Cultiva La Salud is dedicated to engaging, informing and inspiring residents to actively advance personal, family and community health through healthy lifestyles and civic advocacy. Cultiva La Salud, which means “cultivate health” connects people with opportunities to help foster policies, systems and environmental changes that support healthy eating and active living. At the core of Cultiva La Salud’s efforts are the “grassroots community” who are the driving force behind real change. Cultiva has been in existence since 2005 and was formerly known as the Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (CCROPP). Cultiva La Salud is a program of Public Health Institute.

Why Policy, Systems, Environmental Change?
Within California’s San Joaquin Valley lies one of the largest and richest agricultural regions in the world. Despite the abundance of nutritious fruits and vegetables, this region is burdened by food insecurity and obesity. The limited availability of fresh produce in rural and low-income urban neighborhoods and the concentration of unhealthy foods are leading factors contributing to poor nutrition and unhealthy diets. Low-income residents living in disadvantaged communities have greater access to unhealthy foods and sugary drinks, and often times pay higher prices for their groceries than residents who live in more affluent neighborhoods.

Residents in disadvantaged communities also struggle with being able to find safe and easily accessible places where they can be physically active on a regular basis. Compared to more affluent neighborhoods, low-income communities have significantly fewer resources to promote physical activity such as park space, trails, sidewalks, and bike lanes that allow residents to walk and bike safely. All of these inequities result in lower life expectancy, higher rates of obesity and related chronic conditions. This is why policy, system and environmental changes are needed to promote good health.

Cultivating Change
Cultiva La Salud is working with disadvantaged community residents on interventions that will promote health equity. Cultiva La Salud recognizes the critical role that grassroots residents play in cultivating and sustaining healthy communities. In 2006, Cultiva La Salud developed the Powerful People: Building Leadership for Healthy Communities curriculum. Over 200 community leaders from rural and urban sites in the Valley have participated, building their advocacy skills and ability to create healthier communities. Through the leadership program, participants have gained critical skills in community organizing, public speaking, media advocacy, research and policymaking processes.

As a result of the program, relevant policy, system and environmental change projects have emerged creating greater access to healthy foods, beverages and physical activity opportunities. Leadership participants are sharing their learnings and best practices across sites in order to create a more powerful movement around health equity. Many of the participants have gone on to take leadership positions on school or early education boards/initiatives, housing and planning committees, among other roles. Through this model, Cultiva La Salud has been able to contribute to a legacy of leaders who are advocating for healthy changes in their communities.
Over the years, Cultiva La Salud has helped to foster the following community changes:

- Establishing farmers markets, community gardens and school farm stands in low-income neighborhoods with limited access to healthy foods
- Establishing healthy retail policies to support better access to healthy foods
- Supporting small convenience stores in their conversion to healthy stores
- Advocating for policies that dis-incentivize unhealthy food and beverage retail
- Limiting access to unhealthy beverages in schools
- Promoting universal school breakfast
- Informing stronger school wellness policies that support healthy menus, water access and physical activity for students
- Working with school officials to open school gates after hours and on weekends for community use
- Increasing physical activity in schools and after-school programs
- Supporting safe routes to school efforts
- Improving park and other community infrastructure such as sidewalks, trails and bike lanes
- Encouraging physical activity and healthy eating opportunities in communities through media advocacy
- And much more!

Join Us!

Creating communities that support healthy eating and active living will help everyone in the Valley stay healthy and live longer. Be a part of this movement!

Here are some ways that you can get involved:

- Be active in promoting your personal and family health by eating better and moving more.
- Support our local farmers - buy and consume locally grown products.
- Be involved in decisions within your community and schools to promote healthy eating and active living.
- Learn more ways that you can be involved by visiting our website at CultivaLaSalud.org.