



CONTACT:

Chris Smith
Center for Ecoliteracy
(510) 845-4595

FROM IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Food Service Innovator Jennifer Gerard Joins the Center for Ecoliteracy

BERKELEY, CALIF., APRIL 7, 2016 ...Today, the Center for Ecoliteracy announced the appointment of Jennifer Gerard as program director for its California Food for California Kids® initiative, which includes the landmark California Thursdays® program.

Gerard, formerly director of Nutrition Services for the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD), replaces Adam Kesselman, who helped launch the initiative's California Thursdays program three and a half years ago to improve children's health and promote California agriculture. Kesselman, who is leaving to travel and pursue new projects, will continue supporting the program as a consultant.

"Jenn Gerard has been one of the most creative and committed school food service directors in California and a leader in transforming school meals by serving healthy, freshly prepared meals made with California-grown ingredients," said Zenobia Barlow, executive director of Center for Ecoliteracy. "She even developed unprecedented partnerships with local fishermen to incorporate Monterey Bay's bounty into school nutrition programs. I know she will be able to grow the California Food for California Kids initiative to reach more children and more schools."

While in Monterey, Gerard prioritized a transition to fresh meal preparation, salad bars and staff development, and launched a culinary program at Seaside High School that collaborates with Nutrition Services to develop, test and market new recipes. She soon earned the California Center for California Kids Innovation Award for her work in elevating the quality of meals and connecting the classroom to the cafeteria.

"I am honored to have the opportunity to devote myself to expanding California kids' access to healthy, delicious locally sourced food," said Ms. Gerard. "Together, we're accomplishing an amazing feat: remaking an entire industry to better serve our children and farmers, fishers and producers."

California Thursdays was originally developed and successfully piloted with the Oakland Unified School District in 2013 to provide students with healthier meals and support local agriculture. Today the California Thursdays Network includes 58 public school districts across the state covering at least 2,878 schools. Collectively they serve over 283 million meals a year. The program provides scaled recipes, staff training, and other assistance to support schools in their transition to a healthier, more sustainable meal program, as well as offering resources for teachers and parents at www.californiathursdays.org.

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The **Center for Ecoliteracy** is a Berkeley-based nonprofit dedicated to education for sustainable living and a pioneer in school lunch reform. For more information, visit www.ecoliteracy.org.