

Since Food Forward Ventura County opened its doors in 2011, the region's agricultural abundance has offered countless opportunities to collect massive quantities of fresh produce from farms and large orchards. In 2018, there was a 28% increase in our harvest efforts in the region—up from 153,000 pounds in 2017 to 196,000 pounds in 2018.

Due to the growth of our Backyard Harvest and Produce Pick-Up programs, we were able to serve 22 new hunger relief agencies in the county including Friends of Fieldworkers, Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP), Upper Ojai Relief, and Restore Ventura. The latter two organizations sprung up in response to the Thomas Fire, which devastated Ventura County in late 2017. In collaboration with community partners, we created weekly free produce giveaways in the cities of Ventura and Ojai to serve those impacted by the fire.

In addition, we responded to community needs by expanding our Farmers Market Recovery program to the Oxnard Farmers Market, our fifth market in the county. That weekly market is gleaned by and serves people living at the C Street Family Plan, a residential facility that provides low-cost treatment options for those in recovery from substance abuse. Through this partnership model, 4,024 pounds of fresh produce went directly back with the C Street volunteers responsible for recovering the food, creating a virtuous circle.

# Food Forward Ventura County grows to meet the region's needs

