

At Pala Tribal TANF, Back to School Event Highlights Individual Student Needs and Educational Success

Story and photos by Maria Diaz, Administrative Assistant, Pala Tribal TANF



Peter Mejia holding his daughter Sylvia

Pala Tribal TANF's Native Youth Success Program (NYSP) Back-to-School Event was held July 17 at the Rincon Government Center.

The event brought together families, educators, and community partners to celebrate the beginning of a new school year while supporting the academic success of our Native youth.

The evening began in a good way with an opening blessing by Raymond Belardes III, a middle school teacher and Native American spiritual leader who was raised on the Rincon Indian Reservation and now resides on the San Pasqual Indian Reservation. His words reminded everyone of the importance of beginning our journey together with gratitude, respect, and a shared commitment to our youth.

Families then heard an inspiring message from Michelle Parada of All Tribes American Indian Charter School in Rincon. She encouraged students and parents to embrace the event's "Ready, Set, Go!" race car theme by approaching the new school year with confidence, determination and purpose.

Keith Vasquez and Brenda Bequette, Education Coordinators at Pala Tribal TANF, introduced NYSP, highlighting how the program partners with families to strengthen educational success by identifying individual needs, connecting families with valuable resources, and creating plans that help students reach their fullest potential.

(Continued on page 4)

Tribal Youth Reconnect to Ancestral Ocean Roots Through *Sovereign Shores'* Coastal Field Trips

By Gary P. Taylor, for SCTCA TANF

From July through December, dozens of tribal youth and young adults will become 'Storykeepers of the Southern California Coast.'

The program- called *Sovereign Shores*- is designed "for Southern California tribal youth ages 12-24, with the overarching goal of reconnecting them to their ancestral ocean-based roots," according to the California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center (CICSC) at California State University San Marcos.

Native Americans from tribes throughout Southern California will travel on several coastal field trips over the next five months to learn about various aspects of coastal environments through a tribal cultural perspective, noted the *California American Indian Review*. They will learn

(Continued on page 2)





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The purpose of the Tribal TANF Newsletter is to provide the tribal communities with information about services provided by the TANF Programs and other important issues concerning our rural/urban communities and families.

SCTCA provides services to San Diego, Orange and Santa Barbara counties and the following reservations:

Agua Caliente	Los Coyotes	Santa Rosa
Barona	Manzanita	Santa Ysabel
Cahuilla	Mesa Grande	Santa Ynez
Campo	Morongo	Soboba
Ewiiapaayp	Pala	Sycuan
Inaja/Cosmit	Pauma	Torres Martinez
Jamul	Rincon	Viejas
La Jolla	San Manuel	
La Posta	San Pasqual	

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(Continued from bottom of page 1)

about watersheds, coastal erosion, climate change, coastal conservation, ocean science, ocean safety, and tribal language place names.

Participants- up to 60 spaces are available- will also journal and video record their experiences, learning to become digital storytellers, which will then be presented in community showcases in 2027.

CICSC collaborated with the Surfrider Foundation and the Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association (SCTCA), Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians, Birch Aquarium and California Indian Education for All (CIEFA).

The program was made possible through funding from the California Coastal Commission and the Ocean Protection Council's Whale Tail grant. It is part of the (CICSC) Indigenous Climate and Environmental Collaborative (ICEC).

Storykeepers of the Southern California Coast

Sovereign Shores seeks to re-introduce tribal youth to ancestral roots along the ocean and wetlands. The program will enable participants to learn about Native American history in the region, but to also document and record their experiences with their phones and other digital devices. In this way, they will become 'Storytellers of the Southern California Coast.'

As noted in the *Review*, citing CICSC:

"San Diego-area tribes have millennia-long histories of connection to beach landscapes, but in the last two and a half centuries these connections have been disrupted and coastal access has become extremely limited. *Sovereign Shores* will help reverse some of this negative history and give young people the opportunity to see themselves as part of these beachscapes, too."

Students who become part of *Sovereign Shores* will engage in the following activities:

- Go on six field trips from July through December
- Receive surf and ocean safety training
- Learn about traditional food and harvesting
- Work on Tule boat building
- Make video vignettes and art
- Reconnect with tribal coastal homeland
- Gain Ethnobotany and plant knowledge

Tribal youth will also create jewelry and coastal art provided by the land and sea. They will also keep a journal of their experiences.

All gear will be provided at no cost and meals will be provided at every field trip. The trips include visits to San Mateo Creek, North County wetlands, the Birch Aquarium and the Rincon Indian Reservation.



Longest-Serving Native American Woman in Congress Faces Re-election Contest in Kansas in November

By Gary P. Taylor, for SCTCA TANF

Representative Sharice Davids of Kansas- the longest serving Native American woman in the United States Congress- will seek her fifth term in November.

Davids, a Democrat first elected in 2019, will face Republican Eric Jenkins in the November general election. Davids easily won the Democratic nomination for Congress after a landslide victory in the Kansas primary in early August. She trounced her opponent, gaining 83 percent of the vote.

"I'm deeply honored to earn the trust of voters across the Third District," Davids, a citizen of the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin, told *Indian Country Today*. "I fundamentally believe the government should work for the people it serves — not special interests, big corporations, or partisan agendas.



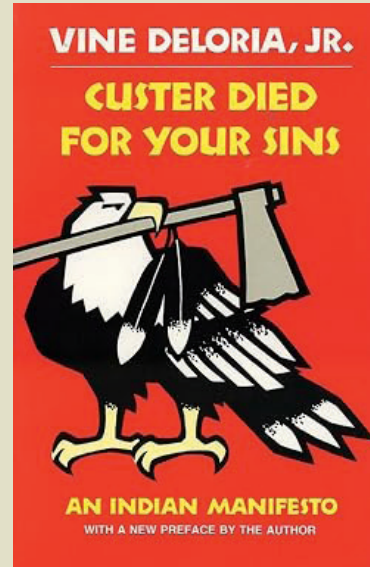
Sharice Davids

"Kansans don't want political games or constant partisan bickering — they want practical, common-sense solutions. That's why I'll keep working across the aisle with anyone, Republican or Democrat, to lower the cost of living, protect healthcare access, and build an economy where every family has the opportunity to get ahead."

According to *Indian Country Today*, former Kansas House of Representatives member Christina Haswood, Diné, said that Davids continues to be a consistent, ethical voice for both Kansas and Native Americans.

"Sharice is that bipartisan person who's able to bring those results back home, and at the federal level and working with Indigenous issues, working with veterans issues and transportation," Haswood said. "She's been able to bring those results back to her home district, but also working across Indian Country and being that voice that we need in Congress." The 46-year-old Davids first took office for the district in 2019 and is currently the only Democrat in the Kansas U.S. congressional delegation.

DISPATCHES NEW YORK



In November of 1969, Edward Abbey of the *New York Times* wrote a review of a book that had been recently published.

The book was titled *Custer Died For Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*. The author was then 36-year-old Vine Deloria Jr., Lakota. It was his first book.

It would mark the beginning of one of the most impressive literary careers in Native American history. In little more than three decades, Deloria would write 20 books, including the classic *God Is Red*, in 1973,

and other titles including *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence* in 1979 *The Nations Within* in 1984. He also edited hundreds of articles and contributed dozens of literary pieces to a vast number of publications.

Deloria- who died in 2005 at the age of 72- is widely regarded as one of the leading American Indian writers of the 20th century. But it was *Custer Died For Your Sins* that established him as not only a remarkably talented author, but as an unforgettable intellectual force.

The 279-page book- critically acclaimed and widely praised for its blunt language- consisted of essays regarding Native American history, culture, humor, religion and the continuing struggles of Indians on and off the reservation.

Some excerpts from Abbey's original 1969 review in the *Times*:
"Mr. Deloria points out America was discovered not by Columbus, not by Leif Ericson, but by the Indians - over 20,000 years ago.

"...In filling in the many little gaps in school textbooks on American history, Mr. Deloria accuses the United States Government of ignoring or violating some 400 treaties made with Indian tribes.

"...In his chapter on Indian humor, Deloria reports the results of an opinion poll taken among Indians on the question of the Vietnam war: 15 per cent replied that the United States should get out of Vietnam; 85 percent that the United States should get out of America.

"...Mr. Deloria also writes of more contemporary afflictions which Indians must endure, such as anthropologists, missionaries, the bullet-headed bureaucrats of the B.I.A. (Bureau of Indian Affairs) and other Government agencies. He (notes) such potentially disastrous policies as "termination," by which the Government would have eliminated medical and educational services. And "relocation," an ingenious scheme thought up by someone in Washington where- by surplus reservation Indians are transferred to big-city slums, where it is hoped they will sort of fade away and be forgotten."

Deloria's *Custer Died For Your Sins* remains an outstanding piece of literature. It was at times humorous, at times haunting, but at all times deeply emotional and completely relevant.

Nearly six decades later, that has not changed.

BACK TO SCHOOL: TOP 10 THINGS KIDS LIKE ABOUT RETURNING

Parents may have different ideas about what they like about their children going back to school. Children, on the other hand, know exactly what they like. The following list compiled by educators is based on responses compiled from schoolkids across the nation - and it is very specific:

1. **Seeing friends:** Catching up with best buds and playing at recess every day.
2. **New school supplies:** Opening fresh boxes of crayons, crisp notebooks, and fun pens.
3. **Cool backpacks:** Showing off a brand new bag with their favorite character or design.
4. **First-day outfits:** Wearing a special, brand-new outfit to make a great first impression.
5. **Meeting teachers:** Finding out who their teacher is and seeing if they are nice and fun.
6. **Recess, lunch and PE:** Running around outside, playing games, and doing sports with classmates.
7. **Going to art,** music, gym, or computer lab.
8. **Lockers or desks:** Getting a personal space to decorate and keep things.
9. **After-school activities:** Joining sports teams, clubs, or art programs.
10. **Fresh routines:** Enjoying the structure and excitement of a brand-new start.



(Continued from top of page 1)



Stephanie McEntire and Tammy Striler from the Valley Center-Pauma Unified School District presented the i-Ready Math Program. The program demonstrated how personalized, adaptive learning helps build strong math skills. TANF families learned how to understand student assessment results, navigate the online family dashboard, support learning at home and encourage positive math habits throughout the school year.

To help students continue learning beyond the classroom, each student received a lap desk to create a comfortable study space at home. TANF families also took home a cultural beading activity with step-by-step instructions to decorate their pencil pouches- a meaningful way to celebrate creativity, culture, and the traditions that connect our community.

Thank you to everyone who attended and to all of our presenters and partners for investing in the future of our Native youth. Together, we continue to strengthen our children through education, culture, and community.

Tribal TANF Back to School

At Santa Ynez, Back to School Event Brings Children and Parents Together for Family Activities

By Gerri Massey, Site Manager, Santa Ynez Tribal TANF

The Santa Ynez Tribal TANF Back-to-School Activity was held on Saturday, July 25, 2026, at the Buellton Recreation Center.

The activity provided families with an opportunity to prepare for the upcoming school year while participating in educational and family-centered activities. Santa Ynez Tribal TANF staff reviewed the PowerPoint presentation education requirements with the parents, including requirements for school-aged children such as proof of school enrollment, the importance of school attendance and required documentation.

While parents participated in the presentation, the children worked on a coloring and sticker craft activity at the table. Following the presentation, families participated in a vision board activity. TANF staff provided instructions on how to create a vision board focused on individual and family goals, as well as ways families can work toward growth and contribute to their Native American communities. The activity encouraged families to communicate, work together, and identify goals they would like to accomplish individually and as a family.

Based on the surveys completed after the activity, parents demonstrated an understanding of the education requirements, including proof of enrollment, the

importance of school attendance, and the required documentation. Participants also provided positive feedback about the event. One participant stated Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association (SCTCA) is a "very caring organization" that is professional and accommodating. The participant also said they enjoyed having family fun and felt it was a great activity. Another participant stated they enjoyed creating goals on their vision board as a family. A third participant stated that they learned how valuable the NYSP program is and how it can assist families when needed. They also shared that they enjoyed creating the vision board and felt that the activity helped their family grow closer.

The children also provided positive feedback, with one child stating they enjoyed spending quality time with their family and learning how to communicate together as a family. Another child stated it was a great activity for families.

Overall, the Back-to-School Activity was successful in providing families with important education requirement information. The event also created an opportunity for families to spend quality time together, strengthen communication, establish individual and family goals, and learn about available Tribal TANF resources and programs.

Photos by Gerri Massey



At Escondido Tribal TANF Back to School, 'Deep Roots' Presentation Explores Traditional Native American Plants

Story and photos by Marcos Trejo, Administrative Assistant, Escondido Tribal TANF



Escondido Tribal TANF's 2026 Back to School event in mid-July- 'Deep Roots, Tall Trees'- was held at the Park Avenue Community Center Auditorium.

Ami Admire from 'ataaxum Pomkwaan was the featured speaker at the event.

The Back to School activity began at 6 p.m. with a story and Bird singing from Paul Miranda, SCTCA Assistant Director of Technology/Operations. After the Bird singing, our participants listened to Admire and her assistant Aeden Lagillardaie. The two took the auditorium stage to explain and display a Native American ancestral botany presentation.

The tables in the room were decorated with various hand-procured herbs and plants like Buckwheat, White Sage, Laurel Sumac and many others for our TANF participants and their children to explore. The presentation explained the importance and medicinal properties of these plants and the way generations of Kumeyaay people have used them.

During her presentation, Admire presented various items made from plant life. One item was a carved rabbit stick for hunting. Another were soles made from the fibers of the Yucca. A third was a ring and stick game made from an antler and the caps of acorns. The ring and stick game was fascinating to learn about as each acorn ring had mythological elements to them. One ring represented a coyote and another ring represented a humble animal; yet the animals and creatures for the other rings are lost to time.

After her presentation, Ami led our participants in a workshop. One table had beads and sinew for participants to create their own jewelry. Another table had various hand

picked plants. One of the plants was the spongy remains of wild cucumber that could be turned into a scrubbing sponge. Another was a spritzer workshop that enabled participants to select a medicinal herb and place it in a spritzer bottle with water to set in the sun. The sunlight and infusion of the plant properties results in a spritzer that can work as either a bug repellent or even as a hair conditioner.

Once the workshop was over, TANF participants completed evaluations and received a custom tote bag. Once all the evaluations were collected and bags handed out, the Back to School night was over.



In San Diego, Back to School Features Family Engagement, Education and Community Connection

Story and photos by Michael Cervantes, Education Coordinator, San Diego Tribal TANF

San Diego Tribal TANF hosted its annual Back to School Family Engagement Event at the Ronald Reagan Community Center in July to prepare families for the upcoming academic year.

The event promoted educational success, family engagement and community connection. It brought together students, parents, community partners, and Tribal TANF staff for a day of educational workshops, hands-on learning experiences and family-centered activities designed to support Native American families both academically and socially.

The Living Coast Discovery Center provided two engaging science workshops. Students in Transitional Kindergarten through 2nd grade attended the Science of Flight program, where they explored bird anatomy, bone structure, and the principles of flight through interactive lessons, crafts, and educational activities. Students in grades three through eight participated in a marine science workshop featuring a guided squid dissection that introduced concepts of anatomy, biodiversity, adaptation and ocean conservation.

High school students attended a career readiness workshop facilitated by Goodwill's Mobile Employment Center. Participants received instruction on professional communication and Goodwill's Young Adult Program. The workshop introduced students to employment resources available through Goodwill and encouraged participants to begin preparing for future education and career opportunities.

While students attended their workshops, parents and guardians participated in two educational presentations led by Tribal TANF Education Coordinators. The Parents as Partners presentation focused on supporting children during key educational transitions, including entering kindergarten, promoting to middle school, and beginning high school. Parents also received information on building positive relationships with schools, preparing for parent-teacher conferences, and supporting student success throughout the academic year.

Families also participated in culturally enriching family engagement activities designed to strengthen family relationships and foster community connections. Participants created bracelets with guidance from Southern California American Indian Resource (SCAIR) staff and designed personalized magnetic photo frames using Perler beads to display instant family photographs taken during the event. These activities encouraged creativity, collaboration and meaningful family interaction while celebrating Native culture and community.

Each household also received a magnetic family calendar to assist with organizing school schedules, appointments, extracurricular activities and other important events.

Participant evaluations reflected overwhelmingly positive feedback regarding both the educational presentations and family engagement activities. Parents reported the information provided increased their confidence in supporting their children's educational journey and better prepared them for the upcoming school year. Families also shared the engagement activities created meaningful opportunities to spend quality time together while strengthening connections with other Tribal TANF families and community partners.



Tribal TANF Back to School



National Recovery Month: For Native Americans, Treatment Focuses on Individuals, Culture and Families

By Gary P. Taylor, for SCTCA TANF

September is National Recovery Month.

It was designed nearly three decades ago by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to increase public awareness of mental health and addiction recovery, celebrate individuals in long-term recovery and honor service providers.

But for Native Americans - across the nation and throughout the Southern California region - recovery isn't the same as it is for non-Natives.

One of the main reasons is geographic isolation - many Indians live on reservations in remote areas which can make it difficult to access health services. In San Diego County, that isolation is reduced by health clinics and facilities located on the Rincon Indian Reservation, the Southern Indian Health Clinic (SIHC) on the Viejas Indian Reservation and the Indian Health Clinic on the Santa Ysabel Indian Reservation.

Tribal members from nearby reservations in the North County (Pala, Pauma, San Pasqual) are within 10 miles of Rincon's clinic. But tribal members on distant reservations in Sycuan, Campo and Manzanita have further to travel to get to SIHC at Viejas.

A second reason substance abuse recovery may be even more difficult for Native Americans is the cultural misunderstandings that occur among non-Native medical facilities. Modern medical approaches may not be as effective without traditional Native American healing methods, according to the Via Linda Behavioral Hospital in Arizona.

"Treatment for substance abuse in Native American communities requires a culturally sensitive approach," according to the hospital's website. Here are some of the most effective treatment options available, as noted by Via Linda:

Traditional healing practices: Incorporating traditional healing methods is crucial in substance abuse treatment for Native Americans. Sweat lodges, talking circles and ceremonies are integral parts of many programs, providing spiritual healing and community support.

Residential treatment programs: Residential treatment programs offer intensive therapy and support. These programs are beneficial for individuals with severe addictions, providing a structured environment away from triggers and stressors.

Outpatient treatment programs: Outpatient programs are more flexible, allowing individuals to receive treatment while maintaining daily responsibilities. These programs typically include counseling, group therapy and education on coping strategies.

Holistic approaches: Holistic treatment options focus on healing the mind, body and spirit. This can include yoga, meditation, art therapy and nutritional counseling. These approaches are especially effective when combined with traditional Native American practices.

In recovery, families play a crucial role in the recovery process. Via Linda also has several tips for supporting a loved one in recovery:

- **Educate Yourself:** Learn about addiction and recovery to better understand what your loved one is experiencing.
- **Communicate Openly:** Encourage open and honest communication. Listen without judgment and offer support without enabling negative behaviors.
- **Set Boundaries:** Establish clear boundaries to protect your well-being and encourage your loved one's responsibility for their recovery.
- **Seek Support:** Consider joining a support group for families of individuals struggling with addiction. Sharing experiences with others in similar situations can provide comfort and guidance.

SAMHSA envisions that people with, affected by, or at risk for mental health and substance use conditions receive care, achieve well-being, and thrive.





Suicide Awareness: Understanding, Recognizing, and Supporting



"Our ancestors survived so that we could be here. Your life has purpose, and your community stands with you." -Author Unknown

Suicide is deeply complex, but please know that it can be prevented and no one has to carry this weight alone. It can affect anyone, from any background, at any stage of life. When mental health struggles, overwhelming stress, or feelings of hopelessness feel like too much to bear, You can find support.

Suicide prevention is about Life Promotion—rooted in the understanding that connection to culture, family, and the land is our greatest medicine. While historical and generational trauma can feel overwhelming, our cultural roots provide a powerful shield of resilience. You are never a burden; you are a vital piece of our future.

Recognize the Warning Signs

Most people who consider suicide show warning signs through their behavior, words, or mood shifts. Keep an eye out for these critical changes: **Verbal Cues:** Talking about wanting to die, feeling like a burden to others, feeling trapped, or having no reason to live. **Behavioral Cues:** Withdrawing from family, friends, and activities. Giving away prized possessions or making a will. Searching for methods online or buying a weapon. Increased use of alcohol or drugs. **Verbalizing Hopelessness:** Saying things like "Everyone would be better off without me" or "I just want the pain to stop." **Mood Changes:** Displaying extreme mood swings, sudden calmness after a long depression, severe anxiety, or expressions of hopelessness.

The 3-Step Action Plan

If you are worried about someone, take these steps to wrap them in support:

- **Ask Openly and Directly:** Don't be afraid to ask, "Are you thinking about suicide?" Speaking the words out loud breaks the isolation and shows you care deeply.
- **Listen with an Open Heart:** Put aside judgment. You don't need to have all the answers. Just listen, validate their pain, and let them know they are not alone.
- **Lean on Community & Culture:** Do not keep secrets. Connect them to trusted tribal elders, cultural leaders, helplines or professional counselors. Remind them of their worth to the community. Stay with them if they are in immediate danger.

Culturally Centered & Confidential Resources (24/7)

If you or someone you love needs a safe place to turn, free support is available right now:

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** Call or Text 988 Free, confidential support available 24/7. (Many areas route directly to counselors trained in Indigenous cultural competency).
- **StrongHearts Native Helpline:** Call or Text 1-844-7NATIVE(1-844-762-8483) A confidential, culturally centered helpline specifically for Native people, dealing with domestic/relationship wellness and mental health.
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text NATIVE to 741741. Connect with a crisis counselor over text messaging immediately.
- **We R Native:** Visit wernative.org. A comprehensive health and wellness resource created by Native youth, for Native youth.
- **The Trevor Project:** Call 866-488-7386 or Text START to 678-678LGBTQ+ youth crisis support.
- **Veterans Crisis Line:** Call 988, then Press 1. Dedicated support for veterans and service members.
- If someone is actively hurting themselves or has a plan to do so immediately, please call 911, contact your local tribal law enforcement, go to the nearest Indian Health Clinic or emergency room.



Open hearts, open conversations, saved lives.



If you have any questions, or would like to discuss this further please contact
Cyndie Gilliam LMFT TANF Therapist @ 760-330-3913 or cgilliam@sctca.net



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
TRIBAL CHAIRMEN'S ASSOCIATION
TRIBAL TANF

***Scan the QR code to view current SCTCA Tribal TANF
Contractor Class Schedules and Calendars.
Schedules include training offered through our approved contractors.
Schedules are updated monthly.***



Commodity Distribution Schedule September 2026

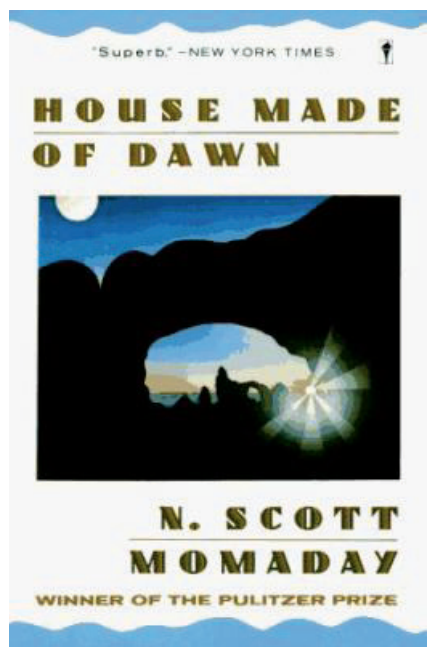
USDA FOOD DISTRIBUTION SCHEDULE FOR SEPTEMBER 2026

<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>TIME</u>
SEPT 1 ST , TUESDAY	CAMPO	10 AM – 12 PM
SEPT 3 RD , THURSDAY	SAN PASQUAL	8 AM – 12 PM
SEPT 8 TH , TUESDAY	LOS COYOTES LA JOLLA	9 AM – 10 AM 11 AM – 12 PM
SEPT 10 TH , THURSDAY	RINCON	8 AM – 12 PM
SEPT 14 TH , MONDAY	PECHANGA PAUMA	9 AM – 10 AM 11 AM – 12 PM
SEPT 15 TH , TUESDAY	PALA	9 AM – 11 AM
SEPT 17 TH , THURSDAY	MANZANITA OLD CAMPO	930 AM – 1030 AM 11 AM – 12 PM
SEPT 21 ST , MONDAY	VIEJAS BARONA	9 AM – 10 AM 11 AM – 12 PM
SEPT 23 RD , WEDNESDAY	MESA GRANDE SANTA YSABEL	9 AM – 10 AM 11 AM – 12 PM

OFFICE CLOSURES: 7TH LABOR DAY & 25TH CA INDIAN DAY

A HOUSEHOLD CANNOT PARTICIPATE IN THE FOOD COMMODITY PROGRAM IF THEY ARE ON THE CALFRESH (FOOD STAMPS) PROGRAM. YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN ONLY ONE OF THE ABOVE PROGRAMS

WRONG INFORMATION ON APPLICATION, DUAL PARTICIPATION IN BOTH PROGRAMS, OR FAILURE TO PICK UP COMMODITIES COULD BE A BASIS FOR DISQUALIFICATION FROM THE FOOD COMMODITY PROGRAM. IF YOU DO NOT PICK UP ON YOUR SCHEDULED RESERVATION DAY, YOU MUST MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TO PICK UP AT THE WAREHOUSE. CALL OUR OFFICE FOR AN APPOINTMENT. (760) 749-5608



Coming in October:

- Native American Book Selections
- Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- Confidential Resources and Safety Planning

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
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