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The Daily Californian news blog

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2016

Berkeley activist Alice Waters, members of Congress discuss solutions to food insecurity



OFFICE OF CONGRESSWOMAN BARBARA LEE/COURTESY

BY [ASHLEY WONG](#) | STAFF

LAST UPDATED SEPTEMBER 15, 2016

Alice Waters, a UC Berkeley alumni and longtime advocate for nutritional education, met with the Democratic Whip Task Force on Tuesday to discuss how they could use her Edible Schoolyard' approach to combat food insecurity and spread nutrition awareness throughout the country.

Waters has been running Edible Schoolyard in Berkeley for more than 20 years as a way to cultivate nutritional awareness through school gardens. Through students growing their own food, Waters aims to teach children where fresh food comes from and how to follow healthier diets.

The task force was launched in 2013, with the intention of raising awareness of the impacts of poverty and to cut poverty around the country in half by 2023.

"I was pleased to hear that these programs not only improve nutrition and strengthen educational outcomes, but that students are very proud of growing and cooking their own

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food,” said creator of the task force U.S. Rep. Steny Hoyer, D-Maryland, in an email. “I applaud (Alice Waters’) work, and the Task Force will continue to advocate for strong school nutrition programs.”

Waters has long been involved in promoting sustainably sourced food, particularly in the Bay Area. In 1971, she opened Chez Panisse, a renowned restaurant in Berkeley that focuses on serving fresh, organic food that is often locally grown.

Additionally, she lobbied for the White House to install a vegetable garden for 17 years, from 1992 until 2009 when Michelle Obama [approved](#) the first one on the South Lawn. According to the Edible Schoolyard’s website, by incorporating the cafeteria into school curriculums, Waters hopes to eventually provide meals for every child at school.

Food insecurity is especially prevalent in low-income communities around the country, according to Xóchitl Castañeda, director of Health Initiatives of the Americas at the campus School of Public Health. Castañeda said she would like to see more community-based efforts to revise schools’ food policies and reform existing program alternatives that can still lead to unhealthy meals.

Castañeda also said money from the schools that could go into providing more fresh food for children can sometimes be used instead for plastic packaging and transportation.

“We need to find healthy alternatives and change the culture of fast, easy food,” she said.

Gwenn White, a health educator specialist for the Bay Area Nutrition and Physical Activity Collaborative, agrees that one of the obstacles standing in the way of better child nutrition is a financial one.

“There’s always a need for more, because there’s only so much money,” White said.

Contact Ashley Wong at ashleywong@dailycal.org.

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