

The Food We Eat PhotoVoice Project
Anderson Valley Junior & Senior High School
2015-2016

PhotoVoice projects bring together photographs and oral histories, stories and poems to tell the stories of people's lives across the globe. The goal of PhotoVoice projects is to offer people the opportunity to represent themselves, their perspectives and their stories while advocating for *positive* changes in their lives and communities.

This is the fourth year Anderson Valley Junior & Senior High School (AVHS) students in Nat Corey-Moran's Photography Class in collaboration with artist and arts educator Cathleen Micheaels have had the opportunity to bring together the art of telling the stories of students' lives through photography while documenting and addressing identified school and community concerns. The 2015-2106 *The Food We Eat PhotoVoice Project* focused on looking at food habits including family, financial, peer and cultural influences as well as where food is purchased and when and where meals are eaten without making judgement on the habits. The project included opportunities for students to document the reality of the way they eat while also making suggestions about how eating habits could improve and connecting students and families with examples of healthy local food resources.



Students took photographs of all aspects of the food they eat including breakfast, lunch during and after school snacks, dinner, comfort and special holiday foods as well as cultural influences and where food is purchased and/or grown then crafted individual narrative "storylines" which together with the photographs tell the story of the food they eat. Alongside taking photographs and telling stories about the food they eat students also had the opportunity to connect with local community member resources including a visit from Amanda Bontecou proprietor of Philo Hill Farm who is also the Boonville Farmers' Market Manager and a field trip to Pennyroyal Farm for a tour of the cheese making, goat and sheep herds and grounds by Head Cheesemaker & Herd Manager Erika McKenzie-Chapter (who posted photographs the students took on their tour of Pennyroyal Farm on the Pennyroyal Facebook site at <https://www.facebook.com/PennyRoyalFarm>.) Teams of students also participated in photographing the Local Lunch served this year at the pre-school, elementary and high school sites. Students were introduced to local healthy, seasonal fruits and vegetables through class tastings of pomegranates, Asian pears, Satsuma tangerines, huckleberries and apples, carrots as well as the special tastings of seasonal produce and products (kale chips) from the Boonville Farmers' Market and a sampling of the goat and sheep chesses produced at Pennyroyal Farm.



The project took place from September 2015 – March 2016 with 14 class sessions focused on (1) introducing the basics of PhotoVoice; (2) identifying key focus areas and making connections to community leaders (3) locating opportunities for photographic discovery; (4) providing tools for making observations and crafting storylines; (5) looking at photographic and observation techniques; and (6) creating final project website and plans for community exhibit and presentation with a project preview with school and community leaders.



The project concluded with a very successful culminating exhibit of student photographs and large-scale storylines at Lauren's restaurant in Boonville (a venue which hosts monthly exhibits by professional artist from Mendocino County and beyond) with a reception presentation of the project website and recommendations in March 2016. A team of students took the lead in creating the project website which features the individual student storylines, student photographs and final student messages and recommendations with an overview of the project, information about the Anderson Valley schools and communities, project funders and acknowledgements and links to related PhotoVoice resources (please visit the project website at <http://avhsphotography.wix.com/food>). The opening reception event brought together 60-65 students, teachers, staff family and community members who joined us for a viewing of the professionally museum-quality framed photographs and the presentation of the project website including students reading excerpts from their completed storylines. Refreshments for the event were provided by Pennyroyal Farm (fresh sheep and goat cheeses), Philo Hill Farm (handmade kale chips) and the AVHS *ReThink Your Drink* student team (fruit and vegetable infused waters). Eight of the exhibit photographs were sold to community members, with the income from the purchases banked to support next year's PhotoVoice project.



A final note to also mention that the AVHS *The Food We Eat PhotoVoice Project* also provided the theme for this year's annual *Family Arts Night* at the Anderson Valley Elementary School in April 2016, with the framed photographs and storylines on display at the event and providing inspiration for the family foods poem mini-print collage flag banners which were created by students and families for display in the elementary school cafeteria.

The AVHS *The Food We Eat PhotoVoice Project* received generous support from Anderson Valley Arts, the Anderson Valley Education Foundation, the Anderson Valley Lions Club, the George and Ruth Bradford Foundation and the Mendocino County Health & Human Services Agency – Public Health, Prevention & Planning Unit *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed)*.