Meet Natsuda Boonleua
Age: 16 • School: Redwood High School, Larkspur • Role: Teen Chef, Ceres San Rafael

I heard about Ceres from a friend who used to cook meals for them. It was the day of the orientation and I decided to point it out and head to the kitchen in San Rafael. That was almost a year ago. The thing that caught my attention was the cooking process of these interesting meals. Cooking has been and continues to be my passion since I was a little kid. I was surprised for the first time.

Being at Ceres, I have learned many things. First, I learned how to talk to different between boys and adults, potatoes. Second, I learned how to work with other people and how to encourage each other to the point that we become more confident in ourselves and trusting in our teamwork. I got to know people I had never talked to from school.

The best part about volunteering is making a huge impact in someone’s life. That inspires me to continue cooking in the kitchen every Thursday and help others in need.

“Thank you for the love filled, healing food you make. I am so grateful for the wonderful food you cooked for me. You are angels.” — Barbara

“Natsuda always walks into the kitchen with a positive attitude and a sense of purpose. She always prepared everything with precision, focus, and quickening certainty. Once, I asked about preparing additional vegetables because there wouldn’t be enough time to cook and package them. Natsuda later said, ‘I can’t think about preparing those additional vegetables with grace and efficiency. The attempt to do it in alternative ways would make a visible saving of time, so I choose the efficient and beautiful way to do it for the recipients.’ These words made me feel good about the meals we were prepared to her and her family and what we do in the kitchen. Natsuda is talented in the kitchen and also has a sense of humor. She can consider our clients’ needs and give above and beyond to make each meal special for them.” — Assistant Chef Lindsay Ratan

Learn how volunteering benefits youth.
PDF at: CeresProject.org/PDF/ImpactReport_YOUTH.pdf

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Our Community Needs Us

More than 2,500 people receive a new diagnosis of cancer each year in Sonoma County. Thousands of others face heart disease, diabetes, Hepatitis C and a host of other serious health challenges. Despite Ceres Community Project’s growth over the past few years, the need in our community continues to outpace our capacity. We’re committed to being there for our neighbors, and that’s why we’re adding cooking days at our Santa Rosa and San Rafael program sites later this spring.

Our goal is to increase meals from 103,000 in 2018 to close to 125,000 this year, and for over 200 more families annually.

In San Rafael, we’re moving from two 3–5 pm shifts on Tuesdays in Santa Rosa, we’ll be adding adult volunteer shifts Monday through Wednesday, and then shifting to a four day a week program with two separate delivery days.

To be successful, we’ll need a lot more volunteer help: adult mentors in the kitchen, and in the Santa Rosa garden, and teen volunteers for every day of the week. Please help us spread the word and encourage your friends and family members to join the Ceres family.

Ceres’ clients come from all walks of life and all parts of our diverse community. No matter their age or income, they’re facing one of the toughest moments in their lives. But at just as importantly, they’re facing it alone. Whether they’re single moms facing breast cancer, a family with a sick child, or an older person living alone, the meals make a world of difference. They reduce stress, ensure that people eat well. The meals can be a source of strength and support.

Santa Rosa adding 4th cooking day
Sebastopol adding 3rd cooking day
San Rafael adding 4th cooking day

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Healthy Eating the Ceres Way

We’re pleased to be offering 90 classes this year at Ceres locations and through our partnerships with libraries and healthcare providers. This year’s class offerings will include classes in English and Spanish offered at the Sonoma Valley Community Health Center, our first class at a Marin County Library, and new classes featuring our staff chefs.

Some of our most popular classes last year included classes in English and Spanish offered at the Sonoma Valley Community Health Center, our first class at a Marin County Library, and new classes featuring our staff chefs.

Sonoma Valley Community Health Center

These free classes are held on the 3rd (Spanish) and 4th (English) Wednesday of each month from 5:30-7:30. You can register by visiting sonomalibrary.org and search the Events Calendar for Ceres to see the schedule and sign up.

Smart Box Pilot Supports Heart Health

Our classes are open to all, with a sliding scale fee based on income. Some classes involve food demonstrations and tastings. All the classes are held in our Ceres kitchens this year. We’re also offering 5 Spanish-language classes on healthy eating. All the classes require food demonstrations and tastings. Our classes are open to all, with a sliding scale fee of $10-$40 per person. Scholarships are also available by request. Check out all the classes and register at CeresProject.org, or email education@ceresproject.org to learn more.

We’re grateful to the following corporations and institutions partners who’ve provided $1,500 or more support in the past three months:

- American Ag Credit
- American Red Cross
- Anonymous Fund East Bay Community Foundation
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- Benavity Fund
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- North Bay Cancer Alliance
- Speedway Children’s Charities
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- Wavenue Children’s Charities
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Saturday mornings are hopping at Roseland Elementary School, where twenty families gather to learn about healthy eating and pick up an array of prepared meals and groceries. Each of the families includes at least one member with high or very high blood pressure and/or diabetes. Both risk factors for heart disease and this unique pilot program aims to give participants the knowledge and skills to adapt healthy cooking and eating habits to improve their health.

Funded by a grant from Sonoma County’s Department of Health Services, the program is a collaboration between Ceres Community Project, Redwood Empire Food Bank and St. Joseph’s Health. Participants received health screenings from St. Joseph’s Health at the first class and will be tested again at the end of the program. At 6 months later, and 12 months later.

Cere’s bilingual Health Educator Sandra Tafur is teaching the classes in Spanish with simultaneous translation into English for those who need it. And at the end of each class, families take home five heart healthy prepared meals along with a box of groceries and recipes to turn them into several more delicious and healthy meals.

Smart Box aims to show that investing in nutrition education and access to healthy food can pay big dividends in improved health for patients and lower health care costs for providers.