

Growing A Revolution: Meet Plant-Based Advocates – Los Gatos

By Plant-Based Advocates

When Los Gatos resident Kathleen Willey started a Facebook page called Plant-based Friends in early 2018, she was newly vegan and looking for a few like-minded people to share ideas and recipes. Then the page grew to over 200 members practically overnight—and she knew she was on to something.

Over the summer of 2019, she and a few committed friends formally created Plant-Based Advocates – Los Gatos with the goal of promoting plant-based diets. The group’s mission: “Mitigate climate change by reducing the traditional reliance on meat and dairy and encouraging the adoption of plant-based diets in our community.”

Besides Willey, other organizers of the group include Lisa Wade, Mary Mackey, Debbie Parsons, Shailaja Venkatsubramanian and Karen Rubio. Brought together by a shared passion for veganism, they bring a diversity of experience to their work. Their backgrounds include teaching, business ownership, nutrition counseling, community outreach, animal rights activism and even—in Mackey’s case—acting!

The group hopes to help people in the community connect the dots between their meal choices and the climate crisis.

“Raising livestock generates more greenhouse gas emissions than the entire transportation sector, making it a huge factor in global warming,”

Wade said. “Moving to a plant-based food system is one of the most important things we can do as a society to address climate change.”

While COVID-19 has put a wrinkle in the group’s plans for in-person events—a film series, a speaker series, and more—it hasn’t stopped their outreach. One way they’re showcasing the benefits of plant-based eating is through meal deliveries. The group recently brought meals to the hard-working Santa Clara County Fire Fighters at the Shannon Road Station in Los Gatos, who enjoyed Mongolian soy curls with broccoli and brown rice, fruit salad, chickpea salad, and nut-seed bark.

“Plant-Based Advocates is now working on a comprehensive meal program for firefighters to support them while they’re working so hard to protect us,” Parsons said. “Plant-based foods boost the immune system and help maintain optimal health during these trying times.”

In June, the group made brown-bag lunches for unhoused people living in Gilroy consisting of quinoa salad and delicious sandwiches of cucumbers, vegan cream cheese and aioli made by Venkatsubramanian. Ashanti Mitchell of the Santa Clara County Public Defender’s office delivered the meals, and said people were particularly grateful for the fact that it was vegan and healthy food.

“One woman asked if I would promise to come

back with any leftovers!” Mitchell said.

Sharing plant-based meals is important, Rubio noted.

“Providing meals is a simple gesture that shows solidarity and support to those who are struggling,” she said. “Making that meal healthy and plant-based, while avoiding animal suffering, is even more powerful.”

This is even more important during the coronavirus pandemic. Plant-Based Advocates is passionate about sharing the information that eating a diet high in meat, dairy and highly processed foods spurs the very diseases that are co-morbidity factors for COVID-19.

“Moving to a plant-based diet offers huge benefits,” said Mackey, a Certified Holistic Nutritionist. “Research has shown that it helps prevent, treat and even reverse some of the leading causes of death, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure.”

One of the team’s early successes was in December 2019 when the Los Gatos Town Council approved a resolution for Green Monday. Green Monday promotes vegan, plant-based meals on Mondays (or another day of the week) and educates the community on the impacts of their food choices on climate change and the environment. The group continues to work with the Los Gatos Town Council to incorporate plant-based policies and plans into the sustainability portion



Plant-Based Advocates with the Santa Clara County Firefighters they delivered meals to.

Photo courtesy of Plant Based Advocates



Plant-based advocates brought Santa Clara County Fire Fighters at the Shannon Road Station in Los Gatos a lunch of Mongolian soy curls with broccoli and brown rice, fruit salad. “Soy curls” are a high-protein food made from whole soybeans, and make a great meat substitute.

Photo courtesy of Plant Based Advocates

of the Los Gatos 2040 General Plan.

Another goal is helping restaurants in Los Gatos offer plant-based menu items. After meeting with Willey, Willow Street added a vegan bowl and vegan Impossible Burger crumbles to their pizza; Cin Cin added an entire plant-based section to their menu. Pizza My Heart in Los Gatos now offers Miyoko’s vegan cheese as an option on their pizzas. The group plans to continue helping others add plant-based menu items and celebrate restaurants.

If you are interested in learning more about Plant-Based Advocates, you can “like” their Facebook pages: “Plant-Based Advocates – Los Gatos” and “Plant-based Friends.” If you would like to join their email list to be notified of events and information, please email Rubio at karenr@phc.net with your name, city and email.

CELEBRATING 45 YEARS!

HEALTH • HOME • HEART

West Valley Community Services

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

If you or anyone you know is affected by schools and/or business closures, loss of jobs and hourly earnings amidst the COVID-19/coronavirus crisis you may qualify for COVID-19 financial assistance. If you did not apply already or are not eligible for unemployment or any other state or federal stimulus check please apply here <https://sacredheartcs.org/covid19/>

SASCC

SASCC

The OUTLOOK

a vision for our Age-Friendly community

ADVERTISE WITH US

Reach 13k homes in your area

EMAIL MARKETING@SASCC.ORG FOR PRICING

Apricots and peaches and plums, oh my! Orkards: an original piece of Sonoma history

Volunteers decorate the Village patriotically for annual "America the Beautiful" salute