

The P.A.T.H. way to reducing food waste and food insecurity in Tehama County

by Nicole Carr

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, many Tehama County residents faced the daunting challenges of food deficiencies, unemployment and homelessness.

Heather Ledford, the P.A.T.H. executive director, and her dedicated team addressed this need by implementing emergency food and shelter programs and job search services. P.A.T.H., which stands for Poor And The Homeless, is a local nonprofit organization established in 1999. It operates sober, transitional homes for individuals experiencing homelessness. Additionally, P.A.T.H.'s Day Center Program provides food programs for unhoused and low-income Tehama County residents.

Nora Guthrie, the assistant manager of the Day Center Program, heads up a comprehensive housing, food and grocery recovery program. To address food insecurity, P.A.T.H. launched the following initiatives: 1) developing partnerships with food pantries and small businesses to offer daily meals and access to groceries, 2) providing rehousing and transitional home programs for displaced Tehama County residents, and 3) offering job search training services for program participants.

When Ledford became aware of SB 1383, a law enacted last year on January 1, 2022, requiring California homes and businesses to recycle food and yard waste, she sought to integrate these provisions into P.A.T.H.'s existing programs. In alignment with the law's mandate to divert food waste from landfills, P.A.T.H. collaborated with local businesses to provide meals for needy Tehama County individuals and communities.

"Heather started the Day Center Program, and she helped reduce food waste in the county," says Guthrie.

Since its establishment in 1999, P.A.T.H.



Nora Guthrie (left), the assistant manager of the Day Center Program, heads up a comprehensive housing, food and grocery recovery program.

has remained committed to serving older adults who may face mobility challenges, have a history of substance abuse, or live in impoverished conditions. These circumstances can hinder an individual's access to food, prompting P.A.T.H. to offer the following services in compliance with SB 1383:

- Daily meals prepared for homeless participants from non-perishable, surplus food donated by local grocers.
- Future workshops focused on reducing food waste and nutritious meal preparation.
- Donations of fresh food waste to local farms for livestock feed production.
- "I'm just so proud to be a part of an organization that helps needy people," says Guthrie.

Guthrie collaborates closely with the Gleaners Community Food Bank and Walmart to provide meals for program participants. P.A.T.H. also partners

with Feeding America, a hunger relief organization, and Dollar General Stores, which donates surplus and overstock food, enabling P.A.T.H.'s production of daily meals for homeless and low-income families. Through these collaborative partnerships, P.A.T.H. addresses food insecurity in Tehama County, reduces food waste destined for landfills, and helps mitigate the adverse impact of climate change.

"Together, we (Tehama County businesses and residents) are making a difference by not wasting food and giving it to those that need it," says Guthrie.



For more information on SB 1383 and how it will affect Tehama County residents, visit www.tehamacountylandfill.com. This article was funded by a grant from CalRecycle.