Fresh and Convenient: SSA Farm Stand Expanding to North Oakland & Eastmont Sites

**GUEST WRITER:** Kim Fogel, Office of Public Affairs

Following the grand opening on December 19, 2013 at the Eden Self-Sufficiency Center, SSA’s Farm Stand is expanding to the Thomas L. Berkley and Eastmont Self-Sufficiency Centers in February. In collaboration with Dig Deep Farms & Produce, a project of the Alameda County Deputy Sheriffs’ Activities League, the SSA Farm Stand creates a sustainable workforce/subsidized wage program that provides job training and employment to CalWORKs participants, while also making locally-grown fruits and vegetables available to the County’s impoverished neighborhoods.

“We recognize that many of our clients live in food deserts and have little or no access to fruits and vegetables. For the vast majority of the people we serve, fresh produce has been priced out of reach,” said Lori A. Cox, the Agency’s director. “We are thrilled to offer our clients, staff and the public the opportunity to purchase produce at reasonable prices right outside our doors.”

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A Job Well Done: Mary Miller Retires After 40 Years of Connecting People with Employment

**STAFF WRITER:** Andrea Wong

For nearly 40 years, Mary Miller has helped countless individuals search for their calling through employment services. On January 31, she will begin her own adventure as a “non-working person”—a retiree.

Mary began her career with SSA in 1974 as an Eligibility Technician and later became a Quality Assurance Technician. From 1979 to 1991, she worked for the community-based Alameda County Training and Employment Board / Associated Community Action Program (ACTEB/ACAP) in areas of planning, budgeting, board support and contracts. She officially rejoined the County family after the organization was integrated into SSA as the Workforce Investment Board. Subsequently, Mary has worked as a Program Specialist, Supervising Program Specialist, Management Analyst and Program Manager under Employment Services. Over the last couple of years, she has been a Program Manager in Workforce and Benefits Administration at the Eastmont Self-Sufficiency Center.

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Labor and workforce programs have always fascinated Mary: “You can really see someone’s life change. Benefits create a critical safety net, but when people get jobs, they take an important step to making their lives better.”

Even in her retirement, Mary will still be on the go. She has several big trips planned, including scuba diving in the Cayman Islands and Indonesia. She looks forward to working on quilting projects, attending symphony concerts and spending time with family. Public service will remain close to her heart; she is a board member of the Citizens Advisory Council for the City of Fremont and an active member of the League of Women Voters. During election time, you may even see her on local access cable TV as a moderator for candidate forums and debates.

What’s her secret to longevity? “Take care of yourself. Renew yourself with an activity, hobby, or family. Allow yourself to start every day fresh,” Mary says. “Think about your skills and where you want to grow. Don’t be afraid to make the move. The only way to find out if something is a good fit is to try it out.” -- Mary Miller

Thank you for all that you’ve done, Mary, and congratulations!

Farm Stand Expands

Dig Deep grows some of the produce sold at the Farm Stand on its plots in Cherryland, Ashland and unincorporated San Leandro, and buys the rest from other farmers. The colorful rainbow of products changes from week to week, but has recently included apples, oranges, carrots, broccoli, avocados, mangos and onions. Farm Stand customers can also enjoy cooking demonstrations and pick up handy recipe cards. CalFresh recipients can use their Electronic Benefits Transfer cards to make purchases. Debit and credit cards are also accepted.

The Farm Stand at the Eden site has been met with great enthusiasm from SSA staff, clients and passers-by from nearby County buildings. It was recently featured in The Daily Review, which noted “tangerines were going fast, and the mangoes were popular.”

Enticing, isn’t it? Mark your calendars for the **Friday, Feb. 14 opening at North Oakland** and the **Monday, Feb. 24 opening at Eastmont**! The stands are open to the public, so pass on the word to your customers, nearby residents and other local fruit-and-veggie fans.

A Job Well Done

“Think about your skills and where you want to grow. Don’t be afraid to make the move. The only way to find out if something is a good fit is to try it out.” -- Mary Miller

**No Pesticides. No Chemicals. Only Fresh Produce At “Dirt” Cheap Prices.**

**VISIT OUR FARM STANDS:**

**Eden Area Multi-Service Center**
24100 Amador St, Hayward
(located on Amador St side of building)
Weekly on Thursdays, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

**Starting Friday, Feb. 14, 2014:**
**Thomas L. Berkley Self-Sufficiency Center**
2000 San Pablo Ave, Oakland (near front entrance)
Weekly on Fridays, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

**Starting Monday, Feb. 24, 2014:**
**Eastmont Self-Sufficiency Center**
6955 Foothill Blvd, Suite 100, Oakland
(1st floor entrance by parking structure)
Weekly on Mondays, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
The 2013 CalWORKs Training Academy held December 2nd-3rd brought together industry professionals engaged in the delivery of CalWORKs services from across the State for fun-filled learning and networking. The two-day journey started with a Pre-Academy Session led by Sacramento State College of Continuing Education trainer Michael Grabow, who highlighted the significant role social services professionals play in the lives of vulnerable people. He expressed his gratitude for those providing services by saying “thank you” to the audience. He noted that often the only positive or uplifting interaction a person in need may get is from public servants.

The second day of the conference provided opportunities for networking and more breakout sessions. Conference goers were left with a powerful message by the closing keynote speaker Lorraine Fox, Ph.D., who has worked with children and youth in human services for 45 years. Ms. Fox reiterated key concepts that were emphasized throughout the two-day training, including the value of laughter, motivation and leadership. She encouraged everyone to avoid being stingy with compliments and to show love—yes, love—and willingness to do all that you can to help others. Final remarks provided by Todd Bland sent attendees on their way with a renewed spirit to help those navigating toward self-sufficiency.

Handouts from the conference workshops and other information are available online.

The Alameda County Family Justice Center’s 7th Annual Gala on Saturday, January 25 was a big hit, raising funds for the KidZone Children and Youth Services Program and the Client Transportation Program. The event was held at the Oakland City Hall Rotunda, featuring a dinner and an auction. In attendance from SSA, from left to right: Sheri Atanda (Office of Public Affairs), Agency Director Lori Cox, Denyse McCowan (Ombudsman, AAMS) and Denise Edwards (Office of Public Affairs).
Poorness housing conditions, affecting the health of our families, are a serious problem in Alameda County. Lead poisoning is one of the most serious and preventable childhood environmental health problems facing us today. Exposure to lead can cause brain damage and other long-term health problems such as learning disabilities, nerve damage, hearing loss and behavioral problems. Additionally, mold, pests and lack of good ventilation in a home can be detrimental to health and may trigger asthma attacks.

Young children are especially vulnerable to the harm caused by lead exposures. Children often show no symptoms until it is too late. That’s why it’s so important that children have a blood lead test at one and two years old, especially if they live in a home built before 1978 or have someone in the household who works with lead (including painters and construction workers). Young children who have recently immigrated from countries where lead is prevalent may also be at risk.

Lead-based paint is still the #1 cause of lead poisoning in Alameda County. The large majority of our housing was built before 1978 when lead paint was in wide use. The old layers of paint become especially hazardous when it deteriorates, creates lead dust on friction surfaces such as window sills, or is disturbed during painting and renovation work. Much of our soil is also contaminated with lead.

Fortunately there is a local program to help. The Alameda County Healthy Homes Department offers free in-home consultations and financial assistance to owners of pre-1978 residential property in Oakland, Berkeley, Emeryville and Alameda. The Department also works closely with tenants to access these services.

During an In-Home Consultation, a professional health and housing expert will conduct a visual survey and provide individualized recommendations to help identify and resolve lead hazards and other safety and healthy housing issues in the home. The consult also includes information about other services and repair funds available. The In-Home Consultation is available to any pre-1978 residential property owner in Alameda, Berkeley, Emeryville or Oakland, regardless of income. Rental property owners and owner occupants are both encouraged to utilize this service.

In addition, the Healthy Homes Department provides technical assistance and grant funding to remediate lead paint hazards and to address other health-related housing conditions that particularly affect young children. To be eligible, the occupants must be low-income and have a child under 6 years of age, a pregnant woman or a young child visiting on a regular basis. This includes in-home day care centers or a grandparent who regularly cares for a young child. Most families with young children in Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley and Emeryville who are accessing Social Services programs and benefits are eligible.

The repair assistance includes complete start to finish project management services including a free paint inspection and risk assessment and grants to pay for lead hazard control work and other healthy homes issues. This may include interior and exterior painting, window and door repair and landscaping work to address all lead hazards found on the property. By completion, the family has a lead-safe and healthier home in which to live.

To request more information, an on-line application, or a guest speaker, visit www.achhd.org or call the Healthy Homes Information Line 510-567-8280.