



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
VOLUNTEER REPORT FORM
PERIOD JULY 1, 2025 - JUNE 30, 2026
Deadline: August 17, 2026

1. DEPARTMENT INFORMATION:

Department:	University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE)
Division/Unit:	San Diego

2. VOLUNTEER PROGRAM BENEFITS:

- a. GENERAL VOLUNTEERS (this section should include community volunteer, student intern, groups, corporations, etc.)

No. of Volunteers: 657 Hours: 77,388.50 x \$41.75 = \$3,230,969.88

Types of work performed by GENERAL VOLUNTEERS in this category:

Master Gardeners are volunteers trained and supervised by the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE). For 43 years, Master Gardener Volunteers have been dedicated to our mission: "To extend research-based knowledge and information on home horticulture, pest management, and sustainable landscape practices to the residents of California."

Our current team of volunteers educates and serves the community in a wide variety of ways, addressing an equally broad range of gardening and horticulture topics.

We operate a gardening hotline, available by phone or email and staffed seven days a week, where residents can ask questions and receive research-based advice. We also maintain four demonstration gardens throughout the county:

- The Flower Fields in Carlsbad
- The County Operations Center, where we host Ask-A-Master Gardener Wednesdays for county staff and visitors
- Founder's Plaza in Balboa Park
- Paradise Hills Native Garden, a former landfill transformed into a usable green space for an underserved community

Beyond our gardens, we bring horticultural education directly into the community. We participate in local fairs, garden clubs, and businesses to share practical, research-based information.

Education is a major component of our work. We provide ongoing support and expertise to approximately 900 K–12 schools throughout the county, helping educators and students incorporate gardening and horticulture into their learning environments.



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Our programs also promote health and well-being across generations. We provide gardening and wellness activities for older adults through intergenerational community gardens and at residential care facilities serving people living with Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

We maintain more than one acre of garden space at the Youth Transition Center, where incarcerated youth participate in weekly gardening lessons. At the East Mesa detention facility, our volunteers provide monthly gardening assistance. Produce grown there supports the facility's kitchen and work programs, while oak trees grown at the facility contribute to reforestation efforts in County Parks.

We also support approximately 80 community gardens throughout the county, aiding with planning, planting, education, irrigation, and the development of inclusive community spaces.

Our volunteers contribute to University research and extension efforts as well, assisting Farm and Home Advisors with projects such as monitoring and documenting the locations of invasive species and plants.

Finally, we extend our educational reach through writing and public communication. Our volunteers contribute articles and information to the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, *California Gardens Magazine*, local community newspapers, blogs, external newsletters, and social media.

Through all these efforts, San Diego County Master Gardeners work to make reliable, research-based horticultural knowledge accessible to residents while strengthening communities, supporting environmental stewardship, and demonstrating the many ways gardening can improve lives.

The **4-H Youth Development Program** is an educational initiative managed by the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE), a division of the UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Designed to foster positive youth development, 4-H focuses on helping young people build social, physical, and emotional skills while developing confidence, leadership, and a sense of responsibility.

Through hands-on, experiential learning, youth are encouraged and supported to explore their interests, develop new skills, and reach their full potential. In San Diego County, youth and adult volunteers play a vital role in the program by organizing and supporting 15 community 4-H clubs.

Adult Volunteers serve in a variety of leadership roles. Community Club Leaders oversee the overall club program, assisting with volunteer and member enrollment, planning the club year, mentoring youth officers, advising club treasurers on finances, and ensuring that club activities and projects follow 4-H policies.



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Project Leaders guide youth through projects focused on specific subjects, such as poultry, sewing, computer coding, and many others. They provide hands-on educational opportunities that allow youth to develop knowledge and practical skills in areas that interest them.

Other adult volunteers support the program by serving as chaperones and assisting with fundraising, community outreach, events, and special activities.

Youth Volunteers take on leadership roles within their clubs, serving as president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, historian, reporter, sergeant-at-arms, healthy living officer, and civic engagement officer. Through these roles, youth learn to lead their clubs, make decisions, develop and manage budgets, plan fundraising activities, and identify ways to make a positive impact in their communities.

Youth also serve as junior and teen leaders, sharing their knowledge and teaching skills they have developed with younger members. This peer-to-peer leadership provides youth with meaningful opportunities to practice communication, responsibility, teamwork, and leadership while contributing to the growth and success of others.

Together, 4-H youth and adult volunteers create a supportive environment where young people can learn by doing, develop leadership skills, build lasting relationships, and become engaged members of their communities.

The **Master Food Preserver (MFP) Program** is a public service and outreach program that provides research-based information and education on safe home food preservation. Its mission is to help residents safely preserve food using culturally appropriate, research-based practices while reducing food waste, strengthening food security, and providing engaging opportunities for community members to explore healthy food practices.

Master Food Preserver volunteers complete an intensive training program covering a wide range of food preservation and safety topics, including food safety, boiling water and atmospheric steam canning, pressure canning, jams and jellies, pickling and fermentation, dehydration, and freezing.

Training classes meet several times each month and include hands-on laboratory sessions, quizzes, special projects, and a comprehensive final examination. Once certified, volunteers share their knowledge throughout the community through hands-on workshops, demonstrations, presentations for community groups, educational programs at community gardens, and a public hotline available by phone and email.

Through these efforts, Master Food Preserver volunteers help residents build practical food preservation skills, make informed decisions about food safety, reduce household food waste, and increase access to nutritious, preserved foods.



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UCCE hosted a **student intern** during the 2025–26 fiscal year who assisted with a research project examining the relationship between sugar content in plant leaves and pest pressure. As part of the project, she visited parks and farms to collect leaf samples from various plants and conducted pest surveys to assess pest presence and pressure. She also completed a literature review to support the project and develop a broader understanding of the relationship between plant sugar content and pest activity.

b. INSTITUTIONAL VOLUNTEERS (this section should include honor camp inmates, PIC/RETC, GAIN, etc.)

No. of Volunteers: N/A Hours: N/A x \$41.75 = \$ N/A

Types of work performed by INSTITUTIONAL VOLUNTEERS in this category: N/A

c. SPECIALIZED VOLUNTEERS (this section should include utilization of Special Volunteers in positions requiring specific skills and/or expertise levels, for example, an attorney, physician, sports figure or celebrity). These specialized positions have verifiable compensation levels (VCL). If you have such a volunteer, please indicate the position, hours and compensation level below.)

Position	Hours	x	VCL	=	Dollar Benefit
Educational Cooperators	669		\$66.10		\$44,220.90

No. of Volunteers: 83 Total Hours: 669 Total Value: = \$44,220.90

Types of work performed by SPECIALIZED VOLUNTEERS in this category:

The volunteers of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, EFNEP, play an important role in recruiting and engaging new families to participate in the program. They support outreach efforts by distributing flyers, sharing program announcements, and promoting EFNEP within the community.

Volunteers also assist instructors with program delivery by helping prepare and organize the classroom, supporting youth during lessons, and reinforcing key nutrition, health, and wellness messages. Through their involvement, volunteers help create a positive and supportive learning environment for participating families and youth.



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d. TOTALS OF DEPARTMENT VOLUNTEERS (from above):

	No. of Volunteers	Hours	Dollar Benefit
2a.	657	77,388.50	\$3,230,969.88
2b.	N/A	N/A	N/A
2c.	83	669	\$44,220.90
Total Volunteers	740	Total Hours 78,057.50	Total Value \$3,275,190.78

3. DONATIONS TO VOLUNTEER PROGRAM:

Please list all donations to the department's Volunteer Program including monetary donations and tangible/intangible items. Items such as computers, airtime, transportation, books, etc. Please assign fair market value to each and add to the total value of the donations section.

Item Donated:	MFP unrestricted cash donations	Value:	\$1364.18
Item Donated:	MG unrestricted cash donations	Value:	\$18,312.00
Item Donated:	4-H donations	Value:	\$215.80
Total Value:			\$19,891.98

4. VOLUNTEER PROGRAM COSTS:

- a. Cost of direct supervision of volunteers (total hours of direct supervision times hourly rate of staff person(s) directly supervising program volunteers.

Hours: 238	x	Rate: \$65.29	=	\$15,539.02
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- b. Cost of program coordination (total hours of program coordination times hourly rate of coordinator(s). This section should include coordination of staff, compiling statistics, job description preparation, volunteer placements and recognition, etc.

Hours: 3654	x	Rate: \$48.00	=	\$175,392
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- c. Other program costs (volunteer training materials/supplies, recognition costs, etc.):

<u>Item</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Master Gardener Program Supplies	\$10,121.00
Master Food Preserver Supplies	\$3,768.00



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TOTAL OF OTHER PROGRAM COSTS

\$13,889.00

d. TOTAL OF VOLUNTEER PROGRAM COST
(Sum of 4a, 4b and 4c)

\$204,820.02

5. NET BENEFIT TO DEPARTMENT FROM VOLUNTEER PROGRAM:

- a. Total Dollar Benefits of Volunteers, Item 2d (Page 2) \$3,275,190.78
- b. Total of Donations to Volunteer Program, Item 3 (Page 2) \$19,891.98
- c. Subtract Total of Volunteer Program Costs, Item 4d (Page 3) \$204,820.02

TOTAL PROGRAM BENEFIT

\$3,090,262.74

6. RECRUITING:

Please describe your recruiting programs:

The **UC Master Gardener Program** recruits a new cohort of volunteers every other year. During fiscal year 2025–26, the program began planning for the recruitment of a new class of volunteers, with recruitment scheduled to begin in August 2026.

The Expanded Food Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) conducts community outreach through tabling events, where staff and volunteers engage directly with residents and provide educational materials, flyers with QR codes, posters, and information about the UC Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program.

EFNEP also provides educational programming through school districts throughout San Diego County, serving elementary, middle, and high school students, as well as students participating in special education programs. Additional outreach and educational opportunities are offered through summer school programs at local libraries, youth-serving organizations, and other community locations, as appropriate.

The Master Food Preserver (MFP) Program conducts a statewide training program once each year to onboard new volunteers. Current MFP volunteers support the recruitment and training process by serving as mentors to prospective volunteers.

As part of the most recent training cycle, each experienced volunteer mentored two prospective volunteers who had been accepted into the MFP program. These new volunteers successfully completed the program and graduated in June 2026.



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Recruitment and outreach efforts are conducted through direct email communications, the program website, and social media platforms.

4-H clubs continue to use a variety of traditional and digital outreach strategies to recruit new members and volunteers and increase community awareness of the program. Outreach includes distributing flyers through schools and community centers, posting information on online community portals, and participating in local fairs and community events.

The county 4-H website and social media platforms, along with individual club websites and social media accounts, are important tools for communicating program information and opportunities.

Many 4-H clubs also participate in community events—including street fairs, petting zoos, parades, and other local activities—to introduce families to 4-H and provide opportunities for youth and volunteers to become involved.

7. SPECIAL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM ACTIVITIES/ACHIEVEMENTS:

Please describe any special activities and/or achievements your program was involved in during the period of this report:

4-H volunteers planned and conducted countywide events designed to strengthen youth leadership, public speaking, interviewing, and creative skills. These included Presentation Day, featuring the Interview Contest, and Art & Design Day, which included Fashion Revue. Staff also hosted the second annual Leadership Summit, offered both in person and through two virtual Zoom sessions.

Additional training opportunities were provided for club leaders, treasurers, and volunteers, including Club Leader Training, Treasurer Training, End-of-Year Financial Reporting Training, and Annual Project Plan Training.

4-H members participated in a variety of regional and statewide educational and leadership opportunities, including horse events; the Fall Meet-Up focused on apple picking; the Spring Meet-Up focused on understanding watersheds; Regional and State Presentation Days; the State Leadership Conference; and the Leadership Summit. Six youth members and five adult volunteers also participated in 4-H Summer Camp.

EFNEP partnered with Barrio Logan College Institute (BLCI) in El Cajon, a trusted community organization serving Arabic-speaking residents, to provide accessible nutrition education to adult participants. With interpreter support from the EFNEP State office, evidence-based workshops were delivered in Arabic, covering diet quality, food safety, food resource management, food security, and physical activity. Lessons incorporated cultural food traditions and participants' everyday experiences, making the information practical and relevant. Extensive coordination among EFNEP staff, BLCI, and the State office ensured interpreter availability, translated materials, and a welcoming environment that encouraged participant engagement and discussion.



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The BLCI workshops demonstrated the significant need for accessible, culturally responsive nutrition education. Participants showed increased engagement, stronger comprehension, and deeper discussion compared with prior English-only programming. Many shared that this was their first opportunity to learn healthy eating concepts in a language they fully understood and reported sharing lessons on food safety, MyPlate, and grocery budgeting with family members.

The partnership also established a successful model for Arabic-language EFNEP programming. With interpreter support, strong community partnerships, and culturally responsive education, EFNEP expanded its reach to an underserved population and strengthened opportunities for continued engagement and improved health outcomes.

From June 10 through June 29, 2026, San Diego County **Master Food Preservers (MFPs)** staffed a large educational booth at the San Diego County Fair. From Wednesday through Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., MFPs provided the public with evidence-based information and answered questions about safe and effective food preservation practices.

Over the 15 days of participation, the MFP booth reached 2,868 fair attendees. In addition to one-on-one consultations, MFPs delivered presentations on the O'Brien Hall stage and conducted two food preservation demonstrations each day at the booth, providing attendees with hands-on and practical information.

The **Master Gardener Program** provides numerous public outreach and educational opportunities throughout the year, including large-scale plant sales, seminars, garden tours, and community events. These programs connect thousands of community members with research-based gardening information, resources, and practical skills.

In 2025, the biennial Plant Sale and Education Day attracted more than 3,000 participants. Educational offerings covered a wide range of topics, including school gardens, culturally relevant crops, inclusive gardening, monarch butterflies, tree care, and seed starting. The event also featured an Ask-a-Master-Gardener table, six 30-minute educational presentations, and hands-on tool-care demonstrations. Master Gardeners sharpened 140 garden tools and distributed 1,500 vegetable seed packets and educational items to children.

In spring 2026, Master Gardeners hosted an all-day Spring Seminar at Sikes Adobe Historic Farmstead, welcoming more than 500 participants on March 21. The event featured workshops on irrigation, raising chickens for farming, plant propagation, seed starting, fruit tree pruning, berry gardening, herb gardening, and gardening with pets and children. Eighteen informational booths staffed by Master Gardener volunteers provided gardening resources and information about UC Master Gardener programs. Master Food Preserver volunteers also participated, offering workshops on kombucha, strawberry jam canning, and preserving lemons. In preparation for the event, the Master Gardener Program donated more than \$2,000 in irrigation supplies, soil, compost, and plants to Sikes Adobe Historic Farmstead and the San Dieguito River Valley Parks and Recreation Department.



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From March 1 through May 12, Master Gardeners also operated a demonstration garden at The Flower Fields in Carlsbad. Docents engaged visitors throughout the themed garden beds, showcasing plants suitable for home gardens and answering questions about irrigation, plant health, pests, pesticides, and other gardening topics. The demonstration garden reached approximately 240,000 visitors during the season.

The Community Garden Committee also organized its seventh annual Community Garden Leaders' Day on April 19, 2025. Representatives from 60 community gardens participated in the event, providing an opportunity for community garden leaders to network, share challenges, exchange solutions, and collaborate. Educational sessions addressed universal garden design, accessible gardening, vegetable gardening, integrated pest management, and fire-safe landscaping. The Tool Care Committee also provided tool sharpening and hands-on instruction on proper tool maintenance and storage.

8. VOLUNTEER PROGRAM GOALS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024 -25:

Please describe your program goals. Include activities, number of volunteers, recruitment, training, recognition and other goals:

In the upcoming year, the **4-H Youth Development Program** will continue to strengthen support for youth and volunteers while expanding opportunities for leadership, education, and community engagement. A new 4-H club has been established to serve youth in the Jacumba, Boulevard, Campo, Lake Morena, and Potrero communities. The Volunteer Management Organization is also expanding, with new committees being developed for the Shooting Sports and Equine programs.

The program will increase its presence at community events to support youth and volunteer recruitment and raise awareness of 4-H opportunities. Expanded volunteer training will remain a priority, including the third annual Leadership Summit, which will feature workshops on career and workforce planning, working with youth with special needs, emergency preparedness, vermicomposting, leading fishing projects, developing teens-as-teachers teams, event planning, and record books. Additional trainings are planned for adult volunteers in club leadership, project leadership, treasurer responsibilities, and end-of-year financial reporting.

Growing participation among both youth and adult volunteers will remain a key focus. The program has also developed a partnership with military programming through the Harvest of the Month initiative, with an after-school program currently being planned for spring. Staff will continue to explore diverse program delivery models, including after-school programming, military partnerships, community-based clubs, and traditional 4-H clubs.

The **Master Food Preserver Program** will continue expanding its volunteer base and developing partnerships with community organizations and other stakeholders. Increased use and maintenance of social media platforms will support public awareness, outreach, and recruitment for this growing program.



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The **Master Gardener Program** will continue providing research-based gardening education and resources to residents throughout San Diego County. A primary goal for FY 2026–27 is to recruit and onboard a new class of Master Gardener volunteers. With approximately 320 current volunteers, recruitment and planning for the January 2027 training class will begin in August 2026.

The program will continue recognizing outstanding volunteer contributions through its annual recognition program in November, honoring volunteers who reach 1,000 hours of service and subsequent 1,000-hour milestones. Fundraising and public outreach will also remain priorities, with plans to host successful educational events in September at Balboa Park and again in the spring at Sikes Adobe Historic Farmstead.

EFNEP will continue to strengthen staff training and professional development to enhance curriculum delivery and program quality. A review of updated curriculum is planned to ensure alignment with the latest USDA nutrition guidelines and recommendations.

9. GENERAL INFORMATION:

Name of Person Completing Report:	Erin Spaniel		
Phone Number:	858-822-7711	Mail Stop:	
Email:	enspaniel@ucanr.edu		

Volunteer Coordinator:	Erin Spaniel		
Phone Number:	858-822-7711	Mail Stop:	
Email:	enspaniel@ucanr.edu		

10. DEPARTMENT CERTIFICATION:

Chandra Richards

DEPARTMENT HEAD SIGNATURE

08/17/2026

DATE