



# CERES COMMUNITY PROJECT

*Connecting people in heart-centered ways to themselves, others, and the earth*



## Our start:

Ceres Community Project was founded in Sebastopol seven and a half years ago when professional chef, Cathryn Couch, was asked by a friend to teach her daughter to cook. Cathryn came up with the idea of cooking healthy meals to support a few local families dealing with serious illnesses. The idea was an extraordinary success.

Since that start, Ceres has served more than 250,000 meals to clients in Sonoma and Marin counties and engaged thousands of teens in the preparation of those meals.

In 2013, the project launched a six-month Sonoma Valley pilot led by local resident and former Ceres volunteer Francesca Fifis, in kitchen space donated by Hanna Boys Center.



## Impact100 Sonoma

has awarded three Community Grants to Ceres Community Project: \$15,000 to establish *Healthy Meals for Healthy Communities* pilot project (2013); \$12,000 to expand the pilot (2014); and \$15,000 for a planning grant with Sonoma Valley health organizations.

## What we do:

Ceres delivers free and low-cost whole, local, and organic meals to clients and their families facing a health crisis in Sonoma and Marin counties. The meals are made with love by teen volunteers who learn about growing, cooking, and enjoying healthy foods, while gaining life, leadership and work-ready skills. In 2014, Ceres will provide 80,000 meals, including more than 6,000 in Sonoma Valley.

The local program started small, with four clients, but has gradually increased to serve upwards of 18 client families each week. Within the first year, 48 teens contributed more than 2,200 hours as volunteer chefs and gardeners.

## A single story:

Ceres is much more than a meal service. The program provides tools and inspiration for people to make lasting dietary change in support of improved health – both for the teens doing the cooking and for those receiving the meals.

Serving teens and clients from Sonoma Valley is making a big difference in their lives. The teens report eating a lot less junk food, and clients are extremely grateful for the food, even though it's often a very new way of eating for them.

Noemi is a Latina living on a household income of less than \$10,000 annually. She lives with and takes care of her 91-year-old mother and is currently in treatment for breast cancer. She is also the recipient of weekly meals from Ceres. Noemi phoned her own daughter in tears on the day her first bag of meals arrived. Her daughter was understandably concerned by the tears and wondered what was wrong. Noemi told her she was just so happy that complete strangers wanted to support her and look after her and give her all this nutritious food. They were tears of joy.

Noemi and her mother sit down to the food each day and often laugh as they have no idea what they are eating. It is very different from their usual diet, but they like it, and they feel the benefit and love in every mouthful.

## Our future:

In 2015, Ceres plans to serve at least 8,000 meals and work with 50 teens in Sonoma Valley. We are working with numerous other organizations to offer support to more clients.