

TO THE COMMUNITY



JULY 2022 – JUNE 2023

DowntownSLO.com (805) 541-0286 ReachUs@DowntownSLO.com Downtown SLO 1135 Chorro Street San Luis Obispo CA 93401

A message from your Downtown SLO CEO, Bettina Swigger



Five years ago, when I stepped into this leadership position, downtown was in the midst of major construction, with two hotels poised to open. It was a time of transition, and there were concerns about a shifting brick-and-mortar retail environment, the threat of online shopping to downtowns, and daily conversations about parking, safety, and homelessness.

Today, in 2023, downtown is in another time of transition, navigating a postpandemic reality, which has elevated conversations about homelessness, economic inequality, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Major construction is underway to create a new Parking Structure that will serve as the anchor for a Cultural Arts District that will bring new economic activity and civic pride. Private multi-use projects will house more downtown residents, and there are daily conversations about the viability of brick-and-mortar retail, homelessness, and parking. Through it all, downtown has been resilient and remained vital.

This report summarizes the work our Downtown SLO staff, board, committee members, and volunteers have engaged in over the last fiscal year to support our mission of fostering an economically vibrant downtown. Our organization is made up of the fee-paying businesses who operate within the boundaries of the Business Improvement Area, voluntary members, and our civic collaborators, including nonprofit organizations, residents, and visitors. We have a robust partnership with the City of San Luis Obispo, and we proudly advocate to the City on behalf of our membership and participate in the process and important work of shaping policy to ensure our downtown is positioned to be successful.

It has been my privilege and honor to steward this organization for a brief moment in its storied history. Thank you to the Downtown SLO team, and the community support from board members, businesses, and volunteers. San Luis Obispo will continue to experience more success and continued economic and cultural vitality in the decades to come.



The mission of Downtown SLO is to foster an economically vibrant downtown.

Our Values

We help people and business grow and thrive

We foster a feeling of belonging

We create community

We like to bring people together

We celebrate diversity

We practice optimism

We are resilient

We actively promote a walkable, bike-able, accessible community

We cultivate sustainability

We value the outdoors and respect our natural environment

We believe that a thriving economy depends on authentic connection



AUGUST 26th season of Concerts in the

Plaza concludes



OCTOBER

State of Downtown Annual Breakfast

Halloween Festivities at Farmers' Market



DECEMBER

46th Annual Holiday Parade

Musical Light Show lights up the Holiday Plaza

JULY

2022

Singersongwriters perform at Concerts in the Plaza





SEPTEMBER

Cal Poly Homecoming at Farmers' Market

Creeks to Coast Clean-Up Day

Concerts in the Plaza Volunteer Appreciation Party at Luna Red





Santa's House & Holiday Plaza open for the season

Decorate Downtown & Clean-Up Volunteer Day

Small Business Saturday

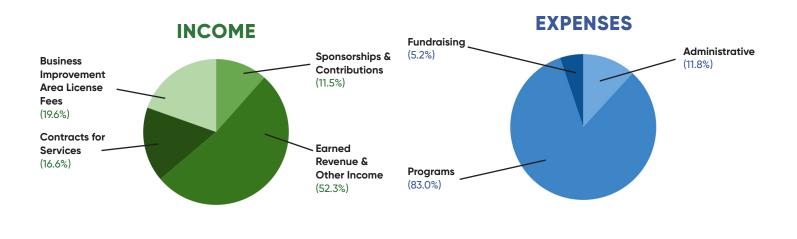
Veterans Outreach Night at Farmers' Market





Financial Summary

After several years of fiscal uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Downtown SLO ended the fiscal year on June 30, 2023 in the black.



INCOME

Sponsorships & Contributions Earned Revenue & Other Income	\$162,008 \$732,456
Contracts for Services	\$232,560
BIA License Fees	\$274,473
TOTAL	\$ 1,401,497

EXPENSES

Administrative	\$158,968
Programs	\$1,119,605
Fundraising	\$69,543
TOTAL	\$1,348,116

FEBRUARY

New Board of Directors is elected

2023

Over 100 band applications are reviewed for the 27th season of Concerts in the Plaza



APRIL

Bunny Trail at Farmers' Market

Donna Lewis begins term as Board President



JUNE

27th season of Concerts in the Plaza begins

JANUARY

Central Coast experiences unprecented storms and flooding





MARCH

Downtown SLO board retreat at Hotel SLO

Downtown SLO staff & board attend the West Coast Urban District Forum in San Jose



MAY

Sip 'n' Saunter returns

Law Enforcement Night at Farmers' Market

Public Works Night at Farmers' Market





Farmers' Market

DOWNT

San Luis Obispo's most popular community event

Every Thursday evening, between 5,000 and 10,000 locals, students, families, seniors, and visitors from around the world come together on Higuera Street to enjoy five blocks of produce, entertainment, BBQ, artisan goods, and more. With over 110 vendors every week and entertainment on every block, **the famous Downtown SLO Farmers' Market is a weekly street fair unlike any other.**



5-10k visitors every week from around the world

110+ vendors every week



Supporting Local Entrepreneurs

This year, we welcomed **over 80 new vendors** to the Market – from artisan makers to nonprofits to culinary artists, we are proud to be a catalyst for new local businesses.



Two Market vendors, Proof & Gather and The Dough Connection, **opened brick-andmortar storefronts in downtown SLO this year.**

Food Access Programs

Downtown SLO manages a **CalFresh/EBT program**, providing access to fresh, healthy food to eligible low-income individuals. Additionally, our **Market Match** grant allows us to double customers' buying power when they use their CalFresh/EBT benefits at our Market. As the only night market in San Luis Obispo County, we are able to provide access to fresh fruits and veggies to working families and students.

\$61,580 distributed in EBT/Market Match

17,746 Ibs of produce rescued by GleanSLO

2022–2023 Recognitions

"Top 10 California Experiences" and "101 Best California Experiences" – LA Times

"Best Community Event" and "Best Farmers' Market" —New Times

"Best Nighttime Activity" – Mustang News











In September 2022, we welcomed Laney Manning to our team through the statewide College Corps program, providing **450** hours of volunteer service with Downtown SLO over the course of the academic year.

Special Activations at the Farmers' Market

The Downtown SLO Farmers' Market welcomed more than 25 events and side-street activations, some hosted by partner organizations and others by Downtown SLO.



R.A.C.E. Matters Block Party* - September 23, 2022 Cal Poly Homecoming - September 29, 2022 Electrify Your Life Showcase - September 29, 2022 4-H Club Showcase - October 6, 2022 Fire Prevention Night - October 13, 2022 Halloween Festivities – October 27, 2022 Veterans Outreach Night* - November 10, 2022 Hanukkah Event – December 22, 2022 Farm City Nights – March 2, 2023 Bunny Trail – April 6, 2023 Cal Poly Open House - April 13, 2023 Shabang SLO Pop-Up – April 27, 2023 Cal Poly Egg Drop - May 11, 2023 Law Enforcement Night - May 18, 2023 Public Works Night - May 25, 2023 Pride Block Party* - June 29, 2023 Streets of Vintage - Third Thursday of Each Month

*Made possible by a generous grant from the City of SLO Human Relations Commission promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.



Community Outreach Events

Fire Prevention Night, Law Enforcement Night, and Public Works Night are all brought to you in partnership with the City of SLO, and provide an opportunity for the community to learn about and engage with public service programs.

Halloween Festivities

Higuera Street was filled with skeletons, princesses, and witches on the Thursday before Halloween. Festivities included the Trick-or-Treat Trail, a costume contest, and "Scary-oke!" Thank you to the 19 downtown businesses who donated prizes for our costume contest winners!

37 Trick-or-Treat Trail locations

Costume Contest entries 800+ Trick-or-Treat maps distributed







Bunny Trail

Free, family-friendly springtime fun! Countless adorable bunnies bounced around downtown, collecting candy from businesses and taking family photos with Downtown Bunny.

500+ Downtown Bunny Photos taken





26th Annual Concerts in the Plaza

JUNE 24 - AUGUST 26, 2022

The 26th season of Concerts in the Plaza, presented by Sunset Honda and in partnership with the City of SLO, brought in **record attendance and bar sales**. The 2022 summer series featured ten weeks of free, live music in Mission Plaza, and introduced two new bands alongside eight series favorites.



70+ 40 musicians hours of music



13,836 plastic cups saved from landfill





In a survey of attendees, 96% said that they **visited at least one downtown business** before or after the concert.





Spotlighting Singer-Songwriters

The 2022 season of Concerts in the Plaza marked the beginning of the **brand new Singer-Songwriter Showcase**, sponsored by The San Luis Obispo Collection. Before each band took the stage, a SLO county-based solo musician captivated the audience with original self-written songs.



27th Annual Concerts in the Plaza

BEGAN JUNE 23, 2023

New Faces

After reviewing **over 100 applications**, two new-to-the-series bands were selected to kick off the 27th season of Concerts in the Plaza. Ghost\Monster and Alex Lucero Band were the first performers, with openers Natalie Haskins and Ynana Rose. Bar sales totaled \$30,694 in the first two concerts!

In addition to new musicians, the series also welcomed two new beverage partners, a new food vendor, and new sponsorship levels in 2023.



Even More Music!

In March 2023, Downtown SLO announced the 27th Annual Concerts in the Plaza lineup and the **series' extension from ten to twelve weeks**.





We couldn't do it without our dedicated team of volunteers and sponsors!





Holiday Happenings

THEME: ROCK 'N' RETRO

46th Annual Holiday Parade

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2022

The 46th Annual *Rock 'n' Retro* Downtown SLO Holiday Parade was a magical evening of holiday cheer, a little bit of rain, and a lot of Elvis impersonators. Thank you to our title sponsor, American Riviera Bank, and to the City of SLO.

82 entries

8,000 attendees

30 volunteers



Lights, sights, and family fun in Mission Plaza!

The Holiday Plaza shined brighter than ever before, with a brand new **light tunnel**, new **photo opportunities**, and a new **musical light show**! Thank you to The San Luis Obispo Collection for sponsoring.

150 musical light shows

12 special

al days of fun ons

48









Santa's House

Ho ho ho! Santa flew in from the North Pole to his annual winter residency in Mission Plaza, bringing holiday magic to downtown San Luis Obispo. Thank you to American Riviera Bank for sponsoring Santa's House.









The official Holiday Plaza Lighting Ceremony took place on Friday, November 25, 2022.

Around Downtown

Mission Plaza wasn't the only place to discover holiday delight – **dozens of businesses decorated their storefronts** with twinkling lights and festive displays, the parking structures and government buildings were lit up with reds and greens, and the Search for Santa's Mouse scavenger hunt in partnership with the San Luis Obispo Children's Museum led families on a quest around downtown.





Small Business Saturday



700 free shopping totes distributed



California Conservation Corps and community volunteers decked downtown in wreaths and ribbons.

State of Downtown Annual Breakfast

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2022



2022 marked the return of the State of Downtown Annual Breakfast, an event that drew a crowd of 152 attendees to the Carrisa. The program featured a comprehensive overview of our achievements from the past year, presented by our board and staff. Guest speakers from the City of San Luis Obispo shared insights about upcoming new development projects and investments in downtown vitality. Thank you to our guest speakers from the City of SLO, Mayor Erica A. Stewart, City Manager Derek Johnson, and Directory of Community Development Michael Codron.









Singer-songwriter Nataly Lola set the perfect tone for the occasion.



Annual Breakfast attendees were prompted to write one opportunity and one challenge they saw for the future of downtown

Sip 'n' Saunter SUNDAY, MAY 7, 2023 **Cheers!**

After a three-year hiatus, Downtown SLO was proud to bring back Sip 'n' Saunter! Community members "sauntered" through the vibrant and unique shops of downtown SLO, while tasting some of the finest food and beverage the Central Coast has to offer. Thank you to our sponsors, Guaranteed Rate and The San Luis Obispo Collection!





attendees

787 \$30,500 gross ticket sales

participating businesses







Over 90% of attendees reported that they learned about a downtown shop they were not familiar with previously.



Over 90% of attendees reported that they planned to revisit a retailer, food, or beverage provider because of the event.

Clean & Safe

Downtown Ambassadors

Our Ambassadors work to ensure that the downtown community is safe, clean, and hospitable to visitors by removing graffiti, litter, and messes. Ambassadors are out on the streets **connecting our community** – welcoming tourists to the area, providing directions, recommending restaurants and shops, answering questions, maintaining relationships with local businesses, and giving resources to unhoused folks.

The Clean & Safe Program is supported in part by the City of SLO. Our Ambassadors completed Transitions Mental Health Association's Mental Health First Aid training to better serve community members who struggle with addiction and mental illness.

We are here to serve the downtown community! If you are a downtown business owner or shopkeeper, please contact our Ambassadors if you need assistance.

To make a gift to support the Ambassador program, visit DowntownSLO.com/Donate.





Ambassador Hotline: (805) 250-6467

1.715

pieces of gum

removed

CAPSLO Outreach

Downtown SLO partners with CAPSLO (Community Action Partnership SLO) to provide 8–15 hours of service by an Outreach Case Manager in the Downtown Business Improvement Area. CAPSLO specializes in providing services to individuals who are experiencing homelessness, and they operate 40 Prado Homeless Service Center.

CAPSLO Impact

2,580 hours spent downtown

988 individual contacts

588 bus tokens distributed

95 clients went to 40 Prado

14 family reunifications

749

repeat

contacts



Ambassador Impact

JULY 2022-JUNE 2023



1,114 times business info was given

to visitors



968 messes cleaned

948 stickers removed

1.994

miles walked



trees trimmed

unhoused

contact

interactions

Extra Bathrooms for Event Weekends

Four portable toilets were positioned throughout downtown for high-impact holiday weekends, including Halloween, Cal Poly Commencement, and St. Patrick's Day. Thank you to our Downtown Environment Committee for providing this service.

Clean-Up Days

Downtown SLO hosted two Clean-Up Days in the 2022–2023 fiscal year; one in November 2022 and one in March 2023 in partnership with Love SLO. A total of **32** volunteers gathered together to beautify our streets. Thank you to everybody who joined!

Additionally, a "how-to" guide for hosting downtown clean-up days was created for local organizations seeking a volunteer activity.

To sign up for updates on future volunteer opportunities, visit DowntownSLO.com/Subscribe.



Communication & Advocacy

Vacancy/Vibrancy Dashboard

Downtown SLO staff regularly audit and track the overall number of new businesses to ensure the data is accurate. Vacancy rate tracks street level storefronts.



Committees

PARKING & ACCESS

Members of the Parking & Access Committee meet every quarter to discuss downtown parking services, multimodal transportation, and access issues downtown. In 2022–2023, the committee successfully advocated for the creation of the **Park Local Pilot Program**, guaranteeing a free hour of parking in downtown structures to SLO County residents, which was implemented by City of SLO Parking Services in July 2023.

DOWNTOWN ENVIRONMENT

Downtown Environment Committee members come together to address ways to keep the downtown area **clean, safe, and attractive**. The group discusses topics such as beautification efforts, general cleanliness, major construction projects, nightlife, crime prevention, and homelessness. In 2022-2023, the committee provided extra portable toilets during high-impact party weekends downtown.

EVENTS & FUNDRAISING

The Events & Fundraising Committee evaluates and discusses events and placemaking activities. In 2022-2023, the committee **restructured** the sponsorship model for Downtown SLO's holiday activations, **relaunched** the Sip 'n' Saunter program, and **expanded sponsorships** for Concerts in the Plaza.

Interested in joining a committee or being part of the conversation? Send us an email at **ReachUs@DowntownSLO.com**.



Birdie Alarms

In partnership with the Student Community Liaison Committee, Downtown SLO gave away over **120 personal safety alarms** to downtown employees.



In December 2022, Downtown SLO contracted local artists Kat Thompkin and Alli Feigin to install art pieces in the vacant retail spaces at 876 and 868 Higuera.

Advocacy

Downtown SLO staff and board members meet weekly with City administrative leadership to discuss downtown issues, programs, and services. In 2022-2023, Downtown SLO provided **considerable feedback** on the following City plans:

- City's Two-Year Budget
- City's Economic Development Strategic Plan
- City's Parking and Access Management Plan
- City's Homelessness Response Plan

Downtown SLO staff sit on the California Downtown Association Board of Directors, SLO County's Homelessness Service Oversight Council, the SLO City Police Chief Roundtable, the SLO Chamber Legislative Action Committee, the Cal Poly Local Economic Development Council, and regularly visit with dignitaries, journalists, and others.



Downtown BIA Member Emails

Member updates contain important information regarding **upcoming programs and events, road closures, City news, grant opportunities, and more.**

Not on our member newsletter list? Send us an email at **ReachUs@DowntownSLO.com**.

Storm Safety

The winter season of 2023 was marked by significant rain and heavy storms. Downtown SLO sent out **notifications to businesses**, sharing a video of **how to deploy flood gates** and informing them of steps to take to **minimize damage**. After the storms, we collected survey responses aimed to gain insight into how prepared and informed downtown businesses were for flooding or natural disasters.





Business Education Series: Creating the Perfect Retail Window

In November 2022, Erica Hamilton of Blackwater and Tim Kelly of HumanKind shared their knowledge and experience in retail design with downtown businesses via free virtual event.

Marketing



256,000 website users (July '22-June '23)

🖸 Instagram

Facebook

@ExperienceDowntownSLO

Email Newsletters

businesses, and other updates.

19,178

followers

(+6,506 vs. June '22)

7,568

page followers

(+467 vs. June '22)

Operation SLO
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1.2mi

total reach

(July '22- June '23)

189k

total reach

(Julv '22-June '23)

Downtown sto Deliver-E

The Downtown Deliver-E is a weekly newsletter

102k

emails opened

(Julv '22–June '23)

sent out to the general public, showcasing

downtown happenings, events, new

DowntownSLO.com

JULY 2022-JUNE 2023

Top Pages – Farmers' Market, Holidays, Concerts in the Plaza

Top Audiences - San Luis Obispo, San Jose, Los Angeles

Top Google Search - "slo farmers market"

Clicks From Google - 158,100

New – Discover Downtown Blog

clicks from Google Ads

Google Ads

As a recipient of a Google Ad Grant, Downtown SLO receives in-kind funds every month to promote downtown business and events.

Dining in San Luis Obispo - Breakfast, Lunch, & Dinner Takeout, Delivery, and Outdoor Dining. Dining | Shop & Dine | Downtown San Lu Types: Shopping, Dining, Services, Smail Business Support, Free Activities, Far Intery, and Outpoor Diring. Diring I shop & Dirie (Downtown San Luis Oo ipping, Diring, Services, Small Business Support, Free Activities, Farmers' upport Small Business. Shops - Wine Tasting Downtown - Subscribe for updates - Downtown Visito

Opposite Control Contro Control Control Control Control Control Control Control Contro

Opposite Comparison Store Comparison Comparison

10,115

followers

(+3.180 vs. June '22)

13,181

page followers

(+681 vs. June '22)

201k

total reach

(July '22-June '23)

78.5k

total reach

(Julv '22-June '23)

63k

THIS WEEKEND

DOWNTOWN

ch 29-April 2, 2023

BUS

3,217 followers

(+1.067 vs. June '22)

OncertsinthePlaza
 OncertsinthePl

total reach (July '22-June '23)

76k







Business Support Campaigns

In August 2022, we launched a brand new series of multi-channel marketing campaigns, highlighting different businesses downtown. From happy hours to quirky holiday gifts to family fun, we're always looking for ways to feature our downtown businesses.





views on IG

Subscribe at DowntownSLO.com/Subscribe

Traditional Media

Radio

4,948

subscribers

(as of June 2023)

Downtown SLO has a weekly radio presence with American General Media on five local stations, (98.1 KJUG, 92.5 the Krush, 920 KVEC, 93.3 KZOZ, and Coast 104.5) promoting Farmers' Market and other events.

TV

10.6k

emails clicked

(July '22-June '23,

Downtown SLO has a robust partnership with **KSBY**, who generously runs commercials for special events.

Print

Downtown SLO places ads in several local newspapers and magazines, including New Times SLO, the Santa Maria Sun, the Tribune, and SLO Life Magazine.



6,909 103k

page followers (+296 vs. June '22)

ConcertsinthePlaza

total reach (July '22- June '23)

New Business Highlights

Downtown SLO staff frequently attend ribbon-cutting ceremonies and visit newlyopened businesses downtown to feature them on our social media pages and in our newsletter!

This Weekend Downtown

downtown SLO were frequently

combined views on IG

Instagram reels highlighting different upcoming events in posted throughout the year.



Thank you to our generous sponsors!

The following businesses and organizations sponsored events and provided inkind support from July 1, 2022–June 31, 2023.

We've done our best to include all of our sponsors and community partners. Please contact us at ReachUs@DowntownSLO.com if you have questions or are interested in sponsoring us.

In order of cash value contributed in the 2022-2023 fiscal year:

The San Luis Obispo Collection Sunset Honda American Riviera Bank Thoma Electric Guaranteed Rate Wilde Wealth Management Dianity Health Pacific Western Bank CoVelop County of SLO Board of Supervisors iFixIt PG&E Lola & Ivy Wallace Group **RRM** Design Eighty20 Group Corvus Wealth Advisors Megan's Organic Market

Sunrun Hotel SLO Hotel Cerro Tenet Health Central Coast SESLOC Finney's Crafthouse Jamba First5 SLO County Astound Business Solutions SLO Credit Union Firestone-Walker Brewing Company Coastal Pediatric Dentistry Injectors Direct Friday Night Lights Youth Flag Football ASAP Movers T-Mobile SLOCAL Roots 1st Capital Bank Cal Polv San Luis Obispo Museum of Art

Ashley & Vance Engineering SLO Cider

DIENDS OF

SL

Woodstock's Pizza Quesadilla Gorilla SLO REP Ah Louis Store Promotional Concepts

IN-KIND CoVelop

Avanti

Dunites

Bill Gaines Audio Meathead Movers Lamplighter Inn & Suites Cuesta Springs Ice Harvev's Honey Huts San Luis Garbage Souza Construction The San Luis Obispo Collection

MEDIA KSBY

American General Media New Times SLO Santa Maria Sun The Tribune Big, Big, SLO

Obispo is clean, safe, vibrant, and attractive,

Friends of Downtown SLO is a 501c3 charitable organization dedicated to ensuring our beloved downtown San Luis

To make a gift or donate, visit DowntownSLO.com/Donate.



Downtown SLO works in close partnership with the City of San Luis Obispo. Thank you to the City Council and staff for your ongoing support of our programs and services.

Board of Directors

Steph Stackhouse, President (-2023) The Center Studio & Boutique

Donna Lewis, President (2023-) Guaranteed Rate

Laura Mullen, Past President (-2023) HumanKind Fair Trade

Stephen Patrick, Vice President (2023-) Stephen Patrick Desians The Bladerunner Salon & Spa

Carolyn Herzog, Treasurer Corvus Wealth Advisors Designated Member: Finance

M. Farid Shahid, Secretary (-2023) Eighty20 Group

Brandon Downing, (-2023) KSBY Designated Member: Media

Courtney Kienow Cal Poly Designated Member: Higher Education

Denis Volic, (2023-) Hotel SLO

Greg Holt Big Sky Cafe shape policy, oversee financial management, and set the strategic direction for the organization. Board members serve two-year terms beginning April 1 of the election year.

The Board of Directors meets the second Tuesday of each month to

If you are interested in running for a seat on the Board of Directors, please contact us at ReachUs@DowntownSLO.com.

Ivv Thompson Region

James Menno Buffalo Pub & Grill

Kevin Harris SLO REP

Lauren Twisselman, (-2023) Hotel SLO

Mark Rawson **Copeland Properties**

Maryah Lilly Bluebird Salon

Maryalice Hamilton Blackwater

Randy Adler Moondoggies Beach Club

Sarah Saldo Saints Barrel

Suzanne Schonig, (2023-) American General Media Designated Member: Media



Government Liaisons to the Board of Directors

Andy Pease San Luis Obispo City Council

Greg Hermann Deputy City Manager, City of San Luis Obispo

Jeanette Trompeter Public Information Manager. County of San Luis Obispo





Staff

Bettina Swigger, CEO

Shannon DalPorto, Operations & Public Space Manager

Whitney Chaney, Program Director

Niesha Johnston, Event Manager

Ali Bailey, Event & Fundraising Specialist

Rachel Lackmann, Marketing & Communications Coordinator

Kelly MacKinnon, Membership & Public Engagement Coordinator

Reagan Ryder Smith, Program & **Event Assistant**

Nat Littier, Social Media & Marketing Assistant

Jacob Munyon, Kevin Casbeer, Brandon Spencer, Michael Hunt, Misha Garza, Ambassadors

Abby Ortega, Jay Nelson, Kayla Brandes, Lyndsey Mott, Lauren Clibon, Jordan Sacks, Kat Smith, Sophia Van Duzer, Events Operations Interns

Quoya Mann, Social Media & Marketina Intern

Farmers' Market Staff

Betty Bautista, Food Access Coordinator

Anna Mullen, Info Booth Coordinator

Alex Thomas, Operations Staff

Laney Manning, College Corps Fellow