



# OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

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## COI Partner Highlight: Laura Niksch



**Laura Niksch - Head Start Nutrition Coordinator, Head Start Program at Neighborhood House Association**

### Bio:

Laura Niksch (formerly Laura Jeanes) is a Registered Dietitian currently working with the Head Start Program at Neighborhood House Associations their Nutrition Coordinator. Originally from Texas, Laura moved to California just over four years ago. She completed her undergraduate degree (BS in Dietetics) at the University of Maryland, College Park. Afterward, Laura completed a combined master program (MS in Nutrition) and dietetic internship with Texas A&M University, College Station. She has worked with the EFNEP program as a Nutrition Educator in Maryland, Child Nutrition and Senior Meals Programs in Texas, served on the Dallas Area Coalition to Prevent Childhood Obesity, and currently holds a co-chair position for San Diego Childhood Obesity Initiative's Early Childhood Domain. Recently, Laura presented on Health Literacy to Head Start counterparts across the state at the California Head Start Association's 2017 Health Institute Conference and to Head Start staff and parents at the National Head Start Association's 2017 Parent and Family Engagement Conference. Laura has a strong passion to treat and prevent childhood obesity and help families in her community lead healthy and happy lives.

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### **When did you know that you wanted to work in this career field?**

During my freshman year pursuing my undergraduate degree, I took an introduction to nutrition course. I fell in love with the material and couldn't stop reading my entire textbook. Shortly afterward, I switched majors from journalism to nutrition. I believe the seed was planted years before when I worked as a nanny for a Registered Dietitian (RD)'s kids throughout high school. She has served as my mentor ever since I chose to become a RD.

### **How did you become involved in the COI?**

Through my current position as Head Start Nutrition Coordinator for NHA, I became connected with COI. With my history working with a similar coalition in Dallas, TX, I was excited to find a local initiative that was so strategic in efforts to prevent childhood obesity. The domain approach works from different but interconnected angles, leading to a stronger collective impact. My work with Head Start naturally gravitated me to the Early Childhood Domain.

### **Why do you stay involved with the COI?**

One projection my mentor shared with me resonated deeply: if strong efforts are not made to change the course of the obesity epidemic in our country, then the current young generation could be the first to not outlive their parent's life expectancy. This fact motivates me to work with children and families to prevent childhood obesity. The COI has made and continues to make significant impacts in reducing childhood obesity for our community.

### **What do you love about of your job?**

I love the Head Start Program. The first five years of life are crucial for a child's development. The sooner we provide support and nurturing development for young children, the better prepared they will be for kindergarten and beyond. Head Start's focus on comprehensive services, like nutrition, in addition to early childhood education, is unique for preschool programs and very effective. Working closely with at-risk families, connecting with community partners, and working with a trans-disciplinary content team at NHA, I can use my knowledge and abilities to their highest level while growing my professional skills.

### **What are three words that describe you?**

Visionary, determined, and energetic.

### **What is your favorite place in San Diego?**

Balboa Park, whether I'm visiting museums or walking the park to take in the peaceful and beautiful atmosphere, I am always able to find something new to appreciate and enjoy. It reminds me of my time in D.C. visiting the Smithsonian Museums. San Diego's rich history and diverse cultures are evident in every part of the park.

### **What do you do for fun?**

My friends and I call it 'urban hiking' where we walk the neighborhoods and parks around San Diego. My father is an architect and always used that knowledge to share interesting aspects of a city's homes and buildings wherever we would visit. I think of him as I walk the streets of historic homes and beautiful landscapes and enjoy sharing them with him and my mother when they visit.

### **What is your proudest professional accomplishment?**

It happens any time I see a Head Start family I have been counseling make strides to a healthier life. Each new success becomes my proudest accomplishment, even though it is truly theirs and I share a small part.

### **What are your three greatest passions?**

Nutrition, self-expression through the arts (guitar, drawing, and dancing), and nurturing friendships.

## What might someone be surprised to know about you?

I play guitar and sing. I have been playing guitar and composing songs since I was 12. Also, I served on a newspaper staff from high school through early college as a writer, editor, and layout designer.

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## Announcements

- Thank you to all who attended our COI Partner Orientation on December 11! We hope that you enjoyed your time networking and learning about collective impact, new ways to stay engaged, available resources, and the ways COI can provide support to partnering organizations. Check out the photos on [Facebook](#)!
- Community Health Improvement Partners is happy to announce that [Dane Peterson](#) has joined the team as the new Food Systems Program Assistant.
- Community Health Improvement Partners would like to announce a special farewell to Elizabeth Vaughn, Food Systems Program Manager.
- Another farewell to Tina Zenzola, Obesity Prevention Program Director, Public Health Services Department HHSA.
- COI would like to welcome Maya Rosas, Advocacy Manager for Circulate San Diego, as a new Domain Champion for the Government Domain.
- Ilisa Goldman, founder of [Rooted In Place Landscape Architecture and Consulting](#), will be presenting at the COI Early Childhood Domain on nature-based outdoor play and learning environments. For more details, please contact [Lyndsey Tapia](#).
- The new COI website will be active early 2018. Stay tuned for more details and resources that will be available.
- We still have a limited number of free [5-2-1-0](#) collapsible water bottles, beach balls, seed stakes, and wet-erase boards! Contact [Lyndsey Tapia](#) if you would like to pick some up.
- If you aren't already receiving our updates through social media, make sure to ["like" us on Facebook](#) and ["follow" us on Twitter](#).



Dane Peterson - Food Systems Project Assistant



5-2-1-0 Materials

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## Collaboration Corner

The "Collaboration Corner" is a section of the newsletter where we are asking partners to post collaborative opportunities, such as partnering on grant applications, volunteer opportunities, and other requests COI partners may be interested in supporting. Please email [Lyndsey Tapia](#) content by the 15th of the month and it will be included in the next newsletter.



Photo courtesy of Dunk Tank Marketing

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## News of Note

[Indicators Measure Collective Impact of Healthy Eating](#)

[Op-Ed: Let's Fix What Matters When It Comes To Health Care](#)

[TV Ads Still Push Unhealthy Foods at Kids](#)



## Events

### Age-Friendly Community Expert Chat

Chula Vista Council Chambers | January 25

Discuss issues that impact health, social life, mobility, and overall quality of life as we age. Be inspired about looking through a new lens at our daily activities and work by Mark Fenton, a nationally recognized authority on public health and policy initiatives. For more information and to register, please click [here](#).



### Assessing Wellness Policy Implementation Workshop

San Diego County Office of Education | February 9

This workshop is being offered in partnership with the California Department of Education, the San Diego County Office of Education, the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative, and the Dairy Council of California. Throughout this workshop, participants will review two evidence-based implementation assessment tools, hear local best practices, and learn how assessment data can be used to meet other district objectives. To register, please click [here](#).

### Pomegranate Method Training for Creative Collaboration

Bayside Community Center | Fridays & Saturdays from 9am-4pm.

February 23-24, March 16-17, April 13-14, May 11-12

This 8-day, hands-on training workshop covers techniques that will empower you to fully engage your community in a productive, creative process, while creating broad ownership of the projects you lead. This training is for anyone who deals with community, consensus building or community building. Space is limited. To register please click [here](#). Training details can be found [here](#).

### Free Baseball Clinic

Encanto Little League Field | February 24

Recognized as a Live Well San Diego partners, Inner City Athletic Program presents a free baseball clinic for boys and girls ages 7-14 years old. Lunch will be provided. For more information please contact, Clarence Henderson III at (619)381-2903.

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## Research and Resources

### Healthy Food Policy Project

The Healthy Food Policy Project identifies and elevates local laws that seek to promote access to healthy foods, contribute to strong local economies, improved environments, and health equity, with a focus on socially disadvantaged and marginalized groups. This web site can help healthy food advocates, local policy makers, and local public health agencies in their quest to champion healthy food access in their communities.



### Serving Water With School Lunches Could Curb Obesity, Save Billions

This study published in Pediatric Obesity showed that students in schools with water dispensers had a threefold increase in lunchtime water intake, significantly lower whole-milk consumption and a small but substantial drop in overweight risk after a year.

### Food Prices Can Be Effective In Promoting Sales & Consumption Of Healthy Food & Beverages

This issue brief reviews thirty studies focused on individuals or stores in middle and high income countries, and food pricing strategies. The review found that the majority of studies showed that pricing incentives can effectively promote the sale and consumption of healthy foods. The most common impact of pricing strategies was increased sales of healthy food, followed by improved revenues or total profits, and increased stocking of healthier foods.

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## Grant Opportunities

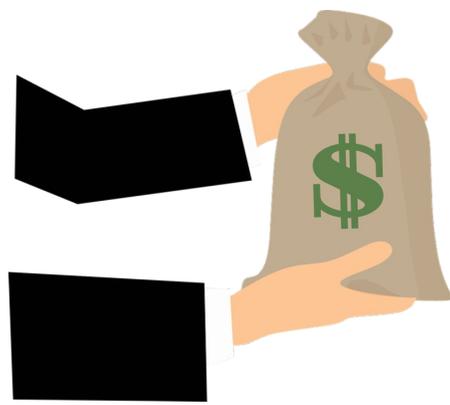
### Teaching Tolerance Educator Grant

Application Deadline: Ongoing

Award Amount: \$500-\$10,000

Teaching Tolerance Educator Grants will support projects that promote affirming school climates and educate youth to thrive in a diverse democracy. Teaching Tolerance grants will fund three different types of projects: school-level, classroom-level and district-level.

[For more information...](#)



### Advancing Wellness Grants Program

Application Deadline: Ongoing

Award Amount: Award amounts vary

The mission of California Wellness Foundation is to improve the health of the people of California by making grants for health promotion, wellness education and disease prevention. Cal Wellness makes grants to nonprofit organizations, public agencies, religious organizations and tribal governments.

[For more information...](#)

### Weingart Foundation

Application Deadline: Ongoing

Award Amount: \$10,000 - \$25,000

The primary purpose of the Small Grant Program is to increase access to funding and strengthen the capacity of small, community-based, and developing organizations. Highest priority is given to organizations or programs that provide greater access for people who are economically disadvantaged and under-served.

[For more information...](#)

### Brittingham Family Foundation

Application Deadline: Ongoing

Award Amount: Award amounts vary

The Brittingham Family Foundation is a private foundation whose goal is to support education, arts, social services, youth, health and the environment. Through transformational grants that build partnerships with other non-profits to increase impact, and to support and address the needs of our local community.

[For more information...](#)

### Children's Obesity Fund

Application Deadline: Ongoing

Award Amount: Varies

The Children's Obesity Fund seeks to educate parents and children about the rising obesity rates in America, reverse the statistics and dangerous trends, and help prevent the next generation from continuing down this alarmingly unhealthy road. The fund would like to support non-profit organizations who share the goal of eliminating the epidemic of childhood obesity.

[For more information...](#)

### LA84

Application Deadline: Ongoing

Award Amount: \$10,000 or less

LA84 is awarding grants that support youth sports programs and activities. Allowable expenses include sports equipment and renovations to facilities and fields.

[For more information...](#)

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### How do you like our eNewsletter? [Send us feedback.](#)

We actively seek newsletter content from our partners. If you or your organization would like to submit content, please **email** it to Lyndsey Tapia.

The San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative is a public-private partnership facilitated by [Community Health Improvement Partners](#), a San Diego-based 501(c)3.

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