



Photo: Kelli Udell

Market Campaign Connects Patients with Healthy Produce

BY RENEE BRINCKS

Stephen Melendrez and Karen Gomez with Everyone's Harvest Executive Director Reid Norris, take Fresh Rx produce prescriptions from doctors at farmers markets.

This harvest season, fresh fruits and vegetables are just what the doctor ordered.

Through the innovative Fresh Rx program, Monterey County physicians issue produce prescriptions to youngsters struggling with weight and nutritional challenges. Families then trade the prescription slip for tokens that pay for \$25 worth of weekly produce at their local Everyone's Harvest farmers market.

Fresh Rx distributed nearly \$100,000 of food to more than 150 households in 2019 alone. Follow-up surveys show that the program helps participants lose weight and embrace long-term lifestyle changes.

"Often, clinics enroll families more than once because participants find it so worthwhile. While it's geared toward children, our doctors

see parents benefit, too. Whole families are making healthy choices together," says Reid Norris, Everyone's Harvest executive director.

Families can also double their produce purchases through the organization's Market Match program. Customers who spend \$10 of CalFresh benefits with an Everyone's Harvest market vendor receive an additional \$10 to use toward fresh food.

"The best part of these programs is seeing families benefit, and hearing physicians say how much it means to patients," says Norris. "Plus, the money supports small, local farmers and makes our markets more sustainable. It's a good outcome for everyone."

For information on Everyone's Harvest and Fresh Rx, please visit www.everyonesharvest.org.