



### **S3E3: Regrowing the Good Food District**

**Colby:** Welcome to Stocking the Pantry, a CalFresh Healthy Living podcast from Leah's Pantry. On this show, we discuss any and all things community nutrition, food equity, and nutrition security. We hope to foster collaboration and community, as well as leverage strengths among listeners, guests, and hosts as we share ideas and dreams of building a more equitable future where everyone has access to healthful and nourishing food.

**Carlos:** Thanks for joining us on Stocking the Pantry. I'm Carlos Alessandrini.

**Colby:** And I'm Colby D'Onofrio, and we are your hosts. Today we're talking with Diane Moss, managing director at Project New Village in San Diego. Project New Village aims to improve fresh food access in southeastern San Diego to strengthen the health of individuals, neighborhoods, and communities.

They have a wealth of really exciting initiatives, from a mobile farmer's market, to a community garden, to an upcoming physical food and resource hub.

**Carlos:** Today we'll be talking with Diane about everything Project New Village, how they integrate a trauma-informed approach to their initiatives, and their historic, current, and future impact on an area called the Good Food District.

**Colby:** Now, Diane has more than 30 years of experience managing community rooted organizations in southeastern San Diego. She was selected as the 2019 Woman of the Year for the 79th State Assembly District and awarded the 2019 Trailblazer Award by the San Diego Voice and Viewpoint. So you can understand that we are really excited to have Diane on the show.

Diane, can you tell us about your background and the history behind how you found yourself as the managing director of Project New Village?

**Diane:** Well, I came to San Diego in the seventies as a student at UCSD. Upon graduating with this urban and rural studies degree, I moved to southeastern San Diego.

I shortly bought a home, got married, so this is where I live, and I work for nonprofits. I've done that almost my entire life. And then started approaching the work around food



justice around 2008 and this organization, Project New Village, then became a nonprofit organization.

**Carlos:** Thank you for that intro and great work, Diane. Now you talk about the Good Food District, which is a term you and your team coined about southeastern San Diego, which historically has not had access to healthy foods and other resources that communities need to thrive. The Good Food District is essentially a rebranding of an area in San Diego where you create your community gardens.

Can you tell us about the Good Food District and how the community has benefitted from this project?

**Diane:** Yes, and I'm glad you used the term rebranding. Because back in the day, this was a rich agricultural place, right? Lots of farms. Where Morse High School is, or Encanto Rec Center, used to be where farms were, and grew food for the people who ate here.

Since then, with the disinvestment or lack of investment in the area, we don't have what we need. What this project aims to do is involve the people who live here to work with other interested partners to make it a better place to access food, right? We grow our own food in our gardens.

We have a network of backyard growers that are contributing to our Mobile Farmer's Market. We're excited to say about 25% of the things we sell on our Mobile Farmer's Market are grown right here in our neighborhood from people who live here who grow food, and the point is we want good food, fresh food, and fairly priced food.

All of our initiatives say that we have to pay attention to not only the consumer of the food, but since we pay the people for the food they give us, we have to give them a fair price. So equity is at least a two-sided coin here.

**Carlos:** I agree with that, Diane. Now, what goals do you have for the Good Food District in the future?

**Diane:** In the future, we have big dreams. Our original garden in Mount Hope, we bought that property back in 2022, it was a major process to do that. We started off as a really small, grassroots organization. We're growing, and we want to take that property and make what we're calling The Village.



The Village would be a food hub that houses a grocery store, a place where food entrepreneurs could sell their food, a community kitchen, commercial kitchen, a garden space, and an upstairs where we're deciding what that would be. Looks like we're leaning toward workforce development slash resiliency center.

It would be a needed permanent asset in the community that's not going away, because the community is building it. This is a community led effort. So I'm working with my neighbors, and I live less than two miles from where I work. This is a project of love, if you will, with our neighborhood members.

**Colby:** Mmm, that sounds amazing. Yeah, I'd be super excited for that and I bet you all are too. Now Project New Village uses a social determinant of health model, which views food equity and self-determination as key factors for achieving better health. Can you tell us a bit more about this model and how it integrates a holistic trauma-informed approach to your work?

**Diane:** So social determinants of health, to me, are anything that's non-medical factors that contribute to your wellbeing. So clearly you need to have access to good food. If you got a backyard, you should be growing something not only for you, but for others. So the social determinants of health looks at those factors that are here: do we have green spaces where we can have fresh air, fresh kind of outdoor activities? Do we have access to food? How's the housing here? Is it safe to live here? All of those factors that determine your state of wellbeing.

Our garden is not just a place

where food grows. We're starting to see that it has a healing kind of effect. People tend to stay around longer, even when the work is done, and we are measuring happiness. How many people are just smiling at one another? It's just a good place to be. There are these, what we call collateral benefits, from being in our, right, from being in our gardens.

I have no use for collateral damage, ever. Yeah. But collateral benefit. Where you just show up, and because you do that, something good happens. We are tracking the do-gooders. We really are. People who give up their time to not only help themselves and for self-care, but for the neighbors and the people who live in our neighborhood. It's catching on.

**Colby:** I love that, because for so long we were all looking at the numbers around health and the test results around health. But what we're really finding, and I think a trauma-informed approach and the resilience aspect of it is showing us, is that all these



things that are maybe harder to track by the numbers and by the tests, are so important. So all those collateral benefits, the smiles, the connection between community members, finding places that we can all grow together, as we maybe grow a garden to have just exponential benefits.

**Diane:** Yeah. You know, next on our agenda is to try to open up a community garden in a public park.

**Colby:** Oh yeah.

**Diane:** It's a lot of red tape. It's a lot of hurdles to jump through. But getting the community input and to see what their concerns are. You can't just build a garden, you have to build the infrastructure to support a garden.

But the level of enthusiasm, they're hanging out in their park and we are interrupting their time saying, what about a garden? And doing surveys. But people are participating, and it's a good feeling. There's some momentum here, right?

**Colby:** Yeah. Just 'cause it's hard doesn't mean it's not worth doing,

**Diane:** And we have fun every day. Our work is fun. I mean, we laugh most of the time.

**Carlos:** On that note, I'll, I will say that it's unfortunate for listeners to miss how much you're smiling and glowing, Diane, while you're going about this, because it truly is exciting and I can genuinely see how it's something that you really enjoy. So kudos to you.

**Diane:** Thank you.

**Carlos:** Project New Village works towards its goal of improving fresh food access in southeastern San Diego primarily through urban farming. For those who are not familiar with this particular term, could you define that a little bit more? And why is farming, that's typically associated with rural communities, also important in these denser areas as southeastern San Diego?

**Diane:** Yeah, I think one of the main differences we would see is space. The land costs a lot of money here in southern California, right? And we have smaller spaces that we're dealing with. We might also be dealing with more pollution, or more cleanup aspects in terms of what we have to do here. And then the cost of water, or putting the infrastructure in to have a garden.



These are some of the things that we are paying attention to. But they're cropping up. Church parking lots, abandoned spaces, and in people's yards, we are growing food. We are looking at pest control and all kinds of things that take place in a urban setting, but the main difference is probably smaller space. And you're in a bubble. Everybody sees what you do.

**Carlos:** Yes indeed. Now, we've been talking about this great model, social determinant, and me personally, I've done my share of community outreach. However, sometimes it's hard to be able to share and pinpoint to our listeners and just sometimes even other colleagues, the amount of time this requires.

So I'm wondering if you could help us better visualize the amount of effort and time that it requires to achieve the implementation of this model and the great work you've done.

**Diane:** Well, it hasn't happened overnight. Like I said, we became familiar with the term food justice back in 2008, and it was compelling.

Some folks came down here from Sacramento and started talking about the scarcity of food in our area. I saw no one in the room from my neighborhood. And so I thought this was compelling enough to come back and start asking questions. What is our relationship with food? And I didn't find one person that was like, happy; everyone then started saying, we want our own garden.

They had memories of farmer's markets back in the day. So we literally thought, that's something we should do here with the Good Food District, is to bring back those two elements. But to do that, there's a whole other body of work. You know, having access to food or trying to do placemaking, when we need housing, we need other things that compete for resources.

It's a lot of time involved knowing who the other service providers are, and finding out where your niche is, that you're definitely one of the priorities in your political people's agenda and other folks, so that you even are on the table or on the agenda as an option.

There's some folks that don't look at urban agriculture as nicely as we do. It reminds them of another time when there was a power struggle, and it wasn't a good situation, I'm gonna say, for some communities of color. So they're hesitant to want to put their hands in the dirt. They just want the convenience of having the food.

But the problem with that is, you're kind of not in control. You're not in control of what you get, when you get it, or how much. So a lot of work goes into producing the food,



distributing the food, and then advocating for places where you can do those kinds of activities. So, I don't know the number of hours, but we've been doing this for a couple decades now. Yeah.

**Colby:** That's a great point you make about, I guess I'm hesitant to say competing initiatives for other needs in the community, because they're all n eeds,

**Diane:** yeah.

**Colby:** of people in the community: housing, healthcare, good education. But we also know that food insecurity and lack of access to nourishment doesn't happen in a vacuum.

**Diane:** Yeah.

**Colby:** So it's hard when they're competing, because they're all necessary and they're all intertwined.

**Diane:** Sometimes it provides us with an opportunity to reimagine how we have access to food.

**Colby:** Mm-hmm.

**Diane:** If you build an apartment complex and there are residents, those residents eat food. So perhaps you want to think about some coexisting, maybe on your first level there's some place where you have access to food.

Maybe you build a space in what you're building where a garden could exist, and people could take a part of that. Looking at some of those solutions from multiple levels might mean that we can coexist in spaces. Because in fact, humans have more than one need.

**Colby:** Isn't that crazy? It's wild. What a crazy realization.

**Carlos:** Project New Village's Neighborhood Growers Collective is a community initiative that engages members with a passion for gardening and food to create a local collective of food growers who could eventually contribute produce to your People's Produce Mobile Farmer's Market. This seems like a great way to get the community involved in the foods they eat and cook. So what has been your experience working with members of the Collective? What gets people excited about community gardening?



**Diane:** Well, this project, we actually started in 2019. We won some international competition, which gave us the dollars to start this Collective. What I find is, growers of food or gardeners, are some of the most generous people, hardworking people, and they tend to have a lot of patience, right? Because you can't really will a plant into being, it has a process, right?

So, but what we find is some people come because it's a tradition in their family and they wanna carry on that tradition. A lot of curiosity of how things taste. They wanna mix and match. There's some science involved here. There are people that come because they like this concept as food as medicine.

These are people that are always bringing samples to the meeting. We get different kinds of teas and tinctures 'cause they're doing things, and they wanna experiment with, with others. That's some of the joy of coming to a meeting also. People who cook food, they want to grow the food that they cook. They like cooking and serving for others.

So these are people who inspire potlucks. I can say, I'm an African American woman born here in Southern California. I eat a certain way, but culturally I've been exposed to other ways to eat. Let me just say, I grew up with collard greens. How my family fixed collard greens is you put it in a pot, you boil it with meat, and then you eat it, and the, and season it, right? And it's very good. But then someone says, why don't you just stir fry it? She was a Vietnamese gardener in the garden. I tried it, and that was some years ago, and that's the way I eat collard greens now. I stir fry them with other vegetables.

And I learned that because I'm hanging out with someone that's gardening at the Mount Hope Community Garden. A good thing that comes out of the cultural exchanges.

We all have to eat. Food is a nexus, if you will.

**Carlos:** I love that collaborative effort that you mentioned, Diane, because it also adds another component, the different knowledge that individuals have, right?

So you could share some anecdotes about members who are beginning as gardeners and who therefore are able to pair with other seasoned green thumbs and are able to make this hobby more impactful in the community.

**Diane:** Well, I know that people have exchanged addresses so they can go and see each other's growing. I'm gonna say like, Christina. Christina lives in Oak Park area, and I think she gardens in her front yard, and she's really big on the Three Sisters, right? She's got the corn and the peas and the beans, but she is really big on these different



kinds of earth. And she's of Latina background, so she brings all kinds of native plants, native herbs, and she makes teas.

You think my face lights up? You should see her. She's so expressive. She tells you what to do. She packages things very well, labels things very well so that you can go home and try it, and then you know there's gonna be a follow-up discussion next time you see her, who tried what. And it's also good conscious raising, 'cause people have different techniques for what they do and products that they use. And they can share and talk about their experiences.

**Carlos:** I love that synergy, being able to feed from each other, getting feedback, continuing to grow together. Love that, Diane.

**Diane:** Thank you.

**Colby:** Now, how do you ensure that there is community voice in the production and distribution of the food you grow?

You know, you mentioned that previously folks were perhaps hesitant around urban agriculture and bringing agriculture back to the Good Food District. But as you pointed out, when we don't have a say in what we're growing, we don't have a lot of control over what we're eating. So how do we bring that voice into the production and distribution of that food? And what's the community's response been to this heightened level of say and engagement in community gardening?

**Diane:** So our work, we say it's a placemaking project. So we have a geographical area with zip codes and census tracts that tell us where we wanna see impact, where we wanna get input from.

We hold a lot of community meetings. Virtual, in-house, we throw some of the best parties and socials where people come. We can tell folks, we are having a Mardi Gras event. You need to show up. And we're playing dominoes. So come!

We engage folks, we don't make any decisions that we don't involve residents. And I can say that 'cause I'm a resident and I talk to my neighbors and we wanna talk to various folks in our neighborhoods.

So with placemaking, it's important that you know the area and we prioritize people who've lived here the longest.





That's not that we don't work with others, but we clearly wanna center the voice and concerns of the people who live here. We try to stay right within our southeastern San Diego, our Good Food District borders, and I should say, our Good Food District is not just southeastern San Diego, but we look at our food geography and those communities to the south. That would be National City, Lemon Grove, and then into Barrio Logan, we share grocery stores.

So when a grocery store goes down, not only impacts Southeastern San Diego, but National City. So when we started looking at putting a village project together, putting a place where you can get healthier food, we looked at the entire area that would be impacted by the stores that are here, and that's how we decide what we're gonna do, where we're gonna do it.

**Colby:** Has there been any pushback or resistance from people providing their voices in the community?

**Diane:** No, I think people wanna be heard, and particularly now when we have some chaos, if you will, from our perspective. And there's more people that are talking that are saying, how can we work together better?

**Colby:** Hmm.

**Diane:** What we are trying to do is put a system in place that we can sustain. So very little of what we do is for free.

We wanna make a change to the mindsets, particularly outside folks saying, why don't you give it away? That means I'm always dependent on the person who gave it to me, versus us doing it ourselves and it being here when we need it. And then we can say what it is that we want and be culturally appropriate, if you will, with the selections that we make for this community.

**Colby:** Yeah, absolutely. With decisions comes power.

**Diane:** Yes.

**Carlos:** That was a great answer, Diane. Very assertive, and I can see that assertiveness in the entire project. Going back to the Project New Village Mobile Farmer's Market, it's a mobile farmer's market that brings healthy local produce directly to the local neighborhoods.



Tell us a little bit more, though, about this mobile farmer's market idea.

**Diane:** We ran a farmer's market, traditional farmer's market, for a few years in our neighborhood. It really didn't catch what we thought would be good momentum.

It's a working class community, or we had the impact of poverty, and some market being open two or three hours a week, a lot of people were gonna miss that. So. We have a mobile farmer's market that can go someplace five, six days a week. We usually do two hour markets are usually two hours. The one in Lemon Grove is a bigger market, so we stay there about four hours, and it's being received real well.

it wasn't the first thing that was on our agenda to do. In fact, it wasn't even on our agenda, it was just before COVID. Some guy called us from Canada and says, California is the place to have a mobile farmer's market. So I ignored him for a long time. I didn't know him, and it's just like scam mail to me. But then he started talking about a grant that was available in California. We looked at the grant and said, this is not difficult. We can do this. So we went for the grant. We got the grant in 2022. September 2022 is when we started this mobile farmer's market. And nobody, this guy's in Canada, nobody was coming over across the border during COVID. So we found someone up in North County, in Vista. And they designed a truck for us. We brought the truck here.

We got local artists to help us paint the truck, put a message on the truck. So I think that resonated with the folks here, and we told everybody our priority is southeastern San Diego. We're not going any place else. We are first. We are part of the home team.

Then we hired the best manager ever. So Rodney is our manager. He retired from the school district. He was everybody's coach on sports teams. He's just the best, and he's a master gardener. He has farming in his background, and he is just lovely. He's a deacon of his church. Just a pillow, this guy. And then recently, we hired his son, so that's the best team ever that's out on the street at least three, four days a week. This is who you deal with on the phone. They're the best. Trauma informed. You couldn't ask for a better person to pick up the phone and say, hello, you found your spot, right?

**Colby:** Yeah.

**Diane:** And then he is always talking to us about the integrity of the fruit, the integrity of the product, how it looks, how it gets here. So he is a good steward and a good representative.



When we started the market, we had some subsidies that were provided by a grant. So we've set aside so much money per year, where those who need that assistance, they can get that.

They just fill out a survey, talk about their experiences, and then we make that available to them. It's a \$10 coupon, and you can use it every time you come to the farmer's market. And we get to say that there's no shame in the game. You need to use your SNAP and any other kind of thing, 'cause that's revenue for us to be able to continue the service. So bring it, please. So it's a good time. In fact, one of the markets is here on Fridays at our office, and we've decided to make an outdoor lounge so that people can have a, what we call it, a hydration station.

**Colby:** Nice.

**Diane:** We're gonna find some local people that play food, music, cause we are here two hours a week and we wanna make the most out of this experience that we're having with our market, and this is a mixed use. So there's people that come out that live here. It's a, it's a good experience.

**Colby:** Yeah, if you're gonna be there, we might as well make the best of it, right?

**Diane:** We do.

**Colby:** Now, your most recent initiative is building the Village Community Food Hub in Mount Hope. And this is a multi-use facility that will encompass production, distribution, and community engagement all in one place by featuring a good food public market, a commercial kitchen for classes, promoting healthy food vendors and community gathering space, and a community garden.

Tell us more about this. I'm really interested to hear what this dream is and also why having a one-stop shop for production, distribution, and community food engagement is so important.

**Diane:** So, I think we agree that food is essential. You have to have it. So any way that we can cook it, prepare it.

**Colby:** Mm-hmm.

**Diane:** Celebrate it, recycle it. We wanna have a celebration and create some energy around the consumption and access to healthy food. We are in the middle of a capital



campaign now, so that we wanna build this structure right and we want community engagement every step of the way, community is involved telling us what products we should have, what amenities they wanna see, what artwork they would like to see. It's way out of our comfort zone, but we had an opportunity and we're taking that opportunity as far as it'll go.

The land was formerly public land. And because we bought the land, we are making the most out of it.

**Colby:** That sounds awesome.

**Diane:** I'm learning a lot about the financial world. I'm learning a lot about, uh, business, that I'm not a business person, but clearly we are moving into a different realm, we're having wonderful partnerships when we do that.

**Colby:** Mm-hmm.

**Diane:** People are stepping up and helping. We say it's a journey of minor miracles, and it's only minor 'cause it's not the whole world, but for our world, we think we could really make a transformative change with this investment in this space.

**Colby:** Yeah, sometimes just putting down roots and serving the people that are closest to you is gonna make the biggest impact.

Now, this sounds really cool, and I'm really excited that this is all coming together. Can you tell us what does a trauma-informed approach mean to you, and how is that approach getting integrated into this vision and into this Hub?

**Diane:** So, I'm gonna say, dignity affirming, life-affirming practices, meeting people where they are, making no assumptions.

Talk to people. Probably more high touch than high tech. I'm not really a tech kind of person, but showing that you care in a demonstrative kind of way, so that it's worthy of people going on the journey with you. We're all gonna benefit at the end. We have shared experiences and we wanna continue to have them, but better experiences and more collective, intentional kinds of circumstances, then things happen to us, and then we rally to solve the problem.



We have seen things that have happened when you're not prepared. So we're trying to stay prepared, and in order to do that, we need to have some permanent structures in our arsenal and this Village, that's one of them.

**Colby:** Yeah.

**Diane:** Because people always say, do you wanna scale up? I'm not real sure about that. I want to get deeper. Because the problem took a long time to get here. So it's not something we could just skim over, it's gonna take more time. Beause we're asking people to change your behaviors, change your relationship towards food, make some healthy options, not 'cause somebody told you to, because you know it's the best thing to do.

**Colby:** Yeah, the term trauma informed is a newer one, but the ideas and the principles behind it, all of the terms you mentioned and all of the ways in which you enact it, have been around for so long. And the ways that you're bringing it into this vision and this dream for the Hub is pretty awesome.

**Diane:** Thank you.

**Carlos:** I like the minor miracles comment, Diane, because they do add up and they make a huge difference.

**Diane:** My dad raised food, so I think he would be proud of the work we're doing. He passed in 2012, so he never saw the Mount Hope Community Garden. I was trying to prep and get ready, so thank you. We're trying to do a good job here for a lot of reasons, and some of it has to do with legacies of people that came before us. We've had board members that put in, and put their time in. They're no longer here, but we raise their names every time we go out and do community work, because they was somebody in our communities. And so as long as I'm here, they're here at this table.

**Colby:** Mm-hmm. That's, like, the best way, I think, to keep people's memory going, is keep pushing for the things that they loved and keeping their names out there. Absolutely.

**Carlos:** And I keep reminding myself that this particular type of community work takes trust, time, and consistency. So sometimes we're only planting seeds, and there are other folks who planted the seeds. So we're literally helping those seeds grow.

**Colby:** Mm-hmm.



**Carlos:** And hopefully someone else will eventually help our seeds grow, right? So it's a collaborative effort. So speaking about collaborate efforts, I would like to share to our listeners about the great podcast from Project New Village, Project Good Food, which talks with organizations and organizers in food access and sovereignty spaces. So please tell us a little bit more about Project Good Food and what kind of things you explore on that show.

**Diane:** It's one of our newest initiatives and it came because there are people a lot younger than me on our team that says this is the way to go. So they won. And, and I think we, uh, just taped our ninth session. And this last session had to do with where we find ourselves in 2025 with the shift from the federal government, how does that mean that we have to shift? And we engaged our community members to talk about that.

Other topics have included food sovereignty, social determinants of health, so these kinds of topics. We were one of the workshops presented in October at the San Diego Food System Alliance. Our topic there was the Good Food District and how people could be involved and support. It was our first time we did it with our live audience, uh, and it went over really well.

We have wonderful people on our board and for most of the podcasts, we've had a board member as one of the speakers because they bring a level of expertise.

**Carlos:** We will be able to embed that podcast in our show notes. And I had a chance to visit you last week and take a look at your garden, we'll also include those photographs in our show notes. You mentioned you're close to that first year anniversary, so congrats on that, and I know that it's a lot of work getting to that milestone, so congratulations.

**Diane:** Thank you.

**Colby:** Now I wanna know, you mentioned that there's a lot of micro farms and backyard farmers, and I hear that you are a backyard farmer. So what do you like to grow?

**Diane:** So, in my backyard, they would call it, half of it, like a food forest. My property goes up an incline, so there's trees, all kinds of fruit trees there, and non-food trees, shade trees.

Then when you come to the bottom, I have these wicker beds, and this is where I get to grow different vegetables. I've grown tomatoes and I've grown peppers. I've grown squash. And my favorite tree, I think, is the fig tree. I think artistically, it just looks



different, and you always know when it's ready because at the same time, the junebugs come out. I'm cool with junebugs now, they make a lot of noise close up in your ear and they like getting in your hair. They're beautiful green things, and when you're outside, you're in their space. So I like, I experiment with, I don't even know the name of all of the trees in my backyard.

That's gonna be a journey. So when they start producing fruit, I'm gonna sample and take pictures and ask people, what is this? I've had figs, gooseberries. Passion fruit? I saw an apple, uh, one apple.

**Colby:** One, the lone apple.

**Diane:** Banana trees. I have a banana circle that they put. Uh, so I'm waiting to see what that does.

**Colby:** Oh, only, only Carlos and Diane can see my face. But I am like, oh, that sounds so cool. Like, also just the patience, like, I love what you're talking about of, like, you're gonna put in the work, you're gonna cultivate these trees and when they're ready to give back to you, you're ready to receive it. And that'll happen when it's meant to happen.

**Diane:** That's right.

**Colby:** But passionfruits, oh man. That's like my dream. We talked to someone back in Season One who told me all about passionfruits and passionfruit flowers, oh man, those flowers are crazy. They look like some extra terrestrial something or another.

Mm-hmm. And I'm trying to concoct a plan to grow my own in my backyard here soon.

**Diane:** Yeah, I'm lucky, it, I can just go in the backyard and it's like a whole nother place. I have a whole different relationship with lizards now. I just like watching 'em.

**Colby:** Oh yeah.

**Diane:** Uh, I don't know. Lizards, butterflies. Just being outside

**Colby:** And like, how calming is that? It's your own, you know, private property, but there's so much happening on it besides you, just nature doing nature. Like that's, what a gift.



**Diane:** Yeah.

**Carlos:** Coexisting. That's it. Coexisting.

**Diane:** That's it.

**Colby:** Absolutely. So now for one of my favorite questions that we love to ask everybody who comes on our show, Diane, we wanna know, what do you stock your pantry with, literally or figuratively?

**Diane:** I have a lot of beans and peas. Dry beans, canned beans and peas.

**Colby:** Yeah, I love having beans in my pantry. Like, worst case scenario, I could always just eat a can of beans for dinner. Yep. I'd be pretty happy.

**Diane:** A soup is an easy thing to put together, right?

**Colby:** Definitely.

**Diane:** Yeah.

**Carlos:** And great source of nutrition. Completely agree. So lastly, how can our listeners get in touch and learn more about your great work, Diane?

**Diane:** So I know our website is [projectnewvillage.org](http://projectnewvillage.org) and everything we've talked about is probably on that website. We have a a wonderful team member that keeps that together.

**Colby:** Yep. And I'll add to that, that I got to listen to Project Good Food, the amazing podcast. I listened on Spotify. I think it's on Apple Podcasts. I know it's on your website too. So, we'll have links to their website and Project Good Food in our show notes.

Well, Diane, it has been an absolute pleasure chatting with you today. Just the light you brought to this conversation, the laughs, the jokes, just amazing energy. It has truly, truly been an honor to host you on our show. And just get to have a piece of your time. We are really appreciative.

**Carlos:** We sure are.





**Diane:** Thank you.

Thank you both.

**Colby:** Listeners, we also wanna thank you for hanging with us today. If you wanna learn more about Project New Village, their website is [projectnewvillage.org](http://projectnewvillage.org) and that will be in our show notes along with the links to the Project Good Food Podcast, which you can listen to on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and wherever you get your podcasts.

We look forward to seeing you next time on Stocking the Pantry.

**Carlos:** Thanks for joining us on Stocking the Pantry. I'm Carlos Alessandrini.

**Colby:** And I'm Colby D'Onofrio, and we are your hosts. Today we're talking with Diane Moss, managing director at Project New Village in San Diego. Project New Village aims to improve fresh food access in southeastern San Diego to strengthen the health of individuals, neighborhoods, and communities.

They have a wealth of really exciting initiatives, from a mobile farmer's market, to a community garden, to an upcoming physical food and resource hub.

**Carlos:** Today we'll be talking with Diane about everything Project New Village, how they integrate a trauma-informed approach to their initiatives, and their historic, current, and future impact on an area called the Good Food District.

**Colby:** Now, Diane has more than 30 years of experience managing community rooted organizations in southeastern San Diego. She was selected as the 2019 Woman of the Year for the 79th State Assembly District and awarded the 2019 Trailblazer Award by the San Diego Voice and Viewpoint. So you can understand that we are really excited to have Diane on the show.

Diane, can you tell us about your background and the history behind how you found yourself as the managing director of Project New Village?

**Diane:** Well, I came to San Diego in the seventies as a student at UCSD. Upon graduating with this urban and rural studies degree, I moved to southeastern San Diego.

I shortly bought a home, got married, so this is where I live, and I work for nonprofits. I've done that almost my entire life. And then started approaching the work around food



justice around 2008 and this organization, Project New Village, then became a nonprofit organization.

**Carlos:** Thank you for that intro and great work, Diane. Now you talk about the Good Food District, which is a term you and your team coined about southeastern San Diego, which historically has not had access to healthy foods and other resources that communities need to thrive. The Good Food District is essentially a rebranding of an area in San Diego where you create your community gardens.

Can you tell us about the Good Food District and how the community has benefitted from this project?

**Diane:** Yes, and I'm glad you used the term rebranding. Because back in the day, this was a rich agricultural place, right? Lots of farms. Where Morse High School is, or Encanto Rec Center, used to be where farms were, and grew food for the people who ate here.

Since then, with the disinvestment or lack of investment in the area, we don't have what we need. What this project aims to do is involve the people who live here to work with other interested partners to make it a better place to access food, right? We grow our own food in our gardens.

We have a network of backyard growers that are contributing to our Mobile Farmer's Market. We're excited to say about 25% of the things we sell on our Mobile Farmer's Market are grown right here in our neighborhood from people who live here who grow food, and the point is we want good food, fresh food, and fairly priced food.

All of our initiatives say that we have to pay attention to not only the consumer of the food, but since we pay the people for the food they give us, we have to give them a fair price. So equity is at least a two-sided coin here.

**Carlos:** I agree with that, Diane. Now, what goals do you have for the Good Food District in the future?

**Diane:** In the future, we have big dreams. Our original garden in Mount Hope, we bought that property back in 2022, it was a major process to do that. We started off as a really small, grassroots organization. We're growing, and we want to take that property and make what we're calling The Village.



The Village would be a food hub that houses a grocery store, a place where food entrepreneurs could sell their food, a community kitchen, commercial kitchen, a garden space, and an upstairs where we're deciding what that would be. Looks like we're leaning toward workforce development slash resiliency center.

It would be a needed permanent asset in the community that's not going away, because the community is building it. This is a community led effort. So I'm working with my neighbors, and I live less than two miles from where I work. This is a project of love, if you will, with our neighborhood members.

**Colby:** Mmm, that sounds amazing. Yeah, I'd be super excited for that and I bet you all are too. Now Project New Village uses a social determinant of health model, which views food equity and self-determination as key factors for achieving better health. Can you tell us a bit more about this model and how it integrates a holistic trauma-informed approach to your work?

**Diane:** So social determinants of health, to me, are anything that's non-medical factors that contribute to your wellbeing. So clearly you need to have access to good food. If you got a backyard, you should be growing something not only for you, but for others. So the social determinants of health looks at those factors that are here: do we have green spaces where we can have fresh air, fresh kind of outdoor activities? Do we have access to food? How's the housing here? Is it safe to live here? All of those factors that determine your state of wellbeing.

Our garden is not just a place

where food grows. We're starting to see that it has a healing kind of effect. People tend to stay around longer, even when the work is done, and we are measuring happiness. How many people are just smiling at one another? It's just a good place to be. There are these, what we call collateral benefits, from being in our, right, from being in our gardens.

I have no use for collateral damage, ever. Yeah. But collateral benefit. Where you just show up, and because you do that, something good happens. We are tracking the do-gooders. We really are. People who give up their time to not only help themselves and for self-care, but for the neighbors and the people who live in our neighborhood. It's catching on.

**Colby:** I love that, because for so long we were all looking at the numbers around health and the test results around health. But what we're really finding, and I think a trauma-informed approach and the resilience aspect of it is showing us, is that all these



things that are maybe harder to track by the numbers and by the tests, are so important. So all those collateral benefits, the smiles, the connection between community members, finding places that we can all grow together, as we maybe grow a garden to have just exponential benefits.

**Diane:** Yeah. You know, next on our agenda is to try to open up a community garden in a public park.

**Colby:** Oh yeah.

**Diane:** It's a lot of red tape. It's a lot of hurdles to jump through. But getting the community input and to see what their concerns are. You can't just build a garden, you have to build the infrastructure to support a garden.

But the level of enthusiasm, they're hanging out in their park and we are interrupting their time saying, what about a garden? And doing surveys. But people are participating, and it's a good feeling. There's some momentum here, right?

**Colby:** Yeah. Just 'cause it's hard doesn't mean it's not worth doing,

**Diane:** And we have fun every day. Our work is fun. I mean, we laugh most of the time.

**Carlos:** On that note, I'll, I will say that it's unfortunate for listeners to miss how much you're smiling and glowing, Diane, while you're going about this, because it truly is exciting and I can genuinely see how it's something that you really enjoy. So kudos to you.

**Diane:** Thank you.

**Carlos:** Project New Village works towards its goal of improving fresh food access in southeastern San Diego primarily through urban farming. For those who are not familiar with this particular term, could you define that a little bit more? And why is farming, that's typically associated with rural communities, also important in these denser areas as southeastern San Diego?

**Diane:** Yeah, I think one of the main differences we would see is space. The land costs a lot of money here in southern California, right? And we have smaller spaces that we're dealing with. We might also be dealing with more pollution, or more cleanup aspects in terms of what we have to do here. And then the cost of water, or putting the infrastructure in to have a garden.



These are some of the things that we are paying attention to. But they're cropping up. Church parking lots, abandoned spaces, and in people's yards, we are growing food. We are looking at pest control and all kinds of things that take place in a urban setting, but the main difference is probably smaller space. And you're in a bubble. Everybody sees what you do.

**Carlos:** Yes indeed. Now, we've been talking about this great model, social determinant, and me personally, I've done my share of community outreach. However, sometimes it's hard to be able to share and pinpoint to our listeners and just sometimes even other colleagues, the amount of time this requires.

So I'm wondering if you could help us better visualize the amount of effort and time that it requires to achieve the implementation of this model and the great work you've done.

**Diane:** Well, it hasn't happened overnight. Like I said, we became familiar with the term food justice back in 2008, and it was compelling.

Some folks came down here from Sacramento and started talking about the scarcity of food in our area. I saw no one in the room from my neighborhood. And so I thought this was compelling enough to come back and start asking questions. What is our relationship with food? And I didn't find one person that was like, happy; everyone then started saying, we want our own garden.

They had memories of farmer's markets back in the day. So we literally thought, that's something we should do here with the Good Food District, is to bring back those two elements. But to do that, there's a whole other body of work. You know, having access to food or trying to do placemaking, when we need housing, we need other things that compete for resources.

It's a lot of time involved knowing who the other service providers are, and finding out where your niche is, that you're definitely one of the priorities in your political people's agenda and other folks, so that you even are on the table or on the agenda as an option.

There's some folks that don't look at urban agriculture as nicely as we do. It reminds them of another time when there was a power struggle, and it wasn't a good situation, I'm gonna say, for some communities of color. So they're hesitant to want to put their hands in the dirt. They just want the convenience of having the food.

But the problem with that is, you're kind of not in control. You're not in control of what you get, when you get it, or how much. So a lot of work goes into producing the food,



distributing the food, and then advocating for places where you can do those kinds of activities. So, I don't know the number of hours, but we've been doing this for a couple decades now. Yeah.

**Colby:** That's a great point you make about, I guess I'm hesitant to say competing initiatives for other needs in the community, because they're all n eeds,

**Diane:** yeah.

**Colby:** of people in the community: housing, healthcare, good education. But we also know that food insecurity and lack of access to nourishment doesn't happen in a vacuum.

**Diane:** Yeah.

**Colby:** So it's hard when they're competing, because they're all necessary and they're all intertwined.

**Diane:** Sometimes it provides us with an opportunity to reimagine how we have access to food.

**Colby:** Mm-hmm.

**Diane:** If you build an apartment complex and there are residents, those residents eat food. So perhaps you want to think about some coexisting, maybe on your first level there's some place where you have access to food.

Maybe you build a space in what you're building where a garden could exist, and people could take a part of that. Looking at some of those solutions from multiple levels might mean that we can coexist in spaces. Because in fact, humans have more than one need.

**Colby:** Isn't that crazy? It's wild. What a crazy realization.

**Carlos:** Project New Village's Neighborhood Growers Collective is a community initiative that engages members with a passion for gardening and food to create a local collective of food growers who could eventually contribute produce to your People's Produce Mobile Farmer's Market. This seems like a great way to get the community involved in the foods they eat and cook. So what has been your experience working with members of the Collective? What gets people excited about community gardening?



**Diane:** Well, this project, we actually started in 2019. We won some international competition, which gave us the dollars to start this Collective. What I find is, growers of food or gardeners, are some of the most generous people, hardworking people, and they tend to have a lot of patience, right? Because you can't really will a plant into being, it has a process, right?

So, but what we find is some people come because it's a tradition in their family and they wanna carry on that tradition. A lot of curiosity of how things taste. They wanna mix and match. There's some science involved here. There are people that come because they like this concept as food as medicine.

These are people that are always bringing samples to the meeting. We get different kinds of teas and tinctures ' cause they're doing things, and they wanna experiment with, with others. That's some of the joy of coming to a meeting also. People who cook food, they want to grow the food that they cook. They like cooking and serving for others.

So these are people who inspire potlucks. I can say, I'm an African American woman born here in Southern California. I eat a certain way, but culturally I've been exposed to other ways to eat. Let me just say, I grew up with collard greens. How my family fixed collard greens is you put it in a pot, you boil it with meat, and then you eat it, and the, and season it, right? And it's very good. But then someone says, why don't you just stir fry it? She was a Vietnamese gardener in the garden. I tried it, and that was some years ago, and that's the way I eat collard greens now. I stir fry them with other vegetables.

And I learned that because I'm hanging out with someone that's gardening at the Mount Hope Community Garden. A good thing that comes out of the cultural exchanges.

We all have to eat. Food is a nexus, if you will.

**Carlos:** I love that collaborative effort that you mentioned, Diane, because it also adds another component, the different knowledge that individuals have, right?

So you could share some anecdotes about members who are beginning as gardeners and who therefore are able to pair with other seasoned green thumbs and are able to make this hobby more impactful in the community.

**Diane:** Well, I know that people have exchanged addresses so they can go and see each others growing. I'm gonna say like, Christina. Christina lives in Oak Park area, and I think she gardens in her front yard, and she's really big on the Three Sisters, right? She's got the corn and the peas and the beans, but she is really big on these different



kinds of earth. And she's of Latina background, so she brings all kinds of native plants, native herbs, and she makes teas.

You think my face lights up? You should see her. She's so expressive. She tells you what to do. She packages things very well, labels things very well so that you can go home and try it, and then you know there's gonna be a follow-up discussion next time you see her, who tried what. And it's also good conscious raising, 'cause people have different techniques for what they do and products that they use. And they can share and talk about their experiences.

**Carlos:** I love that synergy, being able to feed from each other, getting feedback, continuing to grow together. Love that, Diane.

**Diane:** Thank you.

**Colby:** Now, how do you ensure that there is community voice in the production and distribution of the food you grow?

You know, you mentioned that previously folks were perhaps hesitant around urban agriculture and bringing agriculture back to the Good Food District. But as you pointed out, when we don't have a say in what we're growing, we don't have a lot of control over what we're eating. So how do we bring that voice into the production and distribution of that food? And what's the community's response been to this heightened level of say and engagement in community gardening?

**Diane:** So our work, we say it's a placemaking project. So we have a geographical area with zip codes and census tracts that tell us where we wanna see impact, where we wanna get input from.

We hold a lot of community meetings. Virtual, in-house, we throw some of the best parties and socials where people come. We can tell folks, we are having a Mardi Gras event. You need to show up. And we're playing dominoes. So come!

We engage folks, we don't make any decisions that we don't involve residents. And I can say that 'cause I'm a resident and I talk to my neighbors and we wanna talk to various folks in our neighborhoods.

So with placemaking, it's important that you know the area and we prioritize people who've lived here the longest.





That's not that we don't work with others, but we clearly wanna center the voice and concerns of the people who live here. We try to stay right within our southeastern San Diego, our Good Food District borders, and I should say, our Good Food District is not just southeastern San Diego, but we look at our food geography and those communities to the south. That would be National City, Lemon Grove, and then into Barrio Logan, we share grocery stores.

So when a grocery store goes down, not only impacts Southeastern San Diego, but National City. So when we started looking at putting a village project together, putting a place where you can get healthier food, we looked at the entire area that would be impacted by the stores that are here, and that's how we decide what we're gonna do, where we're gonna do it.

**Colby:** Has there been any pushback or resistance from people providing their voices in the community?

**Diane:** No, I think people wanna be heard, and particularly now when we have some chaos, if you will, from our perspective. And there's more people that are talking that are saying, how can we work together better?

**Colby:** Hmm.

**Diane:** What we are trying to do is put a system in place that we can sustain. So very little of what we do is for free.

We wanna make a change to the mindsets, particularly outside folks saying, why don't you give it away? That means I'm always dependent on the person who gave it to me, versus us doing it ourselves and it being here when we need it. And then we can say what it is that we want and be culturally appropriate, if you will, with the selections that we make for this community.

**Colby:** Yeah, absolutely. With decisions comes power.

**Diane:** Yes.

**Carlos:** That was a great answer, Diane. Very assertive, and I can see that assertiveness in the entire project. Going back to the Project New Village Mobile Farmer's Market, it's a mobile farmer's market that brings healthy local produce directly to the local neighborhoods.



Tell us a little bit more, though, about this mobile farmer's market idea.

**Diane:** We ran a farmer's market, traditional farmer's market, for a few years in our neighborhood. It really didn't catch what we thought would be good momentum.

It's a working class community, or we had the impact of poverty, and some market being open two or three hours a week, a lot of people were gonna miss that. So. We have a mobile farmer's market that can go someplace five, six days a week. We usually do two hour markets are usually two hours. The one in Lemon Grove is a bigger market, so we stay there about four hours, and it's being received real well.

it wasn't the first thing that was on our agenda to do. In fact, it wasn't even on our agenda, it was just before COVID. Some guy called us from Canada and says, California is the place to have a mobile farmer's market. So I ignored him for a long time. I didn't know him, and it's just like scam mail to me. But then he started talking about a grant that was available in California. We looked at the grant and said, this is not difficult. We can do this. So we went for the grant. We got the grant in 2022. September 2022 is when we started this mobile farmer's market. And nobody, this guy's in Canada, nobody was coming over across the border during COVID. So we found someone up in North County, in Vista. And they designed a truck for us. We brought the truck here.

We got local artists to help us paint the truck, put a message on the truck. So I think that resonated with the folks here, and we told everybody our priority is southeastern San Diego. We're not going any place else. We are first. We are part of the home team.

Then we hired the best manager ever. So Rodney is our manager. He retired from the school district. He was everybody's coach on sports teams. He's just the best, and he's a master gardener. He has farming in his background, and he is just lovely. He's a deacon of his church. Just a pillow, this guy. And then recently, we hired his son, so that's the best team ever that's out on the street at least three, four days a week. This is who you deal with on the phone. They're the best. Trauma informed. You couldn't ask for a better person to pick up the phone and say, hello, you found your spot, right?

**Colby:** Yeah.

**Diane:** And then he is always talking to us about the integrity of the fruit, the integrity of the product, how it looks, how it gets here. So he is a good steward and a good representative.



When we started the market, we had some subsidies that were provided by a grant. So we've set aside so much money per year, where those who need that assistance, they can get that.

They just fill out a survey, talk about their experiences, and then we make that available to them. It's a \$10 coupon, and you can use it every time you come to the farmer's market. And we get to say that there's no shame in the game. You need to use your SNAP and any other kind of thing, 'cause that's revenue for us to be able to continue the service. So bring it, please. So it's a good time. In fact, one of the markets is here on Fridays at our office, and we've decided to make an outdoor lounge so that people can have a, what we call it, a hydration station.

**Colby:** Nice.

**Diane:** We're gonna find some local people that play food, music, cause we are here two hours a week and we wanna make the most out of this experience that we're having with our market, and this is a mixed use. So there's people that come out that live here. It's a, it's a good experience.

**Colby:** Yeah, if you're gonna be there, we might as well make the best of it, right?

**Diane:** We do.

**Colby:** Now, your most recent initiative is building the Village Community Food Hub in Mount Hope. And this is a multi-use facility that will encompass production, distribution, and community engagement all in one place by featuring a good food public market, a commercial kitchen for classes, promoting healthy food vendors and community gathering space, and a community garden.

Tell us more about this. I'm really interested to hear what this dream is and also why having a one-stop shop for production, distribution, and community food engagement is so important.

**Diane:** So, I think we agree that food is essential. You have to have it. So any way that we can cook it, prepare it.

**Colby:** Mm-hmm.

**Diane:** Celebrate it, recycle it. We wanna have a celebration and create some energy around the consumption and access to healthy food. We are in the middle of a capital



campaign now, so that we wanna build this structure right and we want community engagement every step of the way, community is involved telling us what products we should have, what amenities they wanna see, what artwork they would like to see. It's way out of our comfort zone, but we had an opportunity and we're taking that opportunity as far as it'll go.

The land was formerly public land. And because we bought the land, we are making the most out of it.

**Colby:** That sounds awesome.

**Diane:** I'm learning a lot about the financial world. I'm learning a lot about, uh, business, that I'm not a business person, but clearly we are moving into a different realm, we're having wonderful partnerships when we do that.

**Colby:** Mm-hmm.

**Diane:** People are stepping up and helping. We say it's a journey of minor miracles, and it's only minor 'cause it's not the whole world, but for our world, we think we could really make a transformative change with this investment in this space.

**Colby:** Yeah, sometimes just putting down roots and serving the people that are closest to you is gonna make the biggest impact.

Now, this sounds really cool, and I'm really excited that this is all coming together. Can you tell us what does a trauma-informed approach mean to you, and how is that approach getting integrated into this vision and into this Hub?

**Diane:** So, I'm gonna say, dignity affirming, life-affirming practices, meeting people where they are, making no assumptions.

Talk to people. Probably more high touch than high tech. I'm not really a tech kind of person, but showing that you care in a demonstrative kind of way, so that it's worthy of people going on the journey with you. We're all gonna benefit at the end. We have shared experiences and we wanna continue to have them, but better experiences and more collective, intentional kinds of circumstances, then things happen to us, and then we rally to solve the problem.



We have seen things that have happened when you're not prepared. So we're trying to stay prepared, and in order to do that, we need to have some permanent structures in our arsenal and this Village, that's one of them.

**Colby:** Yeah.

**Diane:** Because people always say, do you wanna scale up? I'm not real sure about that. I want to get deeper. Because the problem took a long time to get here. So it's not something we could just skim over, it's gonna take more time. Beause we're asking people to change your behaviors, change your relationship towards food, make some healthy options, not 'cause somebody told you to, because you know it's the best thing to do.

**Colby:** Yeah, the term trauma informed is a newer one, but the ideas and the principles behind it, all of the terms you mentioned and all of the ways in which you enact it, have been around for so long. And the ways that you're bringing it into this vision and this dream for the Hub is pretty awesome.

**Diane:** Thank you.

**Carlos:** I like the minor miracles comment, Diane, because they do add up and they make a huge difference.

**Diane:** My dad raised food, so I think he would be proud of the work we're doing. He passed in 2012, so he never saw the Mount Hope Community Garden. I was trying to prep and get ready, so thank you. We're trying to do a good job here for a lot of reasons, and some of it has to do with legacies of people that came before us. We've had board members that put in, and put their time in. They're no longer here, but we raise their names every time we go out and do community work, because they was somebody in our communities. And so as long as I'm here, they're here at this table.

**Colby:** Mm-hmm. That's, like, the best way, I think, to keep people's memory going, is keep pushing for the things that they loved and keeping their names out there. Absolutely.

**Carlos:** And I keep reminding myself that this particular type of community work takes trust, time, and consistency. So sometimes we're only planting seeds, and there are other folks who planted the seeds. So we're literally helping those seeds grow.

**Colby:** Mm-hmm.



**Carlos:** And hopefully someone else will eventually help our seeds grow, right? So it's a collaborative effort. So speaking about collaborate efforts, I would like to share to our listeners about the great podcast from Project New Village, Project Good Food, which talks with organizations and organizers in food access and sovereignty spaces. So please tell us a little bit more about Project Good Food and what kind of things you explore on that show.

**Diane:** It's one of our newest initiatives and it came because there are people a lot younger than me on our team that says this is the way to go. So they won. And, and I think we, uh, just taped our ninth session. And this last session had to do with where we find ourselves in 2025 with the shift from the federal government, how does that mean that we have to shift? And we engaged our community members to talk about that.

Other topics have included food sovereignty, social determinants of health, so these kinds of topics. We were one of the workshops presented in October at the San Diego Food System Alliance. Our topic there was the Good Food District and how people could be involved and support. It was our first time we did it with our live audience, uh, and it went over really well.

We have wonderful people on our board and for most of the podcasts, we've had a board member as one of the speakers because they bring a level of expertise.

**Carlos:** We will be able to embed that podcast in our show notes. And I had a chance to visit you last week and take a look at your garden, we'll also include those photographs in our show notes. You mentioned you're close to that first year anniversary, so congrats on that, and I know that it's a lot of work getting to that milestone, so congratulations.

**Diane:** Thank you.

**Colby:** Now I wanna know, you mentioned that there's a lot of micro farms and backyard farmers, and I hear that you are a backyard farmer. So what do you like to grow?

**Diane:** So, in my backyard, they would call it, half of it, like a food forest. My property goes up an incline, so there's trees, all kinds of fruit trees there, and non-food trees, shade trees.

Then when you come to the bottom, I have these wicker beds, and this is where I get to grow different vegetables. I've grown tomatoes and I've grown peppers. I've grown squash. And my favorite tree, I think, is the fig tree. I think artistically, it just looks



different, and you always know when it's ready because at the same time, the junebugs come out. I'm cool with junebugs now, they make a lot of noise close up in your ear and they like getting in your hair. They're beautiful green things, and when you're outside, you're in their space. So I like, I experiment with, I don't even know the name of all of the trees in my backyard.

That's gonna be a journey. So when they start producing fruit, I'm gonna sample and take pictures and ask people, what is this? I've had figs, gooseberries. Passion fruit? I saw an apple, uh, one apple.

**Colby:** One, the lone apple.

**Diane:** Banana trees. I have a banana circle that they put. Uh, so I'm waiting to see what that does.

**Colby:** Oh, only, only Carlos and Diane can see my face. But I am like, oh, that sounds so cool. Like, also just the patience, like, I love what you're talking about of, like, you're gonna put in the work, you're gonna cultivate these trees and when they're ready to give back to you, you're ready to receive it. And that'll happen when it's meant to happen.

**Diane:** That's right.

**Colby:** But passionfruits, oh man. That's like my dream. We talked to someone back in Season One who told me all about passionfruits and passionfruit flowers, oh man, those flowers are crazy. They look like some extra terrestrial something or another.

Mm-hmm. And I'm trying to concoct a plan to grow my own in my backyard here soon.

**Diane:** Yeah, I'm lucky, it, I can just go in the backyard and it's like a whole nother place. I have a whole different relationship with lizards now. I just like watching 'em.

**Colby:** Oh yeah.

**Diane:** Uh, I don't know. Lizards, butterflies. Just being outside

**Colby:** And like, how calming is that? It's your own, you know, private property, but there's so much happening on it besides you, just nature doing nature. Like that's, what a gift.



**Diane:** Yeah.

**Carlos:** Coexisting. That's it. Coexisting.

**Diane:** That's it.

**Colby:** Absolutely. So now for one of my favorite questions that we love to ask everybody who comes on our show, Diane, we wanna know, what do you stock your pantry with, literally or figuratively?

**Diane:** I have a lot of beans and peas. Dry beans, canned beans and peas.

**Colby:** Yeah, I love having beans in my pantry. Like, worst case scenario, I could always just eat a can of beans for dinner. Yep. I'd be pretty happy.

**Diane:** A soup is an easy thing to put together, right?

**Colby:** Definitely.

**Diane:** Yeah.

**Carlos:** And great source of nutrition. Completely agree. So lastly, how can our listeners get in touch and learn more about your great work, Diane?

**Diane:** So I know our website is [projectnewvillage.org](http://projectnewvillage.org) and everything we've talked about is probably on that website. We have a a wonderful team member that keeps that together.

**Colby:** Yep. And I'll add to that, that I got to listen to Project Good Food, the amazing podcast. I listened on Spotify. I think it's on Apple Podcasts. I know it's on your website too. So, we'll have links to their website and Project Good Food in our show notes.

Well, Diane, it has been an absolute pleasure chatting with you today. Just the light you brought to this conversation, the laughs, the jokes, just amazing energy. It has truly, truly been an honor to host you on our show. And just get to have a piece of your time. We are really appreciative.

**Carlos:** We sure are.





**Diane:** Thank you.

Thank you both.

**Colby:** Listeners, we also wanna thank you for hanging with us today. If you wanna learn more about Project New Village, their website is [projectnewvillage.org](http://projectnewvillage.org) and that will be in our show notes along with the links to the Project Good Food Podcast, which you can listen to on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and wherever you get your podcasts.

We look forward to seeing you next time on Stocking the Pantry.

**Carlos:** Thanks for joining us on Stocking the Pantry. I'm Carlos Alessandrini.

**Colby:** And I'm Colby D'Onofrio, and we are your hosts. Today we're talking with Diane Moss, managing director at Project New Village in San Diego. Project New Village aims to improve fresh food access in southeastern San Diego to strengthen the health of individuals, neighborhoods, and communities.

They have a wealth of really exciting initiatives, from a mobile farmer's market, to a community garden, to an upcoming physical food and resource hub.

**Carlos:** Today we'll be talking with Diane about everything Project New Village, how they integrate a trauma-informed approach to their initiatives, and their historic, current, and future impact on an area called the Good Food District.

**Colby:** Now, Diane has more than 30 years of experience managing community rooted organizations in southeastern San Diego. She was selected as the 2019 Woman of the Year for the 79th State Assembly District and awarded the 2019 Trailblazer Award by the San Diego Voice and Viewpoint. So you can understand that we are really excited to have Diane on the show.

Diane, can you tell us about your background and the history behind how you found yourself as the managing director of Project New Village?

**Diane:** Well, I came to San Diego in the seventies as a student at UCSD. Upon graduating with this urban and rural studies degree, I moved to southeastern San Diego.

I shortly bought a home, got married, so this is where I live, and I work for nonprofits. I've done that almost my entire life. And then started approaching the work around food



justice around 2008 and this organization, Project New Village, then became a nonprofit organization.

**Carlos:** Thank you for that intro and great work, Diane. Now you talk about the Good Food District, which is a term you and your team coined about southeastern San Diego, which historically has not had access to healthy foods and other resources that communities need to thrive. The Good Food District is essentially a rebranding of an area in San Diego where you create your community gardens.

Can you tell us about the Good Food District and how the community has benefitted from this project?

**Diane:** Yes, and I'm glad you used the term rebranding. Because back in the day, this was a rich agricultural place, right? Lots of farms. Where Morse High School is, or Encanto Rec Center, used to be where farms were, and grew food for the people who ate here.

Since then, with the disinvestment or lack of investment in the area, we don't have what we need. What this project aims to do is involve the people who live here to work with other interested partners to make it a better place to access food, right? We grow our own food in our gardens.

We have a network of backyard growers that are contributing to our Mobile Farmer's Market. We're excited to say about 25% of the things we sell on our Mobile Farmer's Market are grown right here in our neighborhood from people who live here who grow food, and the point is we want good food, fresh food, and fairly priced food.

All of our initiatives say that we have to pay attention to not only the consumer of the food, but since we pay the people for the food they give us, we have to give them a fair price. So equity is at least a two-sided coin here.

**Carlos:** I agree with that, Diane. Now, what goals do you have for the Good Food District in the future?

**Diane:** In the future, we have big dreams. Our original garden in Mount Hope, we bought that property back in 2022, it was a major process to do that. We started off as a really small, grassroots organization. We're growing, and we want to take that property and make what we're calling The Village.



The Village would be a food hub that houses a grocery store, a place where food entrepreneurs could sell their food, a community kitchen, commercial kitchen, a garden space, and an upstairs where we're deciding what that would be. Looks like we're leaning toward workforce development slash resiliency center.

It would be a needed permanent asset in the community that's not going away, because the community is building it. This is a community led effort. So I'm working with my neighbors, and I live less than two miles from where I work. This is a project of love, if you will, with our neighborhood members.

**Colby:** Mmm, that sounds amazing. Yeah, I'd be super excited for that and I bet you all are too. Now Project New Village uses a social determinant of health model, which views food equity and self-determination as key factors for achieving better health. Can you tell us a bit more about this model and how it integrates a holistic trauma-informed approach to your work?

**Diane:** So social determinants of health, to me, are anything that's non-medical factors that contribute to your wellbeing. So clearly you need to have access to good food. If you got a backyard, you should be growing something not only for you, but for others. So the social determinants of health looks at those factors that are here: do we have green spaces where we can have fresh air, fresh kind of outdoor activities? Do we have access to food? How's the housing here? Is it safe to live here? All of those factors that determine your state of wellbeing.

Our garden is not just a place

where food grows. We're starting to see that it has a healing kind of effect. People tend to stay around longer, even when the work is done, and we are measuring happiness. How many people are just smiling at one another? It's just a good place to be. There are these, what we call collateral benefits, from being in our, right, from being in our gardens.

I have no use for collateral damage, ever. Yeah. But collateral benefit. Where you just show up, and because you do that, something good happens. We are tracking the do-gooders. We really are. People who give up their time to not only help themselves and for self-care, but for the neighbors and the people who live in our neighborhood. It's catching on.

**Colby:** I love that, because for so long we were all looking at the numbers around health and the test results around health. But what we're really finding, and I think a trauma-informed approach and the resilience aspect of it is showing us, is that all these



things that are maybe harder to track by the numbers and by the tests, are so important. So all those collateral benefits, the smiles, the connection between community members, finding places that we can all grow together, as we maybe grow a garden to have just exponential benefits.

**Diane:** Yeah. You know, next on our agenda is to try to open up a community garden in a public park.

**Colby:** Oh yeah.

**Diane:** It's a lot of red tape. It's a lot of hurdles to jump through. But getting the community input and to see what their concerns are. You can't just build a garden, you have to build the infrastructure to support a garden.

But the level of enthusiasm, they're hanging out in their park and we are interrupting their time saying, what about a garden? And doing surveys. But people are participating, and it's a good feeling. There's some momentum here, right?

**Colby:** Yeah. Just 'cause it's hard doesn't mean it's not worth doing,

**Diane:** And we have fun every day. Our work is fun. I mean, we laugh most of the time.

**Carlos:** On that note, I'll, I will say that it's unfortunate for listeners to miss how much you're smiling and glowing, Diane, while you're going about this, because it truly is exciting and I can genuinely see how it's something that you really enjoy. So kudos to you.

**Diane:** Thank you.

**Carlos:** Project New Village works towards its goal of improving fresh food access in southeastern San Diego primarily through urban farming. For those who are not familiar with this particular term, could you define that a little bit more? And why is farming, that's typically associated with rural communities, also important in these denser areas as southeastern San Diego?

**Diane:** Yeah, I think one of the main differences we would see is space. The land costs a lot of money here in southern California, right? And we have smaller spaces that we're dealing with. We might also be dealing with more pollution, or more cleanup aspects in terms of what we have to do here. And then the cost of water, or putting the infrastructure in to have a garden.



These are some of the things that we are paying attention to. But they're cropping up. Church parking lots, abandoned spaces, and in people's yards, we are growing food. We are looking at pest control and all kinds of things that take place in a urban setting, but the main difference is probably smaller space. And you're in a bubble. Everybody sees what you do.

**Carlos:** Yes indeed. Now, we've been talking about this great model, social determinant, and me personally, I've done my share of community outreach. However, sometimes it's hard to be able to share and pinpoint to our listeners and just sometimes even other colleagues, the amount of time this requires.

So I'm wondering if you could help us better visualize the amount of effort and time that it requires to achieve the implementation of this model and the great work you've done.

**Diane:** Well, it hasn't happened overnight. Like I said, we became familiar with the term food justice back in 2008, and it was compelling.

Some folks came down here from Sacramento and started talking about the scarcity of food in our area. I saw no one in the room from my neighborhood. And so I thought this was compelling enough to come back and start asking questions. What is our relationship with food? And I didn't find one person that was like, happy; everyone then started saying, we want our own garden.

They had memories of farmer's markets back in the day. So we literally thought, that's something we should do here with the Good Food District, is to bring back those two elements. But to do that, there's a whole other body of work. You know, having access to food or trying to do placemaking, when we need housing, we need other things that compete for resources.

It's a lot of time involved knowing who the other service providers are, and finding out where your niche is, that you're definitely one of the priorities in your political people's agenda and other folks, so that you even are on the table or on the agenda as an option.

There's some folks that don't look at urban agriculture as nicely as we do. It reminds them of another time when there was a power struggle, and it wasn't a good situation, I'm gonna say, for some communities of color. So they're hesitant to want to put their hands in the dirt. They just want the convenience of having the food.

But the problem with that is, you're kind of not in control. You're not in control of what you get, when you get it, or how much. So a lot of work goes into producing the food,



distributing the food, and then advocating for places where you can do those kinds of activities. So, I don't know the number of hours, but we've been doing this for a couple decades now. Yeah.

**Colby:** That's a great point you make about, I guess I'm hesitant to say competing initiatives for other needs in the community, because they're all n eeds,

**Diane:** yeah.

**Colby:** of people in the community: housing, healthcare, good education. But we also know that food insecurity and lack of access to nourishment doesn't happen in a vacuum.

**Diane:** Yeah.

**Colby:** So it's hard when they're competing, because they're all necessary and they're all intertwined.

**Diane:** Sometimes it provides us with an opportunity to reimagine how we have access to food.

**Colby:** Mm-hmm.

**Diane:** If you build an apartment complex and there are residents, those residents eat food. So perhaps you want to think about some coexisting, maybe on your first level there's some place where you have access to food.

Maybe you build a space in what you're building where a garden could exist, and people could take a part of that. Looking at some of those solutions from multiple levels might mean that we can coexist in spaces. Because in fact, humans have more than one need.

**Colby:** Isn't that crazy? It's wild. What a crazy realization.

**Carlos:** Project New Village's Neighborhood Growers Collective is a community initiative that engages members with a passion for gardening and food to create a local collective of food growers who could eventually contribute produce to your People's Produce Mobile Farmer's Market. This seems like a great way to get the community involved in the foods they eat and cook. So what has been your experience working with members of the Collective? What gets people excited about community gardening?



**Diane:** Well, this project, we actually started in 2019. We won some international competition, which gave us the dollars to start this Collective. What I find is, growers of food or gardeners, are some of the most generous people, hardworking people, and they tend to have a lot of patience, right? Because you can't really will a plant into being, it has a process, right?

So, but what we find is some people come because it's a tradition in their family and they wanna carry on that tradition. A lot of curiosity of how things taste. They wanna mix and match. There's some science involved here. There are people that come because they like this concept as food as medicine.

These are people that are always bringing samples to the meeting. We get different kinds of teas and tinctures 'cause they're doing things, and they wanna experiment with, with others. That's some of the joy of coming to a meeting also. People who cook food, they want to grow the food that they cook. They like cooking and serving for others.

So these are people who inspire potlucks. I can say, I'm an African American woman born here in Southern California. I eat a certain way, but culturally I've been exposed to other ways to eat. Let me just say, I grew up with collard greens. How my family fixed collard greens is you put it in a pot, you boil it with meat, and then you eat it, and the, and season it, right? And it's very good. But then someone says, why don't you just stir fry it? She was a Vietnamese gardener in the garden. I tried it, and that was some years ago, and that's the way I eat collard greens now. I stir fry them with other vegetables.

And I learned that because I'm hanging out with someone that's gardening at the Mount Hope Community Garden. A good thing that comes out of the cultural exchanges.

We all have to eat. Food is a nexus, if you will.

**Carlos:** I love that collaborative effort that you mentioned, Diane, because it also adds another component, the different knowledge that individuals have, right?

So you could share some anecdotes about members who are beginning as gardeners and who therefore are able to pair with other seasoned green thumbs and are able to make this hobby more impactful in the community.

**Diane:** Well, I know that people have exchanged addresses so they can go and see each other's growing. I'm gonna say like, Christina. Christina lives in Oak Park area, and I think she gardens in her front yard, and she's really big on the Three Sisters, right? She's got the corn and the peas and the beans, but she is really big on these different



kinds of earth. And she's of Latina background, so she brings all kinds of native plants, native herbs, and she makes teas.

You think my face lights up? You should see her. She's so expressive. She tells you what to do. She packages things very well, labels things very well so that you can go home and try it, and then you know there's gonna be a follow-up discussion next time you see her, who tried what. And it's also good conscious raising, 'cause people have different techniques for what they do and products that they use. And they can share and talk about their experiences.

**Carlos:** I love that synergy, being able to feed from each other, getting feedback, continuing to grow together. Love that, Diane.

**Diane:** Thank you.

**Colby:** Now, how do you ensure that there is community voice in the production and distribution of the food you grow?

You know, you mentioned that previously folks were perhaps hesitant around urban agriculture and bringing agriculture back to the Good Food District. But as you pointed out, when we don't have a say in what we're growing, we don't have a lot of control over what we're eating. So how do we bring that voice into the production and distribution of that food? And what's the community's response been to this heightened level of say and engagement in community gardening?

**Diane:** So our work, we say it's a placemaking project. So we have a geographical area with zip codes and census tracts that tell us where we wanna see impact, where we wanna get input from.

We hold a lot of community meetings. Virtual, in-house, we throw some of the best parties and socials where people come. We can tell folks, we are having a Mardi Gras event. You need to show up. And we're playing dominoes. So come!

We engage folks, we don't make any decisions that we don't involve residents. And I can say that 'cause I'm a resident and I talk to my neighbors and we wanna talk to various folks in our neighborhoods.

So with placemaking, it's important that you know the area and we prioritize people who've lived here the longest.





That's not that we don't work with others, but we clearly wanna center the voice and concerns of the people who live here. We try to stay right within our southeastern San Diego, our Good Food District borders, and I should say, our Good Food District is not just southeastern San Diego, but we look at our food geography and those communities to the south. That would be National City, Lemon Grove, and then into Barrio Logan, we share grocery stores.

So when a grocery store goes down, not only impacts Southeastern San Diego, but National City. So when we started looking at putting a village project together, putting a place where you can get healthier food, we looked at the entire area that would be impacted by the stores that are here, and that's how we decide what we're gonna do, where we're gonna do it.

**Colby:** Has there been any pushback or resistance from people providing their voices in the community?

**Diane:** No, I think people wanna be heard, and particularly now when we have some chaos, if you will, from our perspective. And there's more people that are talking that are saying, how can we work together better?

**Colby:** Hmm.

**Diane:** What we are trying to do is put a system in place that we can sustain. So very little of what we do is for free.

We wanna make a change to the mindsets, particularly outside folks saying, why don't you give it away? That means I'm always dependent on the person who gave it to me, versus us doing it ourselves and it being here when we need it. And then we can say what it is that we want and be culturally appropriate, if you will, with the selections that we make for this community.

**Colby:** Yeah, absolutely. With decisions comes power.

**Diane:** Yes.

**Carlos:** That was a great answer, Diane. Very assertive, and I can see that assertiveness in the entire project. Going back to the Project New Village Mobile Farmer's Market, it's a mobile farmer's market that brings healthy local produce directly to the local neighborhoods.



Tell us a little bit more, though, about this mobile farmer's market idea.

**Diane:** We ran a farmer's market, traditional farmer's market, for a few years in our neighborhood. It really didn't catch what we thought would be good momentum.

It's a working class community, or we had the impact of poverty, and some market being open two or three hours a week, a lot of people were gonna miss that. So. We have a mobile farmer's market that can go someplace five, six days a week. We usually do two hour markets are usually two hours. The one in Lemon Grove is a bigger market, so we stay there about four hours, and it's being received real well.

it wasn't the first thing that was on our agenda to do. In fact, it wasn't even on our agenda, it was just before COVID. Some guy called us from Canada and says, California is the place to have a mobile farmer's market. So I ignored him for a long time. I didn't know him, and it's just like scam mail to me. But then he started talking about a grant that was available in California. We looked at the grant and said, this is not difficult. We can do this. So we went for the grant. We got the grant in 2022. September 2022 is when we started this mobile farmer's market. And nobody, this guy's in Canada, nobody was coming over across the border during COVID. So we found someone up in North County, in Vista. And they designed a truck for us. We brought the truck here.

We got local artists to help us paint the truck, put a message on the truck. So I think that resonated with the folks here, and we told everybody our priority is southeastern San Diego. We're not going any place else. We are first. We are part of the home team.

Then we hired the best manager ever. So Rodney is our manager. He retired from the school district. He was everybody's coach on sports teams. He's just the best, and he's a master gardener. He has farming in his background, and he is just lovely. He's a deacon of his church. Just a pillow, this guy. And then recently, we hired his son, so that's the best team ever that's out on the street at least three, four days a week. This is who you deal with on the phone. They're the best. Trauma informed. You couldn't ask for a better person to pick up the phone and say, hello, you found your spot, right?

**Colby:** Yeah.

**Diane:** And then he is always talking to us about the integrity of the fruit, the integrity of the product, how it looks, how it gets here. So he is a good steward and a good representative.



When we started the market, we had some subsidies that were provided by a grant. So we've set aside so much money per year, where those who need that assistance, they can get that.

They just fill out a survey, talk about their experiences, and then we make that available to them. It's a \$10 coupon, and you can use it every time you come to the farmer's market. And we get to say that there's no shame in the game. You need to use your SNAP and any other kind of thing, 'cause that's revenue for us to be able to continue the service. So bring it, please. So it's a good time. In fact, one of the markets is here on Fridays at our office, and we've decided to make an outdoor lounge so that people can have a, what we call it, a hydration station.

**Colby:** Nice.

**Diane:** We're gonna find some local people that play food, music, cause we are here two hours a week and we wanna make the most out of this experience that we're having with our market, and this is a mixed use. So there's people that come out that live here. It's a, it's a good experience.

**Colby:** Yeah, if you're gonna be there, we might as well make the best of it, right?

**Diane:** We do.

**Colby:** Now, your most recent initiative is building the Village Community Food Hub in Mount Hope. And this is a multi-use facility that will encompass production, distribution, and community engagement all in one place by featuring a good food public market, a commercial kitchen for classes, promoting healthy food vendors and community gathering space, and a community garden.

Tell us more about this. I'm really interested to hear what this dream is and also why having a one-stop shop for production, distribution, and community food engagement is so important.

**Diane:** So, I think we agree that food is essential. You have to have it. So any way that we can cook it, prepare it.

**Colby:** Mm-hmm.

**Diane:** Celebrate it, recycle it. We wanna have a celebration and create some energy around the consumption and access to healthy food. We are in the middle of a capital



campaign now, so that we wanna build this structure right and we want community engagement every step of the way, community is involved telling us what products we should have, what amenities they wanna see, what artwork they would like to see. It's way out of our comfort zone, but we had an opportunity and we're taking that opportunity as far as it'll go.

The land was formerly public land. And because we bought the land, we are making the most out of it.

**Colby:** That sounds awesome.

**Diane:** I'm learning a lot about the financial world. I'm learning a lot about, uh, business, that I'm not a business person, but clearly we are moving into a different realm, we're having wonderful partnerships when we do that.

**Colby:** Mm-hmm.

**Diane:** People are stepping up and helping. We say it's a journey of minor miracles, and it's only minor 'cause it's not the whole world, but for our world, we think we could really make a transformative change with this investment in this space.

**Colby:** Yeah, sometimes just putting down roots and serving the people that are closest to you is gonna make the biggest impact.

Now, this sounds really cool, and I'm really excited that this is all coming together. Can you tell us what does a trauma-informed approach mean to you, and how is that approach getting integrated into this vision and into this Hub?

**Diane:** So, I'm gonna say, dignity affirming, life-affirming practices, meeting people where they are, making no assumptions.

Talk to people. Probably more high touch than high tech. I'm not really a tech kind of person, but showing that you care in a demonstrative kind of way, so that it's worthy of people going on the journey with you. We're all gonna benefit at the end. We have shared experiences and we wanna continue to have them, but better experiences and more collective, intentional kinds of circumstances, then things happen to us, and then we rally to solve the problem.



We have seen things that have happened when you're not prepared. So we're trying to stay prepared, and in order to do that, we need to have some permanent structures in our arsenal and this Village, that's one of them.

**Colby:** Yeah.

**Diane:** Because people always say, do you wanna scale up? I'm not real sure about that. I want to get deeper. Because the problem took a long time to get here. So it's not something we could just skim over, it's gonna take more time. Beause we're asking people to change your behaviors, change your relationship towards food, make some healthy options, not 'cause somebody told you to, because you know it's the best thing to do.

**Colby:** Yeah, the term trauma informed is a newer one, but the ideas and the principles behind it, all of the terms you mentioned and all of the ways in which you enact it, have been around for so long. And the ways that you're bringing it into this vision and this dream for the Hub is pretty awesome.

**Diane:** Thank you.

**Carlos:** I like the minor miracles comment, Diane, because they do add up and they make a huge difference.

**Diane:** My dad raised food, so I think he would be proud of the work we're doing. He passed in 2012, so he never saw the Mount Hope Community Garden. I was trying to prep and get ready, so thank you. We're trying to do a good job here for a lot of reasons, and some of it has to do with legacies of people that came before us. We've had board members that put in, and put their time in. They're no longer here, but we raise their names every time we go out and do community work, because they was somebody in our communities. And so as long as I'm here, they're here at this table.

**Colby:** Mm-hmm. That's, like, the best way, I think, to keep people's memory going, is keep pushing for the things that they loved and keeping their names out there. Absolutely.

**Carlos:** And I keep reminding myself that this particular type of community work takes trust, time, and consistency. So sometimes we're only planting seeds, and there are other folks who planted the seeds. So we're literally helping those seeds grow.

**Colby:** Mm-hmm.



**Carlos:** And hopefully someone else will eventually help our seeds grow, right? So it's a collaborative effort. So speaking about collaborate efforts, I would like to share to our listeners about the great podcast from Project New Village, Project Good Food, which talks with organizations and organizers in food access and sovereignty spaces. So please tell us a little bit more about Project Good Food and what kind of things you explore on that show.

**Diane:** It's one of our newest initiatives and it came because there are people a lot younger than me on our team that says this is the way to go. So they won. And, and I think we, uh, just taped our ninth session. And this last session had to do with where we find ourselves in 2025 with the shift from the federal government, how does that mean that we have to shift? And we engaged our community members to talk about that.

Other topics have included food sovereignty, social determinants of health, so these kinds of topics. We were one of the workshops presented in October at the San Diego Food System Alliance. Our topic there was the Good Food District and how people could be involved and support. It was our first time we did it with our live audience, uh, and it went over really well.

We have wonderful people on our board and for most of the podcasts, we've had a board member as one of the speakers because they bring a level of expertise.

**Carlos:** We will be able to embed that podcast in our show notes. And I had a chance to visit you last week and take a look at your garden, we'll also include those photographs in our show notes. You mentioned you're close to that first year anniversary, so congrats on that, and I know that it's a lot of work getting to that milestone, so congratulations.

**Diane:** Thank you.

**Colby:** Now I wanna know, you mentioned that there's a lot of micro farms and backyard farmers, and I hear that you are a backyard farmer. So what do you like to grow?

**Diane:** So, in my backyard, they would call it, half of it, like a food forest. My property goes up an incline, so there's trees, all kinds of fruit trees there, and non-food trees, shade trees.

Then when you come to the bottom, I have these wicker beds, and this is where I get to grow different vegetables. I've grown tomatoes and I've grown peppers. I've grown squash. And my favorite tree, I think, is the fig tree. I think artistically, it just looks



different, and you always know when it's ready because at the same time, the junebugs come out. I'm cool with junebugs now, they make a lot of noise close up in your ear and they like getting in your hair. They're beautiful green things, and when you're outside, you're in their space. So I like, I experiment with, I don't even know the name of all of the trees in my backyard.

That's gonna be a journey. So when they start producing fruit, I'm gonna sample and take pictures and ask people, what is this? I've had figs, gooseberries. Passion fruit? I saw an apple, uh, one apple.

**Colby:** One, the lone apple.

**Diane:** Banana trees. I have a banana circle that they put. Uh, so I'm waiting to see what that does.

**Colby:** Oh, only, only Carlos and Diane can see my face. But I am like, oh, that sounds so cool. Like, also just the patience, like, I love what you're talking about of, like, you're gonna put in the work, you're gonna cultivate these trees and when they're ready to give back to you, you're ready to receive it. And that'll happen when it's meant to happen.

**Diane:** That's right.

**Colby:** But passionfruits, oh man. That's like my dream. We talked to someone back in Season One who told me all about passionfruits and passionfruit flowers, oh man, those flowers are crazy. They look like some extra terrestrial something or another.

Mm-hmm. And I'm trying to concoct a plan to grow my own in my backyard here soon.

**Diane:** Yeah, I'm lucky, it, I can just go in the backyard and it's like a whole nother place. I have a whole different relationship with lizards now. I just like watching 'em.

**Colby:** Oh yeah.

**Diane:** Uh, I don't know. Lizards, butterflies. Just being outside

**Colby:** And like, how calming is that? It's your own, you know, private property, but there's so much happening on it besides you, just nature doing nature. Like that's, what a gift.



**Diane:** Yeah.

**Carlos:** Coexisting. That's it. Coexisting.

**Diane:** That's it.

**Colby:** Absolutely. So now for one of my favorite questions that we love to ask everybody who comes on our show, Diane, we wanna know, what do you stock your pantry with, literally or figuratively?

**Diane:** I have a lot of beans and peas. Dry beans, canned beans and peas.

**Colby:** Yeah, I love having beans in my pantry. Like, worst case scenario, I could always just eat a can of beans for dinner. Yep. I'd be pretty happy.

**Diane:** A soup is an easy thing to put together, right?

**Colby:** Definitely.

**Diane:** Yeah.

**Carlos:** And great source of nutrition. Completely agree. So lastly, how can our listeners get in touch and learn more about your great work, Diane?

**Diane:** So I know our website is [projectnewvillage.org](http://projectnewvillage.org) and everything we've talked about is probably on that website. We have a a wonderful team member that keeps that together.

**Colby:** Yep. And I'll add to that, that I got to listen to Project Good Food, the amazing podcast. I listened on Spotify. I think it's on Apple Podcasts. I know it's on your website too. So, we'll have links to their website and Project Good Food in our show notes.

Well, Diane, it has been an absolute pleasure chatting with you today. Just the light you brought to this conversation, the laughs, the jokes, just amazing energy. It has truly, truly been an honor to host you on our show. And just get to have a piece of your time. We are really appreciative.

**Carlos:** We sure are.





**Diane:** Thank you. Thank you both.

**Colby:** Listeners, we also wanna thank you for hanging with us today. If you wanna learn more about Project New Village, their website is [projectnewvillage.org](http://projectnewvillage.org), and that will be in our show notes, along with the links to the Project Good Food Podcast, which you can listen to on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and wherever you get your podcasts.

We look forward to seeing you next time on Stocking the Pantry.

**Carlos:** Thank you so much for hanging with us. Find us online at [leahspantry.org](http://leahspantry.org), on Instagram @leahspantryorg, or email us at [podcast@leahspantry.org](mailto:podcast@leahspantry.org).

**Tee:** This podcast is a product of Leah's Pantry made possible by funding from the United States Department of Agriculture and their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**Colby:** Visit [calfreshhealthyliving.org](http://calfreshhealthyliving.org) to learn tips on how to make the healthy choice, the easy choice. Stocking the Pantry is hosted by me, Colby D'Onofrio,

**Tee:** Tanesha Atwell,

**Carlos:** And me, Carlos Alessandrini.

**Tee:** The show is produced by Emma Lehman. Stocking the Pantry invites guests with a wide variety of opinions and perspectives. Guest opinions are their own and do not represent the views of Leah's Pantry.

**Colby:** [laughs] Beans...