

MEET EACH NEED WITH DIGNITY



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MENDING Poverty Conference to focus on healthy food equity and accessibility for Angelinos regardless of income level

Nonprofit agency executives, poverty experts, healthcare professionals, funding groups will address access to nutritious, affordable food for all Angelinos

PACOIMA, CA – In 2012, according to Feeding America, over 16 percent – an estimated 1.6 million people – of the Los Angeles county population faced food insecurity. Among the under 18 population, the number jumped to over 25 percent. Given the staggering number of individuals facing food insecurity and the clear link between nutritious food and good health, Los Angeles-based [MEND](http://www.mendpoverty.org) – Meet Each Need with Dignity – will convene community leaders to address food equity and accessibility to nutritious foods for low-income Angelinos at its seventh annual [MENDING Poverty Conference](#). “Hungry for Good Food” - the theme of the Conference - is co-hosted by Valley Nonprofit Resources, in partnership with the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, and will be held on June 18 at the MEND Center, 10641 N. San Fernando Road in Pacoima.

[Weingart Foundation](#) CEO [Fred Ali](#) will deliver the opening welcome. The Foundation, founded in 1951, is a private grantmaking organization that seeks to build better communities by providing assistance to people in need, thereby helping them to lead more rewarding and productive lives. The Foundation gives highest priority to activities that provide greater access to people who are economically disadvantaged and underserved, and is particularly interested in applications that address the needs of low-income children and youth, older adults, and people affected by disabilities and homelessness. Mr. Ali was named CEO of the Foundation in 2006, and has more than 35 years of senior management experience with nonprofit organizations, educational institutions and government.

[New York City Coalition Against Hunger](#) Executive Director [Joel Berg](#), the Conference keynote speaker, is a nationally-recognized leader and spokesperson in the fields of domestic hunger, food security, obesity, poverty, food-related economic development, national service, and volunteerism. Mr. Berg is also the author of *All You Can Eat: How Hungry is America*, and has appeared in three documentary films that address food access. The Coalition Against Hunger represents the more than 1,100 nonprofit soup kitchens and food pantries in New York City and the more than 1.5 million low-income New Yorkers who live in households that cannot afford enough food. Berg is the past winner of the US Secretary of Agriculture’s Honor Award for Superior Service and the Congressional Hunger Center’s Mickey Leland National Hunger Fighter Award.

The luncheon keynote speaker is [Evan Kleiman](#), restaurateur, host of KCRW’s *Good Food*, chef and author. As host of Good Food since 1997, Ms. Kleiman has interviewed more than 6,000 guests ranging from celebrated chefs to local farmers, enabling her to explore every aspect of food and how it intersects with human life.

The Conference includes three concurrent workshops from 10:45 a.m. until 12:15 p.m., each with an outstanding panel of speakers who will address key hunger and nutrition issues:

- **Food and Community: Gardening as a Catalyst for Social Change**
Residents of low-income communities are often at the mercy of food systems where cheap food with little nutritional value is the most pervasive. Panelists will speak of nonprofits at the forefront of the community gardening movement that are working to address this issue by creating opportunities for residents to become producers of nutritious foods, and participants in the shaping of their food systems.
- **Making It Easier to Eat Healthy**
Panelists will highlight programs - from technology-based consumer support to policy advocacy and community organizing - that are focused on improving nutrition for children, youth and adults and that play an important part in making it easier to eat healthy, particularly in communities where it is more challenging to get nutritious food because of the lack of practical guidance about how to eat more healthily, good grocery stores, food banks or financial resources to buy healthy (but sometimes expensive) food.
- **Enhancing Nutrition and Reducing Hunger Through Advocacy**
Panelists will address how public policy shapes school and community programs aimed at reducing hunger and improving nutrition for children, youth and adults. They will speak of how grassroots community leaders can work together with advocacy organizations and elected officials with their staffs to advocate for policy change and legislation to develop, fund and sustain these programs.

Conference sponsors include:

The Angell Foundation, The Honorable Felipe Fuentes, Kaiser Permanente, Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, The California Endowment, The California Wellness Foundation, Valley Presbyterian Hospital, Weingart Foundation, Wells Fargo, Whole Foods Market, and the Honorable Zev Yaroslavsky

To view the MENDING Poverty Conference brochure and to register, please visit: www.mendpoverty.org or contact Maggie Torres at 818-686-7350. For media inquiries, including requests for interviews or a press pass to attend the conference, please contact Nene Ogbechie at nene@mendpoverty.org or 818-686-7335.

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ABOUT MEND

MEND-- Meet Each Need with Dignity, serves an average of 38,000 and as many as 53,000 poverty-level clients each month, while remarkably keeping operating costs to less than 6%. MEND takes a holistic approach to relieve the effects of poverty by providing basic human needs while giving their clients the education and training, that fosters self-reliance. Named California Nonprofit of the Year in 2012 by the Governor's Office, MEND is one of the largest, most efficient and most comprehensive poverty-relief organizations in the Los Angeles region.

Born as a volunteer-powered organization four decades ago in a garage, today MEND benefits from the assistance of more than 5200 volunteers (and only 31 paid staffers) to implement its vast array of programs that provide food; clothing; job training; medical, dental and vision care; classes for adults in English as a Second Language, literacy, and computer training; an after school program for kids; showers and other services for the homeless; and a Holiday Basket Program for 1200 pre-screened families in need. In 2013, 172,609 volunteer hours were provided, equating to 95 full-time employees.