



CERES COMMUNITY PROJECT IMPACT REPORT · CLIENT



Nourishment & Care for Clients with Serious Illness

The United States is facing an epidemic of nutrition related illness, with 59% of deaths related to poor eating habits.¹ In addition, illness increases the need for good nutrition at a time when patients are least able to shop, cook or afford healthy food. Along with good food, we know that strong social connections strengthen our immune systems, improve quality of life and help people get and stay well.²

Ceres Community Project addresses these challenges by delivering healthy organic meals to families in need along with the love and care of the community. As well as relieving stress and ensuring our clients have the best possible nutrition, we help clients and their families adopt healthier eating habits to prevent illness in the future.

More than Just a Meal

Clients receive up to 24 weeks of free or low-cost meals delivered right to their homes by volunteer Delivery Angels. Meals are provided for everyone in the family. Clients regularly receive bouquets of flowers and cards written by our teen chefs along with their meals. Each December we create special holiday gift bags for each client. And each weekly delivery includes a Nutrition Bite document that highlights a food or food group, explains why it's good for their health, and features a recipe with that food that's also in their bag.

I can't express enough how appreciated the delicious and healthy meals have been during the past several months. Our newborn with medical concerns and special needs put us into "survival mode" where we often took life minute by minute just to make it through. Knowing that the Ceres meals were coming provided us with the chance to sit down to a great meal without having to find the time to shop, prepare or plan. As a registered dietician, I was in awe week after week to see all of the amazing produce, healing soups and well-balanced meals. Ceres is truly doing wonderful work – from the smiles brought by the delivery angels, the flowers that brought a little joy inside, and the many surprise gifts that were included – it was all unbelievable.

~Allison, mother of Ceres' client

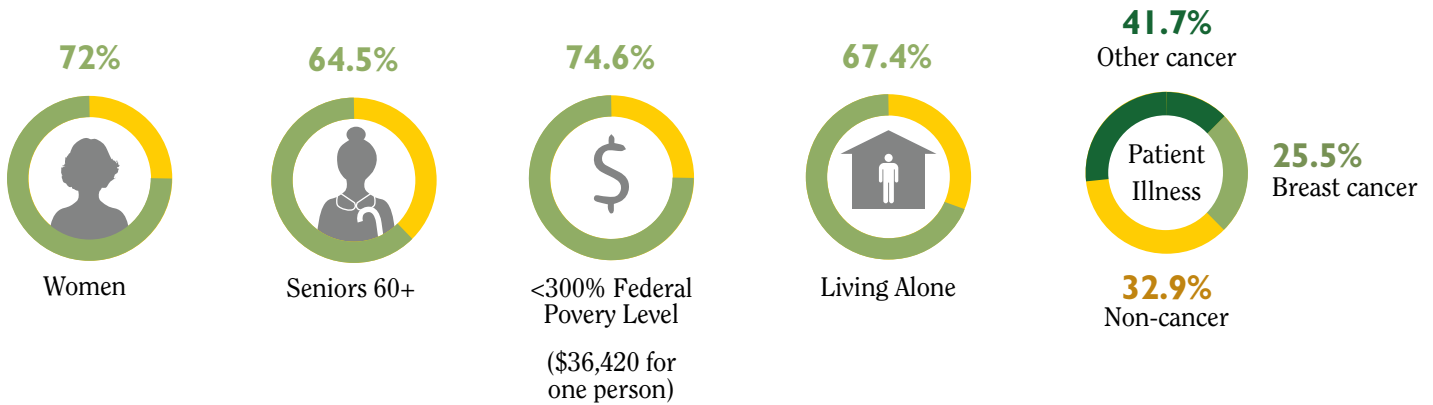


At Ceres our chefs are teens and young adults who learn by doing under the guidance of professional staff and adult mentors.

Who We Serve

Ceres Community Project clients live in towns and cities throughout Sonoma and Marin Counties. All of them are struggling because of a serious health challenge. They range in age from 2 to 94 and represent all parts of our diverse community.

Clients per year **700** | Meals per year **110,000**



High Quality Program

Ceres is committed to the highest standards of service for our clients. We survey clients on the food itself every other week, asking them to rate each dish they receive on familiarity, taste, and portion size. We regularly update our menu plan in response to client feedback. In addition, our Client Completion survey includes ratings of important aspects of our services.

Share of Clients Rating Our Service as Excellent or Very Good

Overall Rating for Ceres' Service	94.8%
Overall Rating of Meals	76.7%
Service from Delivery Angels	96.3%
Quality of Ingredients Used	87.3%
Amount of Food Received Weekly	77.3%

Thank you so much for the wonderful, healthy food for my brother Rick. You have helped so much through all his ongoing treatment. He cannot drive, and is very weak. I am his only family member. Cannot express how much it helps him knowing others care for him.

~Jan

Our Food Philosophy

The meals we provide to clients are made from scratch with the highest quality ingredients. Our approach is “plant forward” with a focus on vegetables, whole grains and legumes; about 35% of our menu items include small amounts of animal protein while the rest are vegetarian or vegan. Research shows that plant forward diets are best for chronic disease prevention and treatment while also supporting the sustainability of earth’s environmental systems. ³

Our entire menu plan meets the American Heart Association guidelines for a Heart Healthy diet,⁴ limiting sodium and saturated fats, and we adjust carbohydrates to serve the needs of those with diabetes. Our overall approach is focused on nutritional density with a focus on high quality anti-inflammatory foods.



Why Organic

The scientific evidence about climate disruption is conclusive. Without significant and rapid changes in human activity, we face a perilous future. While conventional agriculture is one of the largest drivers of climate disruption, organic food systems can make positive contributions to both environmental and public health. At Ceres we’ve been committed to 100% organic food since our inception. Research shows that organic food is more nutritious, reduces harmful pesticide burdens especially for farm and food system workers, and sequesters carbon, reducing the impacts of climate change. To learn more about the benefits of organic agriculture, we encourage you to read *Roadmap to an Organic California*, 2019 report from the CCOF Foundation.^{4b}

“Strong evidence indicates that food production is among the largest drivers of global environmental change by contributing to climate change, biodiversity loss, freshwater use, interference with global nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, and land-system change.” ³



Reduced Isolation & Improved Quality of Life

Healthy food and caring connections reduce stress, improve energy levels and help clients feel happier. Our client surveys consistently show the multi-layered impact of our service.

Addressing Malnutrition

Up to 80% of cancer patients suffer from malnutrition, either because of the cancer itself or as a side effect of treatment.⁵ And some 20% of cancer deaths have malnutrition as a precipitating cause.⁶ Keeping patients well-nourished is clearly vital for treatment and recovery.

During their time on the program...



- 80.4% said**

“I ate more because I had prepared meals.”
- 84.5% said**

“The meals helped me feel better physically.”
- 83.6% said**

“The healthy meals helped me recover more quickly.”

What our Clients Say

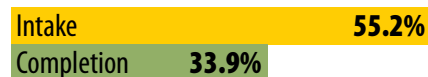
When asked to rate various benefits of the service, the three related to stress and caring connections were rated as important by 90% or more of clients:

“Having meals reduced stress because I didn’t have to shop or cook”	95%
“I felt cared for by the community and less alone”	92.5%
“I knew that my family had healthy meals to eat”	91.1%
“Having the meals saved me and my family money”	89.6%

Before and After the Program

When they begin the program, and then again when they complete meal delivery, we ask clients to rate how they are feeling on ten quality of life measures from the FACT-G, a validated quality of life survey used for cancer patients.⁷ Ceres clients show statistically significant improvement on 8 out of 10 measures.

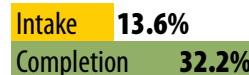
I have a lack of energy



I have enough social interaction with others



I am able to work



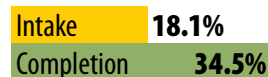
I am able to enjoy life



I am enjoying the things I usually do for fun



I am content with the quality of my life right now



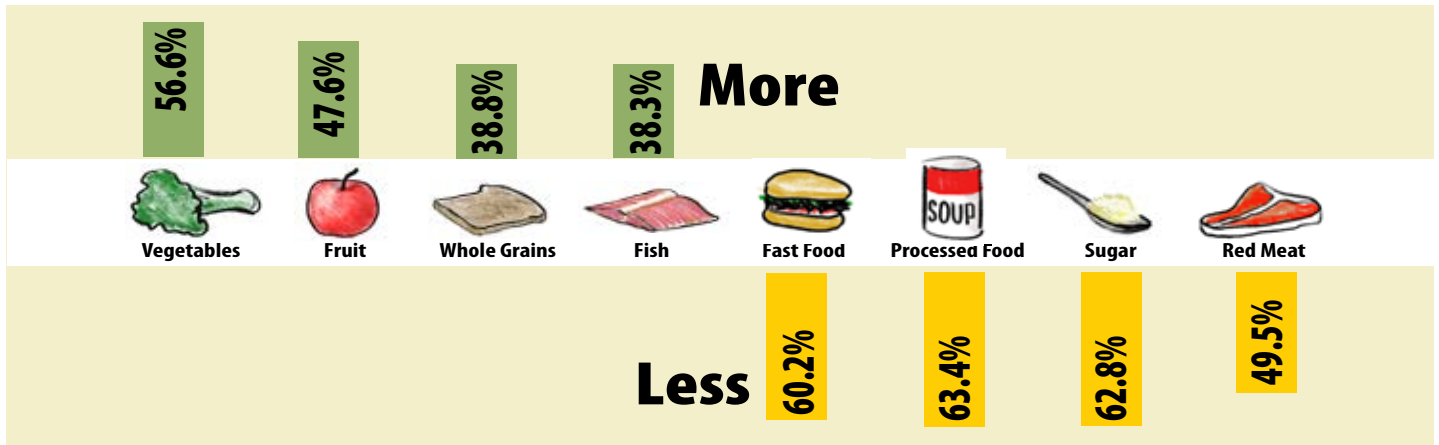


Healthy Eating Habits

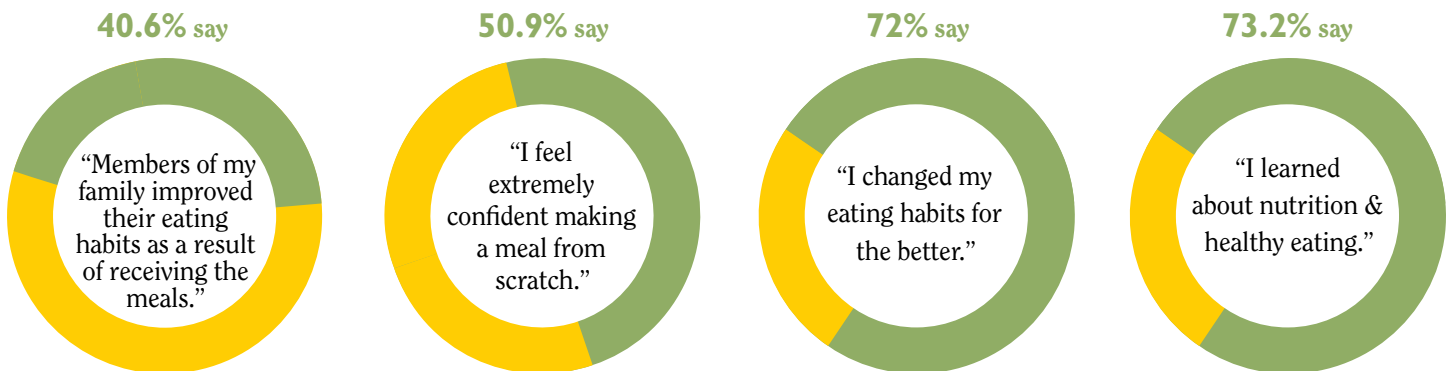
Participating in the Ceres program helps clients learn about and adopt a healthier diet. Through the meals, clients become familiar with healthy foods, learn that they taste good, and discover they feel better when they eat this way. Those experiences are vital for maintaining healthy dietary changes after they complete the program.

Long term program impact

When surveyed four to six months after completing our meal program, clients report significant improvements in their eating habits. Our average client increases fruit and vegetable consumption by 17%. That means that among all the clients we've served, they're consuming an extra 1.2 million servings of fruits and vegetables each year!



After the program, what do clients say about their eating habits?



Clients reported a small but statistically significant increase in the amount of organic food they are purchasing. If they aren't purchasing more, cost is the overwhelming reason cited.



Adult volunteers make sauerkraut weekly. It's one of the probiotic foods we provide our clients to support immune health.

Proving that Food is Medicine

Ceres Community Project is engaged in three studies aimed at demonstrating the positive impact that food can have on the triple aim: improved patient satisfaction, improved health outcomes, and lower health care costs. These studies rest on – and will contribute to – a growing body of national research helping build new strategies for integrating food as a reimbursable medical expense, a vital step in expanding access to healthy food at a critical time for our most vulnerable neighbors.

- **Nutrition Intervention for MediCal Patients with Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)** – This first ever statewide pilot of 1,000 MediCal patients with CHF is being overseen by California's Department of Health Care Services. Ceres and five other medical nutrition providers covering seven counties are delivering 12 weeks of complete nutrition and four visits with a registered dietitian to eligible patients. An evaluation in the MediCal claims database will determine the impact on health outcomes and costs.
- **Congestive Heart Failure Discharge Study for Kaiser Members** – Kaiser members with congestive heart failure who are being discharged from the Kaiser Santa Rosa hospital receive 8 weeks of 14 meals a week with the aim of reducing unplanned 30-day readmissions.
- **Smart Box Heart Disease Prevention Pilot** – Families with an adult member who has high or very high blood pressure and/or diabetes are participating in a 12-week program to learn about shopping, cooking and eating heart-healthy foods. Families attend a 90-minute weekly nutrition class and food demo and go home with five heart-healthy prepared meals, groceries, and recipes they can make themselves. The goal is to improve health status and healthy cooking and eating behavior in order to reduce heart disease risk (see photos below).

Thank you all for the wonderful food, which frees me from a worry I had about how to get the kind of food I need to heal—organic and pure, plenty of nutrients. It also comes with a lot of love, which is also healing. I am so grateful to be included in this service.

~Thea, client





Our Program Evaluation Research

Ceres is committed to continuous learning and improvement. That's why we've dedicated time and effort to gathering data from our youth, clients and adult volunteers since 2011. Our client program evaluation was designed with guidance from the Sarah Samuels Center for Public Health Research and Evaluation and includes three components:

- **Intake Survey** – During the intake process we survey clients on cooking and eating habits and the FACT-G quality of life survey.
- **Completion Survey** – When they complete the program we ask clients to rate the service itself, rate the benefits they received from the service, and complete the FACT-G quality of life questions again.
- **Follow-up Survey** - Four to six months after they've left the program, we survey a random sample of clients based on income and length of time on the program. This survey covers changes in cooking and eating habits since they participated in the program.

We are so appreciative of all the support we have received from Ceres in the last few months. Not only has all the delicious food soothed our soul and stomachs, it has calmed our minds, and relieved the great burden of trying to feed ourselves during this very stressful period in our lives. It is so comforting to know that we are eating healthy food, and the variety of dishes is just astonishing and delightful to the palate. We enjoy everything; the soups are fabulous, the frittatas are always one of my favorite things, the chicken and fish is always so tasty, and the plethora of vegetables are delicious.

~Ceres client and partner



The healthy, delicious, and visually beautiful food feeds my soul as well as my body. Additionally, I have been treated with dignity at every juncture of your service--something I am very sensitive too as asking for help was foreign to me.

~Susan, client

Citations

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- (2) Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review, Julianne Holt-Lunstad, et al, PLOS Medicine, July 27, 2010, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316>
- (3) Food in the Anthropocene: The EAT-Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems, Willett et al, www.thelancet.com, Jan 16 2019
- (4) <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/nutrition-basics/aha-diet-and-lifestyle-recommendations>
- (4b) Roadmap to An Organic California Benefits Report, CCOF Foundation, 2019
- (5) Prevalence of malnutrition in patients at first medical oncology visit: the PreMiO study, Muscaritoli et al, *Oncotarget* 2017 Oct 3; 8(45): 79884–79896. Published online 2017 Aug 10. doi: 10.18632/oncotarget.20168
Malnutrition ‘almost epidemic’ among patients with advanced cancer, *HemOnc Today*, June 25, 2017, “As little as a 5% drop in weight can predict shorter survival.”
- (6) Factors associated with malnutrition in hospitalized cancer patients: a cross-sectional study, Fernanda Rafaella de Melo Silva, Mirella Gondim Ozias Aquino de Oliveira, Alex Sandro Rolland Souza, José Natal Figueroa, and Carmina Silva Santos, *Nutr J.* 2015; 14: 123, Published online 2015 Dec 10. doi: 10.1186/s12937-015-0113-1
- (7) The Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy – General (FACT-G) is valid for monitoring quality of life in non-Hodgkin lymphoma patients, KJ Yost et al, *Leuk Lymphoma.* 2013 Feb; 54(2): 290–297.



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