

# **Work-in-Progress: Food is Medicine**

**Barry Chang, DDS  
Yolo County  
June 21, 2023**

# Introduction

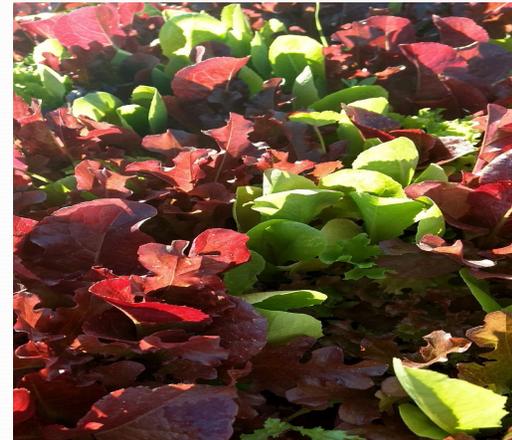
- Barry Chang, DDS, Dental Director at CommuniCare Health Centers in Yolo County
- CommuniCare is a FQHC (Federal Qualified Health Center), we care for a low income and under-served population in the community.

## Background

- ~65% of patients are 100% or below poverty limit.
- Patients have barriers to access to healthy food and transportation to grocery stores; many have limited knowledge of healthy diet impact on well being.
- Outreach activities expanding the understanding and practice of healthy living can benefit the community.

# Overview

## “The Food is Medicine Garden”



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## Gardening, cooking and sharing food as modalities for healing

Presented by CommuniCare Health Centers Food is Medicine Team:

Brian Boyce  
Marina Contreras  
Edye Kuyper





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- **Cultural foods and traditions:** Remembering and sharing recipes, foods, herbs, and health knowledge.
- **Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead:** CommuniCare hosts a public event at the garden to celebrate and honor those who have passed. A community altar is a significant component of this celebration.

# Centering Gardening

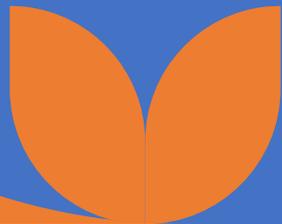
- Organic farming methods ensure health of growers, eaters, and the earth
- Crops are selected based on cultural relevance and specific health benefits they may deliver



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Patient feedback:

*“Healthy and without chemicals.  
Thank you for the donation!”*

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COLONIZING  
MEDICINE 2022



# Centering Cooking

- **Cooking Matters Curriculum:** Evidence-based materials help patients learn how to make healthy, easy, and affordable meals.
- **Cooking Classes at the Garden:** Educational topics include healthy eating, shopping, etc.; discussion-based and hands-on learning; grocery bags allow for recreating recipes at home.



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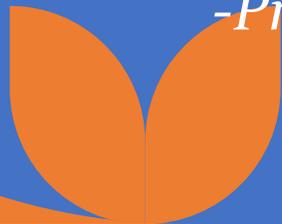
*“Super dope!”*

*-Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Treatment (Tx) group participant*

*“I am using the ingredients to prepare dinner for my friend's family on Wednesdays”*

*-Primary care class participant*

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# Centering Sharing of Food

Food connects people to each other, to the earth, and to culture and traditions.

Applying what they learn in class at home and with others.

Remembering traditions and connecting with friends and family.

Improving individual and community health.



# Centering Connection

- Patients, college students, and community members volunteer
- Staff-focused cooking events
- Outdoor classroom = baby shower destination!
- Frequently visited by participants in substance use disorder treatment groups



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THANK YOU

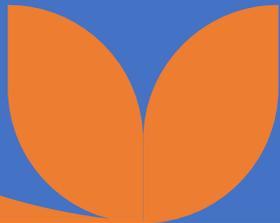
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Dear Vegetable Gardeners:

I LOVE the TASTE of  
these greens [never Bitten!]

Do you need volunteers?

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## Centering Self-Efficacy

- Grant-funded staff offer ~1 hour-long one-on-one self-management support
- Group Medical Visits convene patients, a primary care provider and a diabetes educator to learn, support each other and practice skills together
- Home visits ensure access to patients encountering transportation barriers
- Diabetes Health Educators are integrated with Mobile Medicine and offer education, Hemoglobin A1C tests and food at migrant housing centers, shelters, motels...



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## Looking ahead...

- Further integrating Healthy Living with Diabetes and Food is Medicine activities
- Complementing program delivery with process and outcomes evaluation
- Produce Rx, USDA NIFA GusNIP project: 2023-2025



