

Ribbon Cutting Speech

Welcome to Food Literacy Center! And welcome to the Rhubarb Revolution!

I hope this is your first time coming to a building where vegetables and kids are the focus! I also hope it's not your last time.

At Food Literacy Center, our mission is to inspire kids to eat their vegetables. We do this by teaching free cooking and nutrition classes to elementary kids in low-income schools. Leataata Floyd is one of those schools.

A teacher at Leataata Floyd Elementary asked the students why they like our classes. Students said they like trying new foods and they love cooking. One student said, "They never give up on us."

Since 2015, this project has been a true tale of never giving up. The reasons to be of service here are many: the average household income of residents living in public housing next door is \$8,000 a year. 96% of the students are socioeconomically disadvantaged. Students experience high rates of food and nutrition insecurity, and diet-related health disparities. There are limited sidewalks and little open space. This is a Sacramento Promise Zone and a food desert.

This neighborhood wasn't designed to optimize resident health. But I have always believed we could design a healthier environment here. In order for kids to be successful at eating their vegetables, they need to feel well in other aspects of their lives, too.

Studies show that access to green space is directly linked to human health—improved mental health, focus, creativity, academic performance, reduction of anxiety, and a lot more.

Children who spend time in nature benefit even more than adults. Like healthy eating, the exposure kids have at an early age matters.

We define food literacy as understanding the impact of our food choices on our health, environment, and economy—and understanding that these impacts are not experienced equitably.

This project is designed for food justice and health equity.

From this new site, every student at Leataata Floyd will attend a 10-week cooking curriculum and a 10-week garden curriculum as part of their school day. They'll learn to measure in a math class, or to make an emulsion in science cooking class. They will attend a class in the garden and learn the parts of a plant. All of this is an expansion of our existing programs, which we provide to the district at no cost. Donors like you make this expansion possible.

After school, our team of instructors will deploy to schools throughout the district, as we have done for over a decade, to provide more free cooking and nutrition classes. We originally planned to serve 8 schools this year at no cost to the district—all funded by donors like you. Thanks to an increase in funding, we are now expanding that number of after school sites to 14!

As we raise new funds, we will roll our other new programs in the future. These programs might include Family Dinner Night, or field trips. I hope you will donate tonight to help us expand our programs to reach even more children. Every child needs food literacy.

This new space makes all of this expansion possible. We're here tonight to celebrate the ribbon cutting of this beautiful cooking school behind me. Let's just take a moment of silence to really take this space in.

It is absolutely gorgeous here. The school district invested their heart and their dollars in this vision. They spent \$4.3 million dollars of their own funding to make this possible—and then handed Food Literacy Center the keys. Our nonprofit didn't pay a penny to build this. Talk about a dream come true! We feel so fortunate that the district has entrusted us with the health of these students.

But if you look this way, you can see that the work isn't done. Our students haven't gotten their farm yet.

But as I said before, at Food Literacy Center, we never give up! For a year, we have been inviting local businesses and leaders to tour our site and share our vision. There is one company that heard our story and asked if they could share a few words here tonight.

[SUTTER HEALTH announcement]

We have so much to celebrate!

Thank you, Sutter Health! Thank you, Sacramento City Unified School District! Thank you, City of Sacramento!

Thank you to my staff and board, our volunteers, our donors, our chefs, to everyone here tonight. We cannot serve these students without you. Thank you for being part of our village. Thank you for never giving up on this vision.

Now, let's celebrate and cut this ribbon!