

## Meet Leah White: Educator and Influencer

By: Azucena Chavez-Huerta

Leah White is an educator with the Ukiah Unified School District (UUSD). She has worked with the school as a credentialed teacher for over 15 years and has been in the community for over 21 years. Mrs. White is passionate about providing healthy opportunities for her students and goes out of her way to help them succeed.

"I first met Azucena at the Mendocino College plant sale, where I was drawn to her because of a Blue Zones Project Cookbook she had on her table. I spoke to her about the Blue Zones Project Power 9®. From that conversation I was very excited to partner with her and the Mendocino County team. Because of that conversation we developed a Walking Moai and healthy cooking classes at Ukiah Independent Study Academy (UISA). I have been able to work with Azucena over the academic school year and it has been a wonderful partnership. Students of all ages, K-12, and parents were deeply engaged in the concepts of the Blue Zones Project. It's meant so much to me to see a positive shift in attitudes in community with my students and their families. I have seen families meet each other (for the first time) and connect, all from these Blue Zones Project activities. Connections have been formed and positive behaviors have started to manifest. The local Blue Zones Project team has been integral in creating those partnerships, without them we would not have something like this in our community. It has been a true pleasure and I look forward to fostering and deepening our relationship with Blue Zones Project and our school system." Leah White.

What is your favorite Power 9®:

It's hard to choose just one of the Power 9®, they are all so wonderful. I think one that speaks to me because it's so accessible to everyone is Move Naturally. We live in a beautiful area, and we have many spaces around us that people can enjoy. Whether it's Low Gap Park, Lake Mendocino, or simply walking down our various pretty streets on the west side of Ukiah. We can all very easily move naturally.

### Nutrition Classes

Mrs. White and the Blue Zones Project worked together to bring Nutrition Classes to the students and parents at UISA. We then created a collaboration with the Mendocino County CalFresh Healthy Living team to continue to work with students and parents over the course of multiple months. CalFresh Healthy Living helped incorporate healthy activities with the students. The final nutrition class fell on Earth Day and Mrs. White planned the day with that in mind. Mrs. White started the day by leading students and parents with a trash clean up at Low Gap Park. Mrs. White said, "Sometimes we don't even know we are we're making that positive impact, but we feel better. I think that is great!" Both students and parents then got the opportunity to make healthy smoothies on the Blue Zones Project Smoothie Bike, learn about Rethink Your Drink from the CalFresh team, and work on the UISA mural. What a perfect way to end the school year!