many of us. I'm considered a young black farmer and I'm 55 years old, so if that tells you too much. I've been farming for life. I grew up farming. We've got about 12 acres of crimson seedless and that's what we provided the school at Roosevelt in Selma. It was a very enjoyable experience out there. The kids were excited about the tasting of the grapes and just had lots of questions. One of the questions that I asked the kids, I said, **"What does a farmer look like to you? Can you describe to me what a farmer looks like?" None of them could describe me as a farmer that they would look for. I somehow didn't fit what they thought a farmer would be.** We just talked about the different varieties of grapes. In fact, I learned some things because they said that there were about 200 different varieties of grapes in California. I didn't know there were that many. So they were learning a lot of things and I thought that was very good. It was just a real enjoyable experience to go and watch the kids taste the grapes and experience grapes and learn about the grapes. I was kind of amazed at how the teachers tied in that particular day with the grapes that we brought there for them to taste so that that was a real experience. I met kids from first grade to fifth grade and so, you know, obviously I had to kind of change my questions and how I talked with the kids, but it was a very, very fun day for me as well as it seemed like a fun day for them.

One of the people that kind of got me involved with this is a lady by the name of Stephanie Johnson. She's the one that took me out there and introduced me to the kids and we kind of got started through that process. I had a number of boxes of table grapes that were in storage and she was helping me through the sales process. We got most of the grapes sold. In the end I've still got about 2000 boxes in storage and they've gone out to the schools and I've made some school contacts now and I've been able to reduce that number. Fresno Unified is buying some from me still so it's just really been a blessing. Also, Washington High School, Mrs. Diaz out there, she's continuing to buy on a weekly

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basis. I've got until about the 15th to get them out of storage so I still need some help, but I wanted to thank Edie and Jeremy especially for the help that they've been able to come through for me because I would not be where I am. I think by the 15th what I don't get rid of I will probably have to call and maybe get rid of them, give them to the food bank. But anyway, it's really been a pleasure working with Fresno Metro Ministry, it's really been a pleasure working with the schools and watching the kids and I think this is something that probably should have taken effect years ago and I'm glad to see that Fresno Metro Ministry is out front trying to promote this for the kids. I think it's just a good wellness program.

Dianne Smith: I volunteered in a classroom. I work at a community garden and I had a lot of fun. I went to Roosevelt School in Selma I have to say that **it was my first time teaching a bunch of very short people about vegetables** and I really had a lot of fun. We did what you guys are doing with the bowls right now and we had these kids put the water in the bowl and we put the peat in there and we talked about the vegetables while the peat pocket was trying to expand and it was like trying to fill time, but you know they really had a lot of fun because we did the whole taste test with the broccoli and the carrots. I had them do the broccoli first because goodness knows you don't want that aftertaste in your mouth all day long. A lot of the kids said they've had broccoli before but with ranch dressing. Who hasn't? And then the carrots they liked all by themselves. **They couldn't get enough of the carrots.** I really enjoyed the experience of working with the teachers and actually being in a classroom setting and having all the kids do all the activities. When you write the Farm Fresh Wednesdays on the board they just all get excited and it was really a very good experience. I'd like to have an extra helper in the room with me with 30 kids, but it was a lot of fun and I appreciate the experience. I'd like to do it again.

Jeremy Hofer: That's a really important point. The volunteers that had teams that went into the classroom, two of them, tended to do better or it just went smoother than when they were in there alone. That's another recommendation that we would make to classroom visitors.

Claudia Sersland: I went to Burroughs and I went with the grapes. It was a great time. The kids were fascinated. I, like Al, said, "Well, what does a farmer look like?" Well, it didn't look like me. We were able to scan in pictures so we digitally could show them what a vine looked like at different stages and we could show them the clusters of grapes on the vine and they were very fascinated by that. They all cleaned their plates. There wasn't one child that refused to try the grapes and they loved it. **I think it's really important to have some non-traditional learning.** I think they get really excited about that and it's a different phase. It's a different go at the same thing and I think they remember it a lot better. I was so excited and energized by it that anytime the Farm Bureau asks me to do anything with **Ag In The Classroom** I go. I've been out twice since I went to Burroughs and it was equally rewarding and exciting. So if you want to do that, **the Farm Bureau is always looking for volunteers to go with them.** They have a video. It's called *The Fabulous Food Machine* and it shows everything that's grown in the San Joaquin Valley, but they really like the particular farmer to bring in their products and interact with the students. It's about the same time commitment, 30 minutes to an hour or something, but I thought it was a great program, so thanks for coordinating it.

Jeremy Hofer: The Farm Bureau was very helpful with getting volunteers and giving some feedback because they do have the Ag in the Classroom program.

Rachel Carpenter: Hi. I come from a preschool background and for me giving children carrot sticks to tell them about carrots doesn't quite make sense. **You need to give them a carrot and see that carrot sticks come from carrots and show that carrots come from the ground, that type of thing. Actually have them in dirt, pull them up with the tops on.** So I come from a very dumb-down point of view as far as vegetables and fruits. One of the things that I did as a preschool teacher was that I actually had different types of apples, had the children cut them up themselves with plastic knives, and then we baked them, and according to the colors of the skins they actually bake up very differently. That was something that was very new to even me.

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Jeremy Hofer: We're going to run with the taste test and then while we do the taste test I'm going to ask **Paul Buxman**, who actually grew one of the varieties that you're going to be tasting, to talk a little bit about the variety. Today we're giving a broccoli and orange because broccoli is the harvest of the month for February and oranges because Paul Buxman, a local grower, was kind enough to come up from Dinuba and provide us with some oranges. The other oranges, I think, are actually provided by **Bella Fruta Produce**. So we're going to have a taste of both. We're going to be able to compare both of them.

One of the things that we really tried to instill in the students was that trying new things is cool. So we would ask how many have never tried this item, this fruit or an orange or a kiwi. "Who has never tried a kiwi before?" They would raise their hands and then we would say after they tried it, "Who tried it for the first time?" and then we'd applaud, so trying to engender the idea that trying new foods is a good thing to do.

Paul Buxman: The small orange is a mandarin orange. It's called a Paige and I planted it with both the recommendation and the warning of the Lincove research station. The first thing was I was excited. I just asked them one question. I said, "You have evaluated all citrus here for many, many years. Just tell me the one that's on top, the one that has the **highest level of sugar, the best taste, the best nutrition, all your tests. What comes out on top?**" "Oh, that would be the Paige." "Okay. Well, that's the one I want to plant." And they said, "Well, maybe not. It doesn't get very big." **As you can see, it's about a ping-pong ball, but these are my little ones and that's where the school came in. I can't market these yet in stores, although I think there will come a time when people will know a very interesting fact, that the smaller generally the citrus the sweeter it is.** Also, those with thrip scars are sweeter yet. There were tests done that found that scarred fruit actually allows for more evaporation concentrating the sugars, so look for a little scar on your orange. It's a better one. Anyway, **Stephanie Johnson, who you heard referred to, a wonderful woman working with the California Alliance With Family Farmers**, introduced me to some other people that might be interested in a smaller orange. **The Paige mandarin we sell in 22-pound boxes and normally those will get anywhere from \$14 to \$18 and sometimes up to \$22 a box, so that's a really good price, but the little ones are worth zero, so what do you think I took as an offer on those? Anything.** At first we didn't pick them but then I found out the schools wanted them and I was excited because I knew one thing. When kids got that mandarin it would really begin to get them hooked on citrus and they would think very differently about citrus. It almost is in the candy range. The orange you'll notice is wonderful as well. It's a fabulous taste. I love naval oranges and I grow them in my backyard. I have thousands of boxes of Paige mandarins but I also want naval oranges for breakfast as well. They're just absolutely wonderful and this time of year you can't beat them.

It's interesting that when I think of Fresno Metro Ministry, the word that pops out to me is ministry. I think that's kind of interesting, my wife being a minister and all. I've been waiting for the California Tree Fruit Agreement. I'm not a huge fan of theirs. To do something they keep trying to put little fancy things out in the supermarket to try to

Most companies know that when you develop habits in children those carry on through adulthood. I think we've spent millions on trying to capture the attention of distracted adults when we could have done so much more taking the very sweetest of our product to children.

convince shoppers, sort of catch them on a spur-of-the-moment purchase. So to me this is really a ministry, changing a direction with children. The only field trip I remember taking as a kid was to the Coca Cola bottling plant. We were so excited as children because farming meant nothing to us. We grew up with that. If somebody had said, "Do you want to go see a pig?" Not interested. I had to slop them every morning. "How about a cow?" No, I hate milking cows. "Oh, let's see chickens." I had to gather eggs on 200 hens every morning. I'm not interested. I want to see the Coca Cola bottling plant. That was so cool to see those little bottles flying by and filling up. But it's all reversed now. **Now the farm is much more exciting than the Coca Cola bottling plant.** I remember talking to the

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kids in Selma about this. I said, "You know, if you know the history of all of this I think you'll begin to find that you're going to want juices instead of Pepsi, but sometimes a Pepsi is really good and sometimes a hamburger is wonderful, a barbecue, and maybe some french fries on the side. And what goes with french fries?" Everybody knew. I said, "But did you know that the average American is eating at a fast food restaurant seven or eight times a week?" Did any of you see the film *Supersize Me*? That was pretty bad, huh? But here's the thing. **The children are going to hear those messages most readily right now. The kids are coming away from movies, video games, everything else. It's a tough thing for teachers to get their attention.**

I was very surprised at the Selma school, Roosevelt, how well ordered the children were. I just was in shock. I looked at the teachers. I didn't see one male, by the way, on campus. I'm sure there are some but I didn't see one. They were all women and they were all respectful but they were all forceful. It was wonderful to watch. The kids had a lot of enthusiasm but they were ordered. Anyway, when we finished with the day and my chore was to hand out plums and introduce them to that, we talked about the pit and what's inside that and how you can plant that and get another plum tree and then everybody was fighting for the pit. Nobody thinks about a cherry pit or a plum pit. Even grapes have seeds, even the seedless ones. They're just not fully formed. **But there's a whole wonderful life in a fruit.** Of course, when we're eating we're eating seeds and we're eating the fruity part around the seed. Then I explained something interesting, that the fruit is nature's way of ensuring the propagation of that species of plant because when an animal comes up and eats the fruit – they call it a stone fruit in what I grow – they can't digest the pit. Of course, the kids loved the next part of this story. They get spread and fertilizer right with them so they can grow at a distance away from the parent tree. This is nature's way. It's a wonderful system, and they had never thought of that. Also, the whole idea that we have become a ranch dip society. Does it mean that we never want to have ranch dip? That's not the point. But here's something for you. I thought this was amazing. My son, Wyatt, is a full-time farmer with me. He's 25 years old so he's helping to bring that average down. Wyatt said, "Dad, guess what the most purchased foods were for the Super Bowl Sunday? Do you know what they are?" I said, "Beer." He goes, "No, that didn't make it." "Okay, chips." "No, that didn't make it." He said, "Dad, you're not going to believe this. It's two vegetables. Avocados was number one. Number two was carrots." So they said it's becoming the biggest vegetables purchasing day. Of course, 50 tons of ranch dressing go with that. It's just an excuse to dip it out of there.

I know that that doesn't mean there's a turnaround in America just because we have Super Bowl and we're eating guacamole and carrots, but I think that Jeremy is on to something. I think this is an incredible program, and it wasn't just beneficial for the kids. It was very beneficial to the farmers. It was helpful to us. I sell all my own fruit. **I've just decided that they call them brokers for a reason. We all go broke when we hire them. I use this as my s-e-l-l phone and I sell and have been selling all my own fruit. I opened up a free brokerage for farmers who are trying to sell their fruit and who are struggling, and once they're on their feet then I give it back to them. I try to teach them how to do what we call nonviolent marketing. Marketing has become very violent. It's verbally violent, it's abusive. You can't believe what you are told.** "You're trying to sell me this sh...?" I have to listen to this over the phone. You're just demeaned by the wholesale houses and all these grocery store chains that are beating you up. Well, it was really quite wonderful to shift away from that and suddenly my customers are children. This is very different, a wonderful experience. They clap for you. I've never been clapped for. The wholesale markets don't clap for you. You try to sell them fruit, you're begging, hat in your hand. **I had never thought of the school until Jeremy actually got this thing started along with some others. I never thought of them as a market. Always it's been the terminal markets and the small grocery stores, and more and more of those are going out of business.** Well, I think it's really important. I think of this as advertising. In a way it is because the children get a taste of that little mandarin and they're hooked. I've watched them sit and eat six of those at a time. They just keep going. They don't even bother to wait until they're sliced. It's a wonderful thing, and once that is there I think it's going to stay. I think they have a wonderful experience.

We're really trying to become a less addicted nation. Food is an addiction because of the three ingredients, salt, fat, and sugar. Those are the three major addictive substances in fast foods. Even in french fries they use sugar with the salt and the catsup is very highly sugared. My mandarin, though, is very sweet, but it's a natural sugar that the body can use. I'm just very thankful to Fresno Metro Ministry and for the schools and it's helpful to the farmers to help us sell the product that is smaller. Pretty soon I think we'll be selling them some larger stuff, too, but the little ones are the best.

Jeremy Hofer: I just want to impress upon you how much of a treat it is to have Paul Buxman here. He was one of the precursors to all of this back in the day with the **Lighthouse Farm Network**, he and Mas Masumoto and the California Clean Growers have been kind of this enclave of logical thinking in a way in the farming community, so thank you for being here, Paul. We have to go, but I do want to give **Michelle Roman** a chance to talk about what's going on in the Fresno County Office of Education because it's very positive and it's exciting to hear the numbers.

Michelle Roman: Hi. I'm the wellness and nutrition consultant with the **Fresno County Office of Education**. Linda Shelton just walked in, and she is also the wellness and nutrition coordinator for Fresno County Office of Education. In our office we do **Harvest of the Month**, as Jeremy has said, and this is actually a state program. We've actually partnered with Loren from **Bella Frutta** and we can stay after also if you have any questions about that. All of our fruits and vegetables, our produce, actually comes through with Loren. Loren is great because he does the delivery for us. When we go out to our schools we also do a taste testing. The thing that we really like is not only do they get a taste testing but every single child gets to leave with that produce. Last month we did orange taste testing, but like we said, most kids had just had an orange, right? **So we did blood oranges, something a little different.** Let them try that. **We even did some juicing and then Loren comes through and brings us these boxes for each class so that way every single child gets to take one home.** The food service director up at Sierra Unified had said that she was in the grocery store and hearing these two kids talk about oranges, "Mom, mom, we got to get some more oranges." And they said, "Wait, that's that orange lady." They noticed Alyssa. So they went over the orange lady and **one of the kids told her that she went home and did the whole taste testing with the blood orange for her family just like how we did it with her and she wanted to get more oranges to do it again for other members of the family.** So we do know, like Jeremy said, that these programs really are reaching more kids and more families than we're aware of. The other thing, too, is the Harvest of the Month curriculum is grade level and standard based. I'm a former elementary school teacher of eight years so I take my classroom experience and bring it in whether I'm working with preschoolers all the way up to eight grade, change the curriculum to fit for each one. Also, they're doing broccoli on the menu throughout the month as well at least once a week so kids are getting a variety of opportunities to have broccoli in different ways. We agree with you how it needs to be fresh produce that first time, not cooked, but really the fresh way and so then they go in later on and may cook it.

To give you a quick update, **we're in 252 classrooms currently. That's over 7,500 kids in Fresno County, and we have just picked up six more schools and classrooms** so we'll be starting those for next month, so we're rolling along with you. I think between all of these programs we're going to hopefully reach more and more kids in Fresno County.