



# FEAST

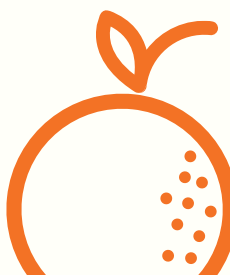
FOOD • EDUCATION • ACCESS  
SUPPORT • TOGETHER



# ANNUAL REPORT 2019

FEAST  
3655 South Grand Ave,  
Suite 210  
Los Angeles, CA

[www.feastforall.org](http://www.feastforall.org)  
@feast\_for\_all  
@feastforall



# A MESSAGE FROM FEAST'S BOARD CHAIR

Dear Friends,

As I write to you amidst surreal, unprecedented, and uncertain times, I hope this letter finds you and your families safe and well. Our team at FEAST is proud to share highlights of this past year, but we do so with full cognizance of the pivotal moment in which we find ourselves as a society. Now, more than ever, while physically distant from one another, we must remain connected and find new ways to support each other. Our ever-evolving experience of this global pandemic only increases our resolve to create and strengthen community ties while providing access to those experiencing food insecurity. We remain hopeful about our future and hope that you will share in our accomplishments.

Reflecting upon 2019, we take great pride in several exciting developments and our increasingly significant impact. Because of your support, our programs have expanded far beyond our home base and headquarters in South LA, and now reach communities across the country through a growing network of trained and licensed FEAST Affiliate Partners. Our low-cost and readily scalable model enabled FEAST programs to serve more individuals and families than ever before and with greater efficiency. This novel approach enabled us to provide more programming locally in Los Angeles as well, supporting our participants through every stage of their health journey, from pre-enrollment to well beyond graduation.

On any given day at our FEAST offices, throughout the year, diverse and robust teams engaged in a broad range of exciting new activities. Interns from departments of local universities--students from the schools of social work, nutrition and public health at UCLA and USC--developed wellness resources, educational materials, and research projects. Program graduates, accompanied by friends and neighbors, joined together for cooking classes led by local chefs and educators using reclaimed produce from local farmers' markets that would otherwise go to waste. Our Community Manager, Ana, continued to exemplify our full spectrum approach to wellbeing, teaching Zumba to a group of moms before their regular FEAST class. In short, we've built a thriving community working together to provide the essential ingredients that create a foundation of health and wellness.

This collaborative effort is matched by the incredible for-profit companies, nonprofit partners, food and wellness professionals and enthusiasts that generously share their resources and time in service of our mission. In particular, I would like to thank our board for their wholehearted commitment to deepening our impact, and to welcome our new members Zoe Kahr, Rachel Szabo, Malcolm Williams, Eric Lau, and Daniel Fine.

As we look towards a future admittedly full of unknowns and new possibilities, I am certain about one thing: we need each other now more than ever, and this is why I'm so proud to stand behind our mission: To Promote Wellness and Enrich Lives Through the Power of Healthy Food and Human Connection. Each of us has an important role to play in lifting each other up and making an essential impact, and we are grateful for your consistent support. As always, thank you all so much for everything you do to make our work possible!

Sincerely,



Christina M. Ford, MD  
Board Chair

## MEET THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Daniel Fine

Lauren Fisher

Christina M. Ford, MD  
Board Chair

Skip Garrett

Kurt Halvorson  
Board Vice Chair

Zoe Kahr

Eric Lau

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Michael Meyer

Kip Pastor  
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Sam Polk

Amanda Railla

Pete Rizzi

Rachel Szabo

Dorcia White-Brake

Malcolm Williams

Jim Williamson  
Board Treasurer

## MEET THE TEAM

Dana Rizer  
Executive Director

Lauren Rejvani  
Communications and  
Development Manager

Amy Vu  
Head of Programs

Ana Guzman  
Family & Community  
Partnerships Manager

# A MESSAGE FROM FEAST'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

To Our FEAST Family of Supporters,

We are tremendously grateful for your dedication to our mission over this past year, as your support is needed now more than ever. Writing this letter today, I am aware that we are straddling two very different moments in time. There was life before the COVID-19 pandemic, and there will be a different version of life after it. Prior to the pandemic, nearly 40% of FEAST families experienced food insecurity "somewhat regularly." Today, as we learn more about our ever-changing present moment, and we grapple with what that means for our shared futures, we anticipate that Food Access will be a growing concern for those we serve.

As we adjust to the "new normal" of social distancing, we are all experiencing firsthand the strain this distance causes. Research across a variety of disciplines has demonstrated again and again that human connection isn't just nice to have, it is an essential nutrient that contributes to our mental and emotional wellbeing, as well as our physical health [1].

Fortunately, FEAST's programs have always been uniquely designed to provide this combination of resources by bringing Food Education, Access and Support, Together.

For more than five years, supporters such as yourself have helped FEAST advance wellness in underserved communities throughout Los Angeles, and now, nationwide [2]. At the graduation of a recent group New York City, one mom described how participating in the FEAST program not only changed her eating habits, but also helped her "find her voice and come out of her shell." As evidenced by the number of women, who go on to take active leadership roles in future groups after graduation, we have seen over and over again that this individual benefit ripples out. When women feel seen, heard and empowered, they take action, and their families and communities benefit greatly. During these challenging times, it is our goal to provide the ongoing support they need to live the healthiest life possible, so that they can help their children and others around them do the same.

We take comfort knowing that we are not alone in this effort, as 2019 was a year of scaling our programs by training local and regional health leaders [3]. FEAST Affiliates like Deb S. in NYC, Bev S. in VA, and Lucia V., in the South Bay worked hard on behalf of their constituents and increased our program reach throughout the year, launching more than ten FEAST programs in their communities across the country. Together, we will work to find creative ways to meet the changing needs of the families we serve.

Also in 2019, FEAST continued to make an impact on local food systems and lived environments, increasing patronage and engagement at local food hubs like SEE-LA Farmers' Markets, Hank's Mini-Market, Everytable, and With Love Cafe through our food scholarships, which enable FEAST families to experiment with nutritious recipes at home. As ever, I am confident that in the year ahead, we will find new ways to work together to ensure that abundant access to nutritious food is available to all.

We are grateful for you, and for all of the ways you have contributed to our cause in 2019—our most impactful year to date. While our priorities for action may evolve in response to these changing times, now more than ever, we are committed to achieving our mission: to promote wellness and enrich lives through the power of healthy food and human connection.

Thank you for making this work possible.



Dana Rizer  
Executive Director, Chief Food Enthusiast  
FEAST

[1] "There is consistent and compelling evidence linking a low quality or quantity of social ties with a host of conditions including cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and cancer." - Journal of Health and Social Behavior

[2] In 2019, we celebrated the launch of programs in Southern California, Lincoln, Nebraska, across New York City, and soon, in Norfolk, Virginia.

[3] Nearly 60 individuals across six states participated in FEAST's three-day leadership trainings.



# FEAST'S MISSION IS TO PROMOTE WELLNESS AND ENRICH LIVES THROUGH THE POWER OF HEALTHY FOODS AND HUMAN CONNECTION.

**FEAST was created to help individuals and families struggling with the effects of living in an inequitable and unhealthy food system build healthier lives. Research shows that health and wellness are the result of a variety of interrelated factors:**

## OUR FOOD ENVIRONMENT

which includes our ability to find and afford healthy food in our neighborhoods, as well as the skills and support needed to prepare and consume those foods regularly.

## OUR EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

which includes our ability to manage stress, practice self-care and access resources that help us help navigate life's challenges.

## OUR SOCIAL NETWORKS

which includes the feeling of being connected to and supported by close friends, family or colleagues.







## PROGRAM APPROACH

FEAST programs were created based on the understanding that health is not only physical, it is also mental, emotional and social. As a result, our program is designed to provide support on three levels:



### FOOD EDUCATION

Each week, FEAST classes include nutrition discussions, recipes and cooking demonstrations to make healthy eating satisfying, affordable and delicious. Program participants learn about how to navigate our food environment in a healthy manner with skills like label reading, understanding the difference between ultra-processed foods and whole fruits, vegetables, and grains, and how to prepare affordable recipes at home for a family, even with limited resources.



### ACCESS

The transition from a diet high in ultra-processed foods and convenience foods to a whole foods diet is challenging, and spending money on new, unfamiliar foods is a risk that many of our families simply cannot afford. Additionally, in many neighborhoods where FEAST groups are most needed, there may not be adequate access points for people to find fresh, healthy whole foods at the start of the program. In each class, we provide free and immediate access to fresh, whole foods through a food scholarship, enabling families to experiment with healthy recipes at home. We partner with healthy food retailers, farmers' markets and CSA programs to provide vouchers for fresh produce each week. These activities not only benefit participants and their families, they also help to strengthen a healthy food environment by boosting local engagement at pre-existing healthy food locations.



### SUPPORT, TOGETHER

Weekly check-ins and sharing circles create opportunities for participants to address the underlying and often emotional elements of eating. The sharing topics help foster personal reflection and introspection, and the guided sharing circle structure creates a safe space for people to open up about deep, vulnerable issues while getting the support of their peers. An increasing body of research shows that strong social connections are as essential to overall health and wellness as the food we eat and the amount we exercise.

# 2019 WELLNESS PROGRAM OUTCOMES

In 2019, upon enrollment, 76% of participants were overweight or obese. 50% had 1 or more health issue such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and/or high cholesterol and 34% also lived with a family member suffering from those health problems. 54% of program participants rely on public assistance programs such as SNAP/EBT, WIC, SSI, to meet their basic nutritional needs.

FEAST's unique combination of Food Education, Access and Support, Together helps families live sustainably healthier lives, creating numerous positive behavioral and physical health outcomes.

## IMPROVED EATING HABITS AND ATTITUDES

By the end of the program, 90% of graduates report confidence in their skills and abilities to:



**Cook recipes using fresh ingredients**



**Eat healthy meals on a limited budget**



**Read and understand Nutrition Labels**

**93%** Read nutrition labels compared to 70% before.

**90%** Identify healthy foods using the food label with confidence compared to 56% before.

*"FEAST has been very good for learning how to prepare healthy recipes. I learned how to control my intake of sugar, salt and processed foods."*

*– Tisa K., Kaiser Permanente Baldwin Hills*



83% consume a fruit/vegetable at least one time per day compared to 71% before. 48% consume fruits/vegetables 3 or more times per day compared to 30% before.

## IMPROVED HEALTH AND WELLBEING

By the end of the program...

**74%** of participants saw improvements in their pre-existing medical condition.

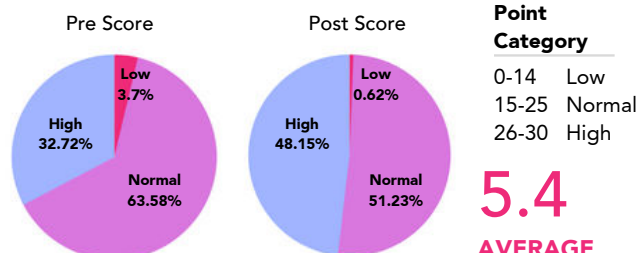
**49%** of participants lost weight, with an average loss of 4.7 lbs per participant. The greatest weight loss was 22 lbs, a 10% decrease in body weight.

*"I don't feel as lonely as be before taking these classes, I feel supported and loved."*

*- Consuelo, PS 132*

The World Health Organization now lists "Social Support Networks" as a determinant of health. Studies find that social support may have indirect effects on physical health through enhanced mental health, by reducing the impact of stress or by fostering a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

### ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE



**5.4**

**AVERAGE POINT INCREASE**

After completing the program, 99% of participants had normal or high self-esteem, with the largest change in the "high" point category. Participants reported greater life satisfaction, feelings of worthiness and positive attitudes toward self.

*among those who increased their self-esteem scores*





# FEAST PROGRAM GRADUATE SUPPORT

FEAST continues to support graduates on their health and wellness journey by providing Graduate Programming.

## GRADUATE CIRCLES

After completing the program, graduates are invited to join a Graduate Circle to check-in with other FEAST graduates in their area about their healthy progress. Graduate circles meet once a month and include fun activities such as fitness challenges, Zumba classes, walking groups, cooking demonstrations, garden visits and more.



## GROCERY STORE & FARMERS' MARKET TOURS

Our grocery store and farmers' market tours provide additional skill building to help families living on extremely limited food budgets make healthy choices for their families for the future. Tours provide families with healthy and cost-effective food shopping skills including tips for reading the ingredients on packaged food items, the ability to create a grocery list that primarily consists of produce, skills for navigating a store or market, and the opportunity to try out their new shopping skills using \$10 vouchers provided at the end of the tour.

## FITNESS CHALLENGES

Ana Guzman, FEAST's Family and Community Partnerships Manager is also a certified Zumba instructor! She leads her groups and graduate circles in weekly fitness challenges to encourage physical activity and further improve health outcomes. Ranier Castillo, USC Dietetic Intern also led fitness classes for graduates this past year thanks to the support of the [USC Good Neighbors Fund](#).







# FEAST COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

FEAST supports the health and wellness of the larger South Los Angeles community by providing open community activities that all are welcome to enjoy!

## COMMUNITY COOKING CLASSES

Every week, FEAST hosts a cooking class that is open to the community! Our partners, **Food Forward** donate fresh produce from the Santa Monica Farmers' Market, which our teachers use to create and demonstrate a healthy recipe like zucchini noodles, fresh salads, or a boiled artichoke. We also welcome guest chefs, like Gilberto Cetina of Holbox (right), to join us for special cooking classes. At the end of each class, participants get take home bags of donated produce!



## GROW GOOD FARM VISIT

We invited past participants and their families and friends to join us at Grow Good Farm in Bell, CA to learn first hand about where our food comes from! Over 30 guests joined us to plant seeds, share a potluck lunch together, and enjoy some time out doors as a community.

## YOGA IN THE PARK WITH DESI

Desi Bartlett, celebrity yoga instructor from Manduka Yoga joined us at Exposition Park for a peaceful practice with moms and kiddos from the community. We were able to enjoy some relaxing time outside and exercise together!







# 2019 IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

**34** Wellness Groups Served 321 families

**23** Wellness Groups Implemented by FEAST HQ

**11** Wellness Groups Implemented by Trained FEAST Affiliates

**321** participants  
&  
**994** family members  
served nationally  
by FEAST Wellness  
Programs.

**\$21,000**

worth of food  
scholarships distributed  
to families to purchase  
fruits, vegetables, and  
whole grains.



**550** program  
graduates

participated in  
ongoing graduate  
support activities.



**491** community  
members

joined our weekly  
cooking classes.



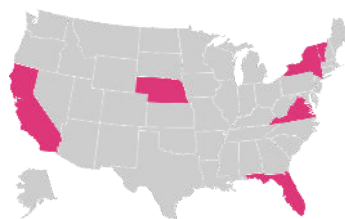
**18,597 lbs**

of fresh produce  
distributed during our  
weekly cooking class.





FEAST's programs have grown nationally through its Affiliate Partners who attended the 3-Day Leadership Training Programs. In 2019, FEAST trained 57 additional leaders to run FEAST programs, bringing the total number trained since inception to 77 across 6 states, including California, New York City, Nebraska, Virginia, Vermont, and Florida.



**57 LEADERS  
TRAINED ACROSS  
6 STATES IN 2019**

## VIRGINIA HIGHLIGHT

In 2019, FEAST Virginia became founded as an official 501(c)3 non-profit founded by Bev Sell, Executive Director. In February 2020, 11 FEAST Leaders were trained to start programs across Norfolk, Virginia.



## FEAST AFFILIATE PARTNERS



"Each FEAST group has been a unique experience of deep connection- there is a level of trust that each participant naturally comes to as they share their personal relationships to food and health and find genuine support without judgment"

— Sheila, FEAST Leader, Health Coordinator, Nebraska



# THANK YOU TO FEAST'S PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS!

## PROGRAM SPONSORS



## CULINARY PARTNERS



KISMET



Crafted Hospitality



## COMMUNITY PARTNERS



Orthopedic High School

Manual Arts High School

Foshay Learning Center

John Liechty Middle School

PS 260

PS 112

PS 132

PS 160

PS 98

## FOOD SCHOLARSHIP PARTNERS



sweetgreen



ATELIER SAUCIER



# THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS!

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