



2014 Annual Report

The mission of CommunityGrows is to cultivate healthy youth through growing gardens in diverse, low-income communities. We are the only organization of our kind providing garden and nutrition education and job readiness training for Western Addition youth. We leverage environmental education in an innovative, holistic way to help youth grow up safe, healthy and prepared to meet their full potential.

We believe that when youth are healthy, safe and supported they become catalysts for positive, lasting change.



CommunityGrows

Serving the community since 1994

The **mission of CommunityGrows is to cultivate healthy youth through growing gardens in low-income, diverse communities.** CommunityGrows, a project of the Tides Center, traces its roots to 1994, when we were known as the Hayes Valley Neighborhood Parks Group. This organization was founded to reclaim Koshland Park, located in the heart of San Francisco's Western Addition neighborhood, from rampant criminal activity. Having been successful, we created the Koshland Park Community Learning Garden and Western Addition Peace Wall, and began offering free weekly garden classes to local youth. Since then, our organization has built and/or renovated eight other community gardens in the Western Addition.

By working closely with Western Addition residents, community leaders and teachers, we learned that **this neighborhood's youth has some significant unmet needs.** Specifically, **the lack of local green spaces, parks and gardens means that these young people do not have many opportunities to engage with and learn about the natural environment.** This is a neighborhood where **residents do not have easy access to fresh, affordable produce** and too many youth have unhealthy diets. And because this is an area with high unemployment, teens struggle to find jobs. Having identified these needs, our mission was refocused to serving the neighborhood's children and teens and in 2007 we changed our name to CommunityGrows.



Fulfilling a need in the Western Addition

Occupying a two-square mile area of 51,748 residents, the Western Addition is one of the City's poorest communities. According to the 2005-2009 American Community Survey, the median household income in the neighborhood is \$41,311, compared to a citywide average of nearly \$72,000. In addition, the percentage of people living 200% below the Census Poverty Threshold (a measurement calculated specifically for San Francisco because of its higher than average cost of living) is 31%. Western Addition has the most public housing units per land area in the City, and the majority of the youth we serve live in these public housing developments, where there is limited personal space to grow fruits and vegetables. Low-income communities like the Western Addition are generally underserved by affordable outlets for fresh and healthy foods, and markedly over-served by convenience stores and fast food chains selling processed food. There is just one full-service grocery store serving the Western Addition. Although the neighborhood has organic farmers markets, price points for this produce are higher than most local families can afford.





Our programs

Growing healthy communities



Environmental Education

Our year-round garden classes enable youth ages 5-11 to gain a sense of accomplishment from growing their own food, all while increasing science knowledge and ecoliteracy. Our in-school classes are grounded in the Next Generation Science Standards and out-of-school time classes utilize best practices for after- and summer school youth. Our programs are student-centered and tailored to multiple



Seed to Mouth

Our cooking classes use food grown in our six community gardens to teach youth how to cook and enjoy fresh fruits, vegetables and other whole foods. Our staff encourages youth to adopt healthy eating and lifestyle habits, discusses where food grows and the how to create, delicious and nutritious meals. Weekly, two hour classes are held afterschool and during the summer at Hayward Rec Connect.



BEETS (Band of Environmentally Educated and Employable Teens)

The BEETS is a paid internship that develops job readiness, life skills and ecoliteracy for youth ages 15-19. We provide our interns with an intensive experience in hands-on garden and nutrition education in order to help them make positive choices in their life and community, acquire skills to prepare them for the workforce and develop supportive relationships with peers.

In 2014 we taught 1,338 youth in 627 classes.



Hands-on, garden based science lessons inspire curiosity and care

One day, Floyd, a first grader, approached Adrian at the beginning of garden class. "Guess what I want to be when I grow up?" he asked.

eventually harvest the produce. Our amazing garden educators present students with an informative and fun science curriculum that **emphasizes nutrition and encourages healthy**

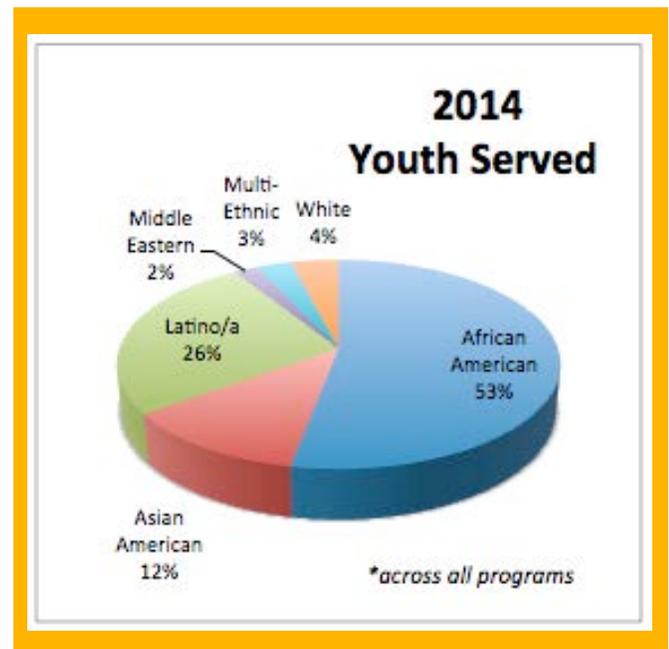
...the garden gives the class a shared experience rooted in stewardship of their own ecological community. It is great being able to connect what we are learning in class to the environment of the garden.

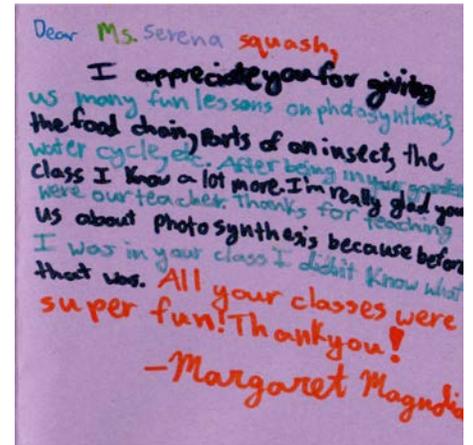
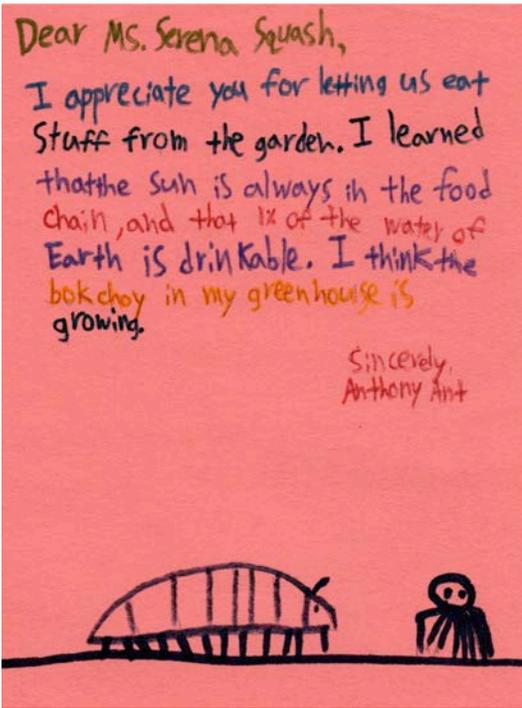
- Mr. Frost, 2nd grade science teacher

"I don't know, Floyd, tell me what you want to be," Adrian replied. He'd first met Floyd last year when he started Kindergarten at John Muir Elementary School Floyd smiled and said, "A garden teacher!"

Each year, CommunityGrows inspires hundreds of curious and inquisitive children like Floyd through hands-on, garden-based science education experiences that **support academic learning and foster knowledge of and respect for the natural environment.** In both our in-school and out-of-school time programs, youth discover the journey food takes from seed to their plate. By working in the garden, they learn how to prepare garden beds, plant and cultivate vegetables, compost and

eating. We present the highest quality educational experience. At the end of 2014, we **updated our curriculum to align with Next Generation Science Standards.** We have much anecdotal evidence that youth who attend our programs pass along their new knowledge and healthy behaviors to their parents and siblings. Therefore, **our year-long programs enrich not only the children who attend them, but also their families.**





A holistic approach

Incorporating silence and gratefulness into the garden

At the end of each weekly garden class, the students and teachers gather in a circle to reflect on what we learned that day. Part of our reflection includes verbal appreciations, in which youth tell a classmate, educator or even the garden itself what they appreciated that day.

In 2014 we introduced meditation to several of our garden classes. We started with just 30 seconds or a minute of silence and worked our way up to 1, 2 and even 5 minutes for one class of 5th graders!

During one 2nd grade class, a student was having a hard time, getting in fights with classmates, disregarding questions, and arguing with her teacher. At the end of class we meditated for three minutes, and I gave the students time to share their

thoughts and feelings after.

The student who had been having a hard time raised her hand at the very end, and said, "I felt angry at my Mom." Both her teacher and I were surprised and impressed at her articulation of her feelings.

I told the students that sometimes we might be angry or upset with someone and that anger can affect everyone else around us. I commended the student for sharing her feelings and identifying why she had been upset during class. I told the students that by identifying and sharing our feelings we can start to think of ways to shift how we feel, and change how we react to our feelings. It was a powerful example of the impact just a few moments of silence can make on our youth. - Adrian - December 2014

"When I was meditating I felt that I was swimming in the ocean on my way to paradise."

- Priya, age 7



Youth prepare delicious, healthy meals with local produce

CommunityGrows seeks to **reduce health disparities** in the Western Addition by providing youth with

chosen together by staff and youth, and reflect the cultural diversity of the students. Lessons about good nutrition and how it relates to physical health are incorporated into each class through games, songs and other teaching tools. Because many youth are cooking for the first time, the **curriculum also includes lessons about kitchen safety, basic cooking skills, and local foods.**

81%

of youth served by CommunityGrows qualified for free or reduced lunch in 2014.

access to free Seed to Mouth classes that **increase their exposure to healthy foods and cooking.** Offered **twice a week for two hours**, classes take place over 30 weeks during the school year and 6-8 weeks during the summer. Cooking classes emphasize

At the end of each class youth receive the recipe explored that day, and at the end of the year students receive a cookbook with all recipes cooked during the previous months. These tools encourage children to take the healthy meals cooked and

recipes that

My daughter has started making herself healthy snacks at home. She really likes making yogurt parfait with fresh fruit. She didn't do that before this class.

- Parent of a 3rd grade Seed to Mouth participant

incorporate healthy fruits and vegetables that come directly from our gardens. Recipes are also

eaten in class and replicate them at home, with their parents and siblings.



Teens become environmental stewards, role models

The BEETS (Band of Environmentally-Educated and Employable Teens) program is a **paid internship** that teaches youth 15-19 years old about garden and environmental education and

different theme related to the environment. For example, the **theme of the summer 2014 session was water conservation** and BEETS learned about water sources, the urban water system, and

A garden for me is a place where life is at its very best. A place things grows and die in natural ways... A place that one can take care of and at the same time is taking care of you.

- Mauricio, Summer 2014 cohort

provides them with job readiness training. Through this program, **participants gain the necessary skills and experience to compete for jobs and to successfully transition from youth to adulthood.** Each year up to 36 teens can participate in the BEETS program. As part of their work, our BEETS learn how to grow and maintain organic gardens. They **work independently and as part of teams** to build vegetable beds, get the soil ready for planting, plant seed, prune and tend growing plants, and eventually harvest the produce. Each program session focuses on a

conservation techniques at home and in the garden such as the benefits of planting native and climate appropriate plants. The theme for fall 2014 session was food justice, and **they visited groups throughout the Bay Area working to make our food system more equitable.** The BEETS use their new knowledge to develop outreach materials for community events, lead a lesson for children, and otherwise lead their communities in environmental stewardship.

78%

of BEETS surveyed report improvement in contributing to their communities.



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Cultivating confidence

BEETS helps teen uncover his strengths

Kyle came to our program after recently losing his father and other family members very soon thereafter. Kyle is an enthusiastic young man but you could tell he was searching for self-confidence to know that he could be successful in school, in a job, and in life. Teaching the young kids in the garden provided part of the self-confidence that Kyle now possesses.

As part of our program, each cohort of teens creates a lesson for elementary school aged youth that they teach during their “extra shift” with a garden or cooking class. During his first time teaching, Kyle was extremely nervous, unprepared, and could barely get through his lesson. As each session went by, Kyle became more confident in the garden and developed his

leadership skills. By Kyle’s third session, he proudly announced, “It’s easy to teach. “

Recently, Kyle held a bunch of second graders attention with his lesson on the water cycle. In fact, their second grade teacher said he’s never seen his students so engaged for this long. Kyle even found himself mentoring the younger boys in the classes he taught by being able to talk one-on-one with them when they were having difficulties in class. Even after his shifts came to an end, Kyle came back and volunteered his time to spend one more day in the garden with them.

Kyle completed 3 sessions of BEETS and is now going to school at City College of San Francisco and working at McDonald’s.



2014 Program Highlights

A year of growth and deepening our roots



Hired a new part-time garden educator

In the fall, we hired Serena Padilla to oversee the Rosa Parks in-school garden education program.

Next Generation Science Standards alignment

As California gets ready to institute the Next Generation Science Standards, CommunityGrows' staff instituted bi-monthly work sessions to update our curriculum to align with NGSS.



Began teaching two classes a week at Hayward Rec Connect

Thanks to funding from Kaiser Permanente, we doubled our classes at Hayward Rec Connect. Recipe favorites this year included sushi, minestrone soup and pumpkin muffins.

Frances Bradley, Volunteer of the Year

Frances started volunteering with CG in YEAR and has contributed over 200 hours to helping youth learn to cook and eat healthy foods.



Awarded PUC grant to teach water conservation, city services

During the summer we received a Public Utilities Commission (PUC) grant to incorporate water conservation and energy education into our BEETS program. It was a huge success! Youth shared their new knowledge on water conservation techniques with kids and families at several community events.

Received over 155 BEETS applications

Interest in our teen program is booming—we had over 150 applicants for just 36 spots.



2014 Organization Highlights

This year marked major growth and change for CommunityGrows.



Doubled the size of our Advisory Board

CommunityGrows welcomed six new members to our Advisory Board in September, bringing our **total board membership to 12**. Our board reflects a wide array of backgrounds, skills and networks, including three Western Addition residents, two accountants, and one member of the Rosa Parks PTA. We hold our monthly board meetings at the African American Art and Culture Complex where CommunityGrows has an office.



Taught a professional development workshop series for Pre-K educators

In the Spring, we held **three professional development classes through the San Unified School District for Pre-K teachers** interested in using the garden as an education tool. They were given a detailed manual that described many different activities and curricula for their students. They learned about the garden rules, composting, prepping a garden bed, planting, mulching, weeding, watering and being with the chickens.



Led a workshop at the Growing Power Conference

Garden Programs Manager Adrian Almquist co-led a workshop, “Seed to Mouth: Growing Healthier Students and Communities” at the Growing Power Conference in Milwaukee, WI. The workshop highlighted youth farming programs and **Adrian spoke about CommunityGrows efforts to bring environmental education, food education and job readiness skills to San Francisco youth.**

Expanded staff learning through trainings, seminars

We are dedicated to enriching and supporting our staff and in 2014 we **participated in numerous professional development opportunities**, including: Creative, Resourceful and Whole: 1:1 and Group Coaching for Middle and High School Students by Be the Change; Brothers on the Rise Community Workforce Training; Next Generation Science Standards through an Environmental Education Lens; DCYF’s Expanded Learning Collaborative August Institute, Community Works Institute on Service Learning, SF Youth Employment Coalition meetings, EcoFarm 2014, Watershed Teaching Tools by the Watershed Project; Saving the Rain, Saving our Watersheds by SF PUC; Teachers for Social Justice; and leadership coaching through Learning for Action.



Outcomes and Objectives

Updated program evaluation tools

Working with Learning for Action (LFA), an independent evaluation firm, we updated our program evaluation plan including our outcomes, indicators and methodology. In September 2014 we rolled out the new plan and began learning some really exciting things about our program strengths and areas where we can grow. Next year, with LFA's help, we will continue to collect our data and refine our tools to determine what are realistic targets to measure our impact.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Youth Stewardship Perspectives and Behaviors

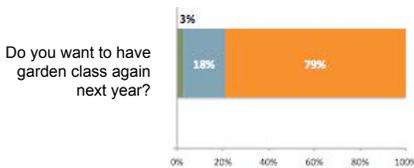


96%

of youth demonstrated an INCREASE in their quiz scores from the beginning to the end of garden class

78%

of youth surveyed report that they learned something new in garden class (n=172)

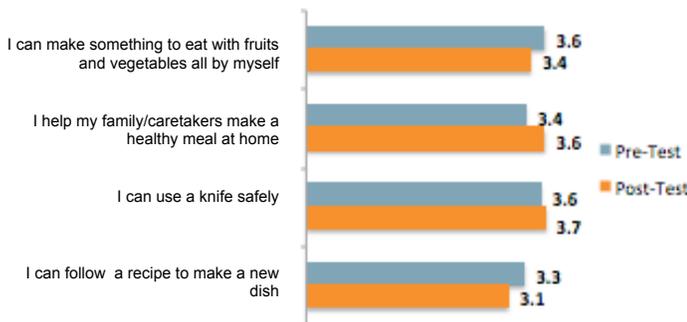


Youth Teamwork

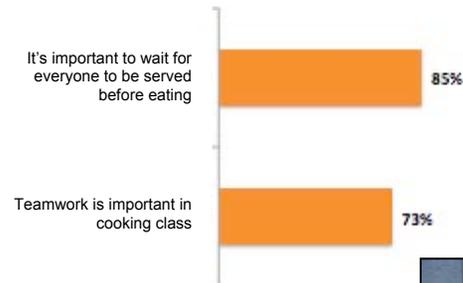


SEED TO MOUTH

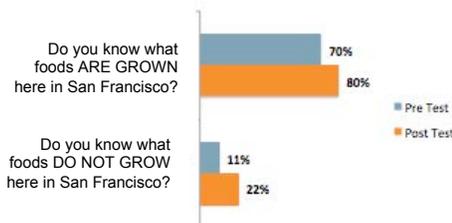
Youth cooking behaviors



Youth Perspectives on Teamwork in Cooking Class



Youth Ability to Identify Food That Can and Cannot Be Grown in San Francisco



96%

of youth surveyed tried a new food in cooking class (n=40)

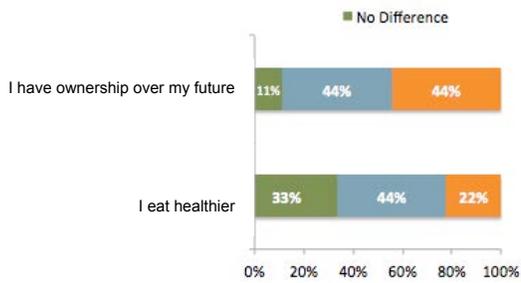
81%

of youth surveyed report being a better cook since taking cooking class (n=40)



BAND OF ENVIRONMENTALLY EDUCATED EMPLOYABLE TEENS

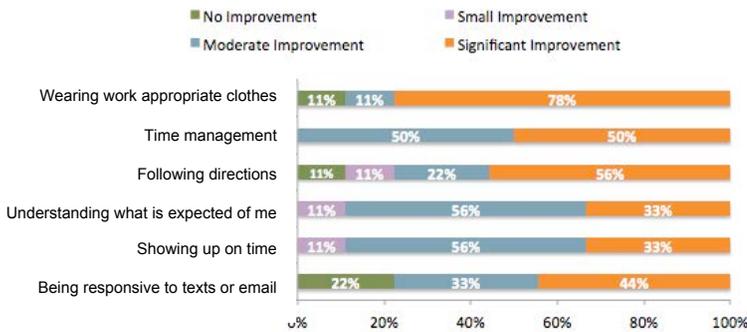
Youth Self-Reported Change in Healthy Perspectives and Behaviors



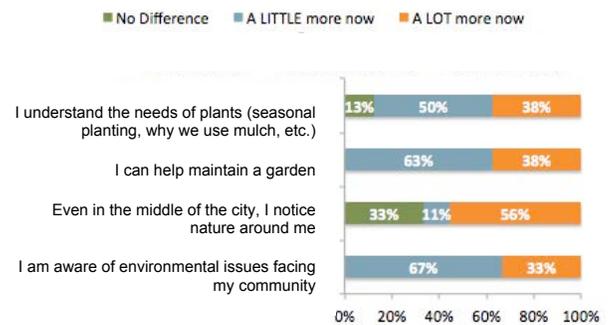
BEETS gave me the opportunity to make money, become independent, learn responsibility and gave me the opportunity to be a role model for the kids.

-Anthony Hernandez, Fall '14

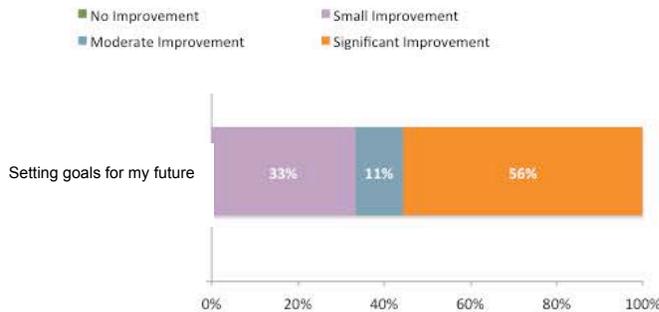
Youth Self-Reported Improvement at Job Readiness Skills



Youth Self-Reported Improvement in Stewardship Behaviors

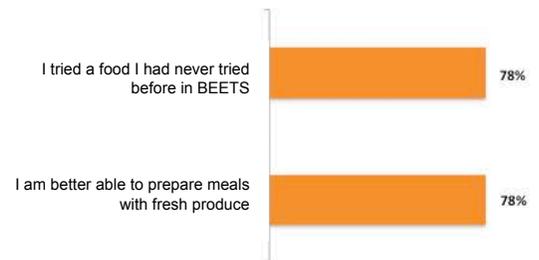


Youth Self-Reported Improvement at Setting Goals for Their Future



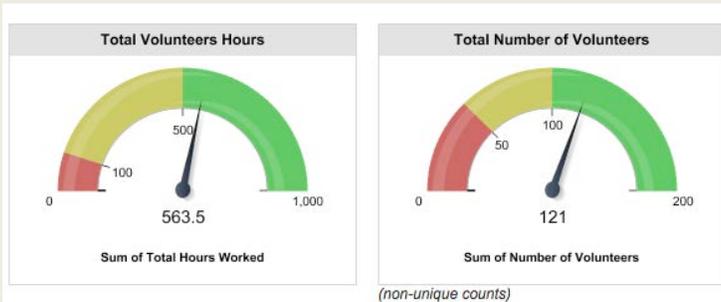
Youth increase positive, healthy lifestyle decisions

Youth Eating Behaviors



Outreach and Events

CommunityGrows hosted 6 workdays, assisted in 8 salad days at Rosa Parks Elementary, taught lessons on water conservation at the Hayward Rec Connect Carnival and National Night Out. We helped serve food at the John Muir Thanksgiving Dinner, hosted a wreath and card-making event in the Hayes Valley Community Room.



In 2014, we began tracking our volunteers through Salesforce.

2014 Revenue: **\$397,802**

2014 Revenue by Type





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Our Supporters

Our Partners



AFRICAN-AMERICAN ART & CULTURE CENTER
 BOOKER T. WASHINGTON COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER
 John Muir Elementary School
 GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVANCY
 SAN FRANCISCO RECREATION & PARKS
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 Hayward RecConnect
 Dr. William Cobb Elementary ExCEL
 Western Addition Beacon Center
 AT 24th HUBB ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 380 WEBSTER STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, 94114-2714



Staff

Barbara Wenger, *Founder and Executive Director*
Kelly ErnstFriedman, *Director of Programs*
Melissa Tang, *BEETS Program Manager*
Adrian Almquist, *Garden Programs Manager*
Serena Padilla, *Garden Educator*
Ezekiel McCarter, *Assistant Garden Educator*
Adrian Gaino, *Assistant Seed to Mouth Educator*

Advisory Board

Sherry Bijan, *Independent Registered Investment Advisor*
Rebekah Black, *CEO, 4 Corners Bookkeeping, LLC & FlowerChild, LLC*
Jennie Carpenter, *Grant Supervisor, Northern CA-Richard Heath & Associates*
Leah Cerri, *Volunteer Services Manager, Mission Economic Development Agency*
Barbara Fujimoto, *Founder of the Green Team at Rosa Parks Elementary School*
Arif Husain, *Director of Business Development, Instart Logic*
Casey Johnson, *Analyst, Advisory Services at Nonprofit Advisory Fund*
William Newsom, *Attorney, Pearson, Simon, Warshaw & Penny*
Carmen Olmetti, *Management Consultant, Alexander Group*
Meredith Pavia, *Sr. IP & Marketing Counsel, Head of Trademarks- Cisco Systems*
Jaromy Schmidt, *Starbucks Ambassador and Store Manager*
Shakirah Simley, *Communications/Outreach/Community Manager at Bi-Rite Market*



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