

# EXPANDED LEARNING IN RANCHO

There's a subtle difference in how the SERRF (Safe Education & Recreation for Rural Families) Program is being referred to these days. Once commonly known as the after-school program for Tehama County, administrators and staff are now referring to their award-winning array of services and interventions as the SERRF Expanded Learning Program.

*"We're more than after-school now,"* says Karla Stroman, SERRF Administrator at the Tehama County Department of Education.

In one rural community, expansion beyond after-school programming was made possible through partnerships between Corning Promise, Tehama County Department of Education, and multiple service providers. During the school year, turnout in the after-school program at Rancho Tehama typically reaches 100 students. According to Stroman, **with no on-site program available, there is little interest in participation in summer programs.** Even with the invitation to participate in off-site summer programs at the nearest school, a 48 mile round-trip bus ride, few if any participate. In 2018, when the program was offered directly at the Rancho Tehama community school, **participation soared to 40 local youth.** *"It made a huge difference to have it on site,"* she adds. *"Corning Promise really allowed us to make that happen."*

In the spirit of Corning Promise, where partnerships are central to the project's operation, summer enrichment activities were made available in Rancho Tehama to children in grades K-8. Similar high-quality, fun and engaging programs were also offered in other district schools.

An alliance with California State University – Chico and sub-contract with CalPoly, funded by Anthem, allowed for Rancho Tehama students to participate in culinary workshops and gardening. These partnerships, including the alliance with Community Action Agency at Tehama County Department of Social Services, will allow several mentors from the high school, who live in the Rancho Tehama area, to assist with the on-site gardening program throughout the school year. This will allow the high school students to gain work experience and test the waters for a career.

Other programs that shed light on SERRF's extension throughout the Corning area include the Missoula Children's Theatre at Maywood School. A well-established touring company that makes an annual stop in Red Bluff through the Tehama County Arts Council, Missoula Children's Theatre casts and produces a one-hour production in one week, providing costumes, props and direction to the chosen youth who audition for their parts. While the Red Bluff production is open to Corning youth, logistics of travel to the mandatory after-school rehearsals often inhibited participation. This year, 35 area youth were cast in a production of *The Secret Garden*.

The summer programs mix academics and enrichment activities designed to promote academic gains during the summer; they are offered by highly trained, certificated teachers who deliver in-person academic support, while using technology to enhance the student's literacy skills. Corning students also participated in the county-wide book in common program with the Newbery Medal-winning, *The One and Only Ivan* by Katherine Applegate.



Of course, summer is synonymous with fun, and what could be more fun for students than field trips? This year, SERRF summer participants at Rancho Tehama and Maywood were able to attend the Ide Adobe State Park for living history experiences and spent a day at the Tehama District Fair where students learned about the different Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM)

career, engaged with a Maker Space and enjoyed all the traditional fair activities, such as barn tours, shows and carnival rides. *"A lot of kids don't get to go to the fair,"* says Stroman, who delights in bringing this traditional community activity to a wider audience of students.

Stroman reflects with pride on the greatly expanded offerings created and says the program will continue *"giving kids hands on experiences and skills that they can continue to develop and bring home to their families."*

These lofty undertakings are not done in isolation, but in community, and the results are meaningful. *"It was really a leveraging of resources,"* says Stroman. *"These are opportunities for enrichment that we may never have had without the contribution from Corning Promise."*