

Harvest of the Month returns to county classrooms



Last week, TCOE nutrition staff members – program lead Alexandra Rogers and nutrition liaison Lauren Quiñones – visited Terra Bella Union School to teach students about the five food groups and their health benefits. Following the lesson, students got to taste test the month’s harvest: persimmons.

“Our main goal is for students to understand why it is so important to consume healthy food daily,” Rogers said. “In addition, healthy eating can be very simple and fun. The kids need to understand they do not have to only eat raw or cooked vegetables to be healthy. There are several fun and tasty recipes out there for them to incorporate into their daily lives.”

Both Rogers and Quiñones made their lessons fun and engaging, with students feeling proud when they knew the answers and curious when they didn’t.

Before each taste test, Rogers and Quiñones gave students a few rules, with the most important being to wait until each student had their food back at their desk before they tried it.

“The rules Lauren and I provide are so important because they teach proper manners when trying something new,” Rogers said. “We understand not every kid may like what they are about to taste, but the object is to try something new. In addition, if a kid grabs their taste test and tries the food before everyone else and does not like it, they may make other students not want to try the taste test.”

Rogers knows firsthand the benefits of giving food a chance. She hated beets as a child but reconsidered them after creating a nutrition lesson and taste tests with them.

“It actually ended up being one of my favorite lessons because most kids had never tried beets before,” Rogers said. “After conducting that lesson and having beets with the kids, I now put beets on my salads.”



Rogers and Quiñones could not visit classrooms during the pandemic but still taught Harvest of the Month lessons virtually. They created a Bitmoji classroom that teachers had access to and could follow for monthly lessons.

Now that they are back in person, the two are booked for the school year, with 54 teachers and 1,226 students receiving the 30-minute lessons and taste tests until May. Upcoming taste tests include jicama, kiwi, cucumbers, beans, peas, strawberries and berries.



In addition to the lessons, each teacher receives a packet with newsletters, teaching points, and the Tasting Trio, which is the recipe the kids are trying. Teachers typically make copies for the kids so they can take them home to their parents. Rogers said they also send material

to districts for staff and students when contacted.

The nutrition staff collaborates with University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE), Kaweah Health Community Outreach, and local health departments to make sure kids as well as parents are being reached.

For more information about Harvest of the Month and free lesson plans, visit tcoe.org/Nutrition.

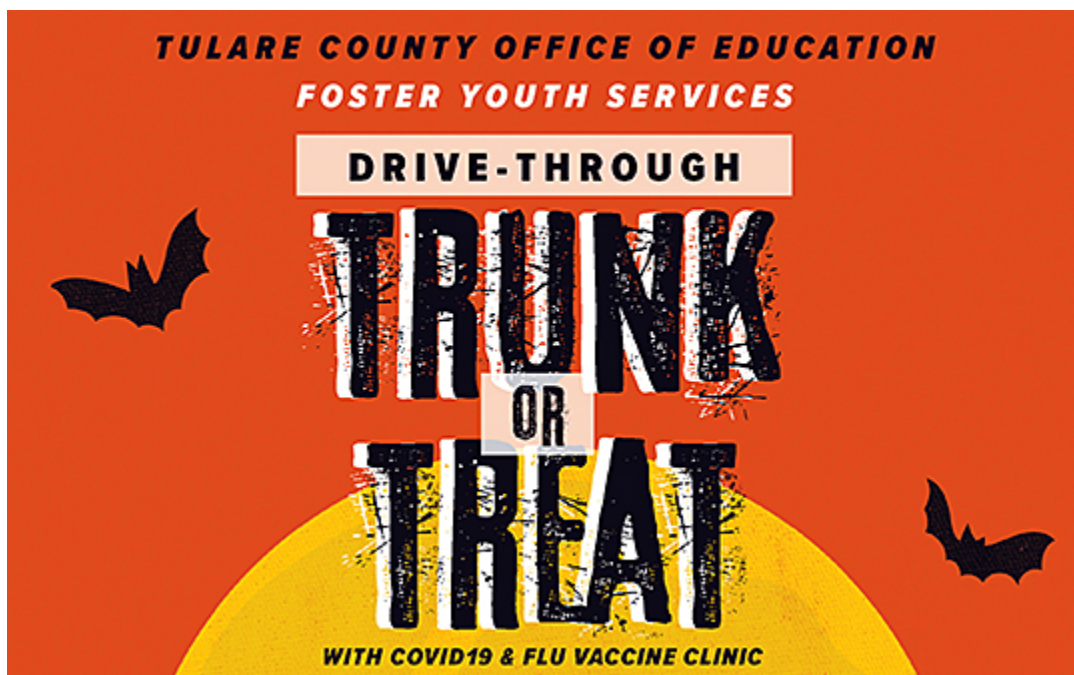
Photo above:

~ Alexandra Rogers talks to a class during a Harvest of the Month lesson, Thursday, October 14, at Terra Bella Union School.

~ This month's harvest is persimmons, and it was served with apples during a taste test at Terra Bella Union School.

~ A Terra Bella Union School student tries persimmons during a Harvest of the Month taste test.

Foster Youth Services will hold drive-thru Halloween event for students and young adults



Next week, Foster Youth Services will hold a drive-thru Trunk or Treat event for foster and homeless youth at The Dream Center in Visalia. The event is scheduled for October 28 from 4:00 until 6:00 p.m. with several agencies providing Halloween treats. The event will also feature available COVID-19 and flu vaccines administered by the Tulare County Public Health Department.

“This event is a fun opportunity for foster and homeless youth new to our program to connect with us,” said Beth Wilshire, the program’s coordinator. “We hope they will continue to reach out to The Dream Center as they need additional support as young adults with college, employment, housing, or transportation.”

The Dream Center is located at 1730 West Walnut Avenue, Suite B, in Visalia. For additional information, call Jaime Burnitzki at (559) 302-3622, extension 5144.

Around the County

The state's largest high school citrus farm just got bigger



This afternoon, Exeter Union High School held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the expansion of their citrus farm from 16 acres to 21 acres, bringing the school farm's total size to 25 acres. The farm has been a part of the school since the 1950s but these new acres will help students to keep up with the times.

"The industry changes and evolves," EUHS agriculture teacher Dan Crookham said. "So if you look at a 40-year-old citrus grove, it doesn't look like a citrus grove that we just planted this past June. You know varieties are different, spacings are different. Irrigation techniques are different. Soil moisture monitoring is different."

"We've got a block of trees that's over 20 years old. And the way that was planted and that variety is good, but it's not what people are planting today."



Students help with a lot of the farm's upkeep and get real-world experience from their work. Crookham said some of the work students do is fixing irrigation, suckering trees, putting pheromone traps out and pruning.

"Hopefully we're connecting those kids with how fruit is grown, and how citrus is grown, and where their food comes from," Crookham said. "Over the course of the year, they get to see the whole cycle."

The citrus grown on Exeter's farm is processed and marketed by Porterville Citrus, Inc. and sold under the Sunkist label all over the world.

"Wherever you find a Sunkist box of oranges, depending on the variety and the month of the year, those could be oranges from Exeter High School," Crookham said.

Around the County is a regular feature of TCOE's *News Gallery Week*. To be considered for this section, Tulare County districts are encouraged to share major student, school, and district achievements and high-resolution photography with Rob Herman, communications director, at robh@tcoe.org.

Learning Resources

- [Arts All Around Us](#)
- [TCOE Learning at Home](#)
- [TCOE's Educational Resource Services Library](#)

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To receive *News Gallery Week*, visit tcoe.org/GetTheGallery, or contact Jennifer Fisher at jenniferf@tcoe.org or (559) 733-6172.