



Imperial Valley
WELLNESS
FOUNDATION

BRIDGE TO A HEALTHFUL FUTURE
Empowering Our Communities to Thrive

OUR VISION

Healthy people living full lives in the Imperial Valley.

Imperial County's civic and community leaders are committed to creating better, healthier places to live.

They initiated the new Imperial Valley Wellness Foundation.

You will see a community of champions there.

You can be a champion too!



OUR MISSION

To advance the health and wellness of vulnerable populations in Imperial County.

Imperial County, California has long been seen as an area with serious health challenges. Some leading examples:

- Food Insecurity
- Diabetes and Obesity
- Asthma

For many non-residents, this is all they know about Imperial Valley but for those who live here, we see things very differently. Imperial Valley is home to a community that cares, loves the region, and wants to see conditions improve for every single resident.



Imperial Valley Farm Land



Imperial Valley Food Bank

INTRO TO THE IMPERIAL VALLEY



Imperial County, California is located on the U.S.-Mexico border between San Diego County and the state of Arizona. It's a highly productive agricultural area, producing \$2 billion in vegetables, fruit, livestock, and other commodities annually. In fact, two-thirds of the vegetables consumed in the U.S. during the winter are grown in Imperial County. In recent years the county has also become home to new and expanding initiatives in wind, solar, and geothermal energy production—enough to power more than 1 million homes in the southwest U.S. Today, it is the second largest geothermal producing county in the U.S., and a number of new geothermal plants are in planning or construction.



Per capita family income is \$16,409, compared with \$29,906 for California, as a whole.

Imperial County has been inhabited for little more than a century. Its harsh desert climate and relentless summers have kept most from braving the border area. People settled here as the 'last frontier', the last remaining place in America to claim land and try to build a livelihood.

The fertile land yielded abundance in cattle, cotton, and winter produce.

According to the Southern California Association of Governments, as of 2018, Imperial County's population of 190,624 people are 83.4% Hispanic, 11.3% Non-Hispanic White, 1.3% Non-Hispanic Asian, 2.3% Non-Hispanic Black, 0.6% Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native and 1.1% Other Non-Hispanic.

In contrast to its health challenges and its mostly hot and dry desert climate, Imperial County possesses a variety of natural and man-made advantages. It is a crucial agricultural zone, being a leading worldwide exporter of agricultural goods and growing a majority of America's winter vegetables.

Imperial Valley is an energetic and lively community of people that care about each other. It's a diverse community that has a deep grounding in family values and hard work. There is so much good here that is seldom promoted and so much more that can be done for the benefit of the people living in this unique place.

REGIONAL CHALLENGES



Despite health-promoting exports, the county's hardworking families suffer staggering health challenges: high rates of asthma, diabetes, obesity, hypertension, cancer, and tuberculosis, among others. They must contend with persistent problems of poor air and water quality, opioid and drug abuse, food insecurity, and health professional shortages. They do their best to live lives of dignity in a county that stands at or near the last place in many important health and wellness measures—a county that also ranks especially low in job opportunities and real income per capita. Research studies show a link between particulates and increased asthma. Poor air quality may cause multiple negative health effects. Increased evaporation from the Salton Sea exposes a toxic seabed called playa that contains pesticides, chemicals, and runoff. When this dust becomes airborne it degrades air quality and negatively affects the health of children and adults.



The Salton Sea exposed toxic playa (Photo by Matthew Dillon Creative Commons)



100 YEARS

OF FERTILIZER AND PESTICIDES IN THE SALTON SEA AFFECT WATER AND AIR QUALITY IN IMPERIAL COUNTY



100 TONS

OF DAILY AIRBORNE DUST CAUSE RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN AND ADULTS

According to the Los Angeles Times, children with asthma in Imperial Valley are far more likely to end up in the emergency room or be hospitalized than children in any other county in California. The California Department of Health states that children in Imperial County go to the emergency room for asthma at a rate three times higher than the state's average.



1 IN 5 CHILDREN IN IMPERIAL COUNTY HAVE ASTHMA.

"As the relentless wind stirs up piles of dust and dirt and creates a gigantic funnel of haze. In the vast, sweltering Imperial Valley, children like Marco Cisneros battle to breathe.

Marco wheezes and coughs and reaches desperately for his inhaler, but the medication doesn't always give him the relief he needs. Often, his mother has to call 911.

Since being diagnosed with severe asthma six years ago, Marco, who lives in this border town east of San Diego, has visited the hospital nearly 50 times. He has been airlifted on several occasions. Blowing out the candles on his 8th birthday cake earlier this year, Marco had just one wish: 'I just want to run.'"

Los Angeles Times 2012



FOCUSING ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE

A key result of air and water challenges, combined with food insecurity and poor diet, is the disproportionate presence of obesity and diabetes in the population of Imperial County.

Imperial County has the highest number of diabetes deaths, 101.2 per 100,000 population, in the United States.

A large percentage of families in Imperial County are food insecure. Children who do not have enough to eat have difficulty in school. Many neighborhoods contain only fast food outlets. These areas are food deserts with little or no access to fruits and vegetables, just processed foods full of sugar, fat, and salt.

In Imperial County almost 1 in 5 residents experience food insecurity, and the County has the highest rate of childhood hunger in California: 40% of children are not getting enough to eat. This is a major irony and a great health disparity for a region that produces a cornucopia of agricultural products and the majority of winter vegetables for the entire United States. Much needs to be done to resolve these problems.



40%
OF CHILDREN ARE
FOOD INSECURE



#1
IN DIABETES DEATH
IN US, 101.2 PER 100K

There are substantial problems we must address among our county population. The systemic health problems created by lack of local wealth and generational poverty have been compounded in a region that is remote and isolated. We must improve resources and services for our local residents.

"THERE IS A WILL AND A WAY"



Today, Imperial County is beginning to confront its health and wellness challenges. Over the past few years, organizations and concerned citizens have worked together to understand the interconnected problems of health and wellness in Imperial County.

CASA OF IMPERIAL COUNTY

- 450 foster children served in Imperial County
- 49% are under the age of five
- 20% have been identified with a chronic health issue
- 83% of all foster children are Hispanic

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE

- Serves low-income women & children
- Served 4,786 people in 2018
- Serving community for over 80 years

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY IMPERIAL VALLEY NURSING LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

- Launched in 2018
- Will graduate 18 students in May 2020
- First ever graduate level nursing program in the county
- Will add a Nurse Practitioner/ Clinical Nurse Specialist in 2020

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF IMPERIAL VALLEY

- Serves over 120 kids per day.
- Has 477 registered members
- Serving the region for over 50 years

CLINICAS DE SALUD DEL PUEBLO

- Served 52,575 patients in 2018
- Only Federally Qualified Health Center in Imperial County
- Founded in 1970 and was the first Migrant Health Center in the Nation
- Largest healthcare provider in Imperial County

IMPERIAL VALLEY FOOD BANK

- Serves over 20,000 individuals a month.
- Provides food to 100 schools, churches and social service agencies in the county.
- Distributes more than 700 backpacks full of food to children each week

IMPERIAL VALLEY WELLNESS FOUNDATION - A BOLD VISION

As a result of community efforts, Imperial County is now poised to take major action to solve the region's health challenges. Enthusiasm and commitment in the county are higher than ever before. What's needed is flexible, sustainable funding to support promising programs and initiatives.

To help address this funding gap, a group of Imperial County civic leaders joined forces in early 2019 and created the Imperial Valley Wellness Foundation ("Wellness Foundation"). **The Wellness Foundation's board of trustees has set a minimum \$25 million goal to establish a permanent endowment, which will allow the foundation to make grants to local nonprofits for generations to come.** San Diego-based Alliance Healthcare Foundation has committed a matching gift of \$7.5 million, contingent on the Wellness Foundation raising at least \$17.5 million by June 30, 2020.

A Funder's Perspective: "Local problems are often best addressed locally. Alliance's board has steadily been aligning our money with where our experience and values lead us," said Alliance Healthcare Foundation's former Board Chair, Elizabeth Dreicer. "In the case of Imperial County, that means making our foundation a little bit smaller so we can shift some of our assets over to a new, independent foundation. We want Imperial County to have its own endowed health and wellness foundation—one governed by local residents and focused solely on addressing local needs."

The Imperial Valley Wellness Foundation will select a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in 2020. This CEO will provide leadership, management, strategy, and grant-funding support to the Board of Trustees and will represent the Wellness Foundation in its work with nonprofit, government, community, and social enterprise organizations.



\$7.5M
CHALLENGE GRANT



\$17.5M
FROM OTHER
FOUNDATIONS
AND GOVERNMENT

OUR FUTURE

The Imperial Valley Wellness Foundation is committed to supporting innovation and collective action to address the region's most pressing health challenges. The Wellness Foundation will partner with local organizations to make strategic investments in advocacy, innovative program models, community education and leadership development.

Through a robust process led by the Imperial County Community Health Improvement Partnership, community groups, agencies, healthcare entities, and local residents participated in the Community Health Assessment process.

As a result, the Community Health Improvement Plan was developed, which is the roadmap and vision to effectively address key priority areas for creating health and wellness in Imperial County.

The Wellness Foundation will focus on the three action areas of the Community Health Improvement Plan:



Healthy Eating, Active Living

- Consumption of affordable, accessible, and nutritious foods.
- Engagement in affordable and safe opportunities for physical activity.
- Achieving and maintaining healthy weight levels.



Community Prevention Linked with High Quality Healthcare

- Asthma detection, management, and education.
- Prenatal Care—Early and Adequate.
- Diabetes detection, management, and education.



Healthy and Safe Communities and Living Environments

- Engagement in improving air quality.
- Prescription drug abuse prevention and treatment.
- Linking family members, caregivers, and persons living with dementia across systems of care and support.



THE MISSING PIECE - WE NEED YOU

The Alliance Healthcare Foundation has stepped forward with a \$7.5 million challenge grant to help fund the Wellness Foundation. We must raise \$17.5 million to complete the Wellness Foundation's \$25 million endowment.

With your generous participation, the Imperial Valley Wellness Foundation will underwrite and support organizations and individuals committed to solving the health problems of Imperial County and promoting the wellness of its hardworking population.

All of our recent community building work and planning will rely on new funding to be made possible.

We ask you to join this effort, and we welcome your partnership in advancing health and wellness in Imperial County.



THE WELLNESS FOUNDATION IS A CHAMPION OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN IMPERIAL COUNTY.

We invite you to become a Champion too!

For more information please contact:

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The Imperial Valley Wellness Foundation is a tax-exempt public charity under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code. Wholly independent from Alliance Healthcare Foundation and locally governed by its own 12-member board of trustees, that will fund local programs and activities in perpetuity. The Imperial Valley Wellness Foundation has selected and announced its first round of grants in June 2019 and the second round of funding will be May 2020.

OUR VALUES - INTEGRITY, STEWARDSHIP, INNOVATION, COMMITMENT

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