The Children’s Center is founded by student parents looking for child care options.

2003
“Kids University” opens during the summer months for school-age children.

2005
The center purchases outdoor equipment with proceeds from a silent auction held during its 30th anniversary.

2006
The Children’s Center is the first preschool in Pomona to become accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

2019
A $1.3 million federal grant allows the center to offer evening child care, hire a student parent success coach and expand services to young toddlers.

Partnering with Communities to Improve Food Security

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WHAT IS FOOD JUSTICE?

Food justice is the idea that everyone should have access to healthy, culturally appropriate food. It involves understanding how the food system is racialized and impacts people based on socioeconomic status and location.

HOW IS THE FOOD SYSTEM RACIALIZED?

The poorest communities are often populated by people of color while the most affluent are largely white. The food in a neighborhood can signify the racial and economic demographic: Is there more fast food and only a handful of grocery stores with subpar fruits and vegetables? Or are there more whole food options, a farmer’s market and a community garden? Low-income communities of color also have a desire for health but oftentimes can’t actualize that in their own neighborhoods because of what’s available.

HOW CAN WE ENCOURAGE MORE GROCERY AND DINING OPTIONS?

We need residents, community leaders and elected officials to support small community enterprises to make the food environment more equitable. Instead of telling to industry and saying “We need Walmart,” it would be more effective to support small land grants, community farms and nutrition education offered through schools.

WHAT CAN COMMUNITIES DO?

I work with Community Services Unlimited, a food justice nonprofit in South Central LA, founded by the local chapter of the Black Panthers in the 1970s to provide social services. They’ve opened a wellness center that also is a full-scale marketplace that offers healthy food, yoga and capoeira classes, book clubs and more. They also own and operate mini-farms throughout the city. There’s a food justice network in South LA, and the CSU demonstrates the kind of range one food justice project can have.

In Pomona, Urban Mission is a food justice ministry and nonprofit. They have turned their church campus into a community farm and wellness center. They partner with Cal Poly Pomona, Western University of Health Sciences and other local organizations to provide health services.

My service-learning students work at both sites on a semester basis.