

## **FROM the GARDEN to the TABLE and GREEN MOBILE HEALTH EDUCATION KITCHEN SRO FOOD INSECURITY and SAFETY INTERVENTION SPECIALISTS**

The more than 30,000 residents of the San Francisco Tenderloin community (1) face increased rates of obesity, asthma, diabetes, and other health problems often resulting in increased hospital stays and medical appointments and interfering with quality of life. From the Garden to the Table was funded to create the Green Mobile Health Education Kitchen to service the 530 Single Room Occupancy Hotels and all Tenderloin residents with cooking and preventive health classes, green lifestyle resources, and design safe cooking facilities to enhance and promote well-being (2). It is not uncommon to find multiple individuals in residing in one unit. The Tenderloin has the highest density of low-income children, families, adults, and seniors.

According to the Food Security Task Force survey, 84% of the Single Occupancy Room (SRO) community in the Tenderloin is food insecure (3) – the ability to obtain and prepare nutritious food is uncertain or not possible. Factors to food insecurity include not having the ability, knowledge or skills to cook, and inaccessibility to cooking facilities and nutritious food stores. A recent report from the San Francisco Food Security Task Force recommended (3):

- Expanding and tailoring services to meet the needs of this growing resident population at the community level, and advocate for additional public benefits programs at the governmental level.
- Improving the low knowledge of food preparation and nutrition and continuing nutrition and food preparation programs/projects that met the diverse needs of the Tenderloin neighborhood.
- Improving access to cooking facilities among homeless and SRO residents to implement strategies to improve access as a means of improving food security.
- Strengthening interagency coordination and innovation and improving coordination among agencies.

With lack of cooking resources comes improvised solutions that are often unsafe and maybe hidden from SRO managers. In the past 10 years, there have been 26,882 fires in the Tenderloin community; 61% of which were attributed to cooking fires (4).

Because some Tenderloin residents still battle substance abuse, mental health, or housing problems, the FGTT partners with San Francisco Recovery Theater (SFRT) Theater Productions to further assist those in need with Tai Chi and theatre to enrich the city's culture one show at a time while saving one life at a time. This partnership enables the Green Mobile Health Education Kitchen to provide culturally appropriate cooking education paired with social gatherings and exercise opportunities to inspire holistic changes.

By addressing the important root causes of food insecurity and cooking fires in the Tenderloin, FGTT's Green Mobile Health Education Kitchen creates a sustainable solution, not just a Band-Aid for health and

© From the Garden to the Table/ Green Mobile Health Education Kitchen, 2017.  
Organic, green, and sustainable since inception in 1996.

social injustices and disparities. Green Mobile Health Education Kitchen has developed two approaches for partnerships with the Tenderloin community.

---

## **FROM the GARDEN to the TABLE and GREEN MOBILE HEALTH EDUCATION KITCHEN PROJECTS**

---

### **Project Description**

#### **Onsite Kitchen Project**

From the Garden to the Table has designed a “Safe and Green” Kitchen for the Camelot Hotel, an SRO without kitchen facilities. The “Safe and Green” Kitchen will be the first in-house kitchen, built with energy efficient and safety-centric appliances to provide the facilities and skills for SRO residents to prepare healthy meals for themselves and community. From the Garden to the Table will not only teach individuals to eat healthy, sustainably, and organically, but also provide the proper training on safety procedures when operating kitchen appliances and utensils.

This program will also focus on engaging individuals to participate in physical activity. By immersing individuals in this holistic approach, FGTT aspires to reduce chronic disease and complications, improve quality of life, and promote lifelong healthy habits among community residents. Lastly, participants will apply their newly acquired cooking skills by showcasing some of their creations and sharing with other residents, building a stronger network and healthy community. We seek funding to pilot a Green Safety Kitchen in one SRO and improve and expand the project based on its successful outcomes.

Costs to design and build the Green Kitchen and for cooking and food safety classes, physical activity sessions, and creating a healthy community are provided based on hotel needs and number of residents.

#### **Safety and Prevention Exchange Project**

This critically needed project will follow the same principles as the Green Mobile Health Education Kitchen - safety, energy efficiency, health, and cooking education. The Safety and Prevention Exchange Program will provide residents the opportunity to exchange cooking equipment they currently use, legal or not, for a safe mobile, energy-efficient, equipped in-room cooking unit, without questions and judgement. The cooking units feature special energy-efficient, non-flammable burners to prevent burns, fires, and loss of property and life. The burners provide precise control of cooking temperature (reducing cooking time 50% and increasing energy efficiency 70%) and also are much safer than conventional burners, because there is no flammable surface.

This approach reassures managers that residents will use energy-efficient, safe cooking systems and SRO tenants will be safer from burns and fires. In addition, training on safe use of the cooking systems and health, cooking, and green healthy choice classes will be provided with each exchange. We seek funding to complete one hotel with 50 to 100 rooms to pilot this approach to food security and hotel, resident, and manager safety.

Costs for in-room units and for cooking and food safety classes, physical activity sessions, and creating a healthy community are provided based on hotel needs and number of residents.

---

From the Garden to the Table is looking for funding partners to support these and other potential projects that will address safety and food insecurity in the SRO Tenderloin community. Please contact Jeffrey Smith,

Founder and CEO to schedule a meeting to discuss these important and necessary projects. He can be reached at 510-841-4335 or [jsmith@g2t.org](mailto:jsmith@g2t.org).

1. San Francisco Department of Public Health, Environmental Health (2014). Improving Health in SROs - Health Impact Assessment: Key Informant Interview Summary. San Francisco, California.
2. SRO Families United Collaborative (2015). SRO Families Report – Living in the Margin: An Analysis and Census of San Francisco Families Living in SRO. San Francisco, California.
3. Harder + Company Community Research for the Tenderloin Hunger Task Force (2013). Food Security and Services in San Francisco’s Tenderloin. San Francisco, California.
4. Statistics from the San Francisco Fire Department, reported July 2016.