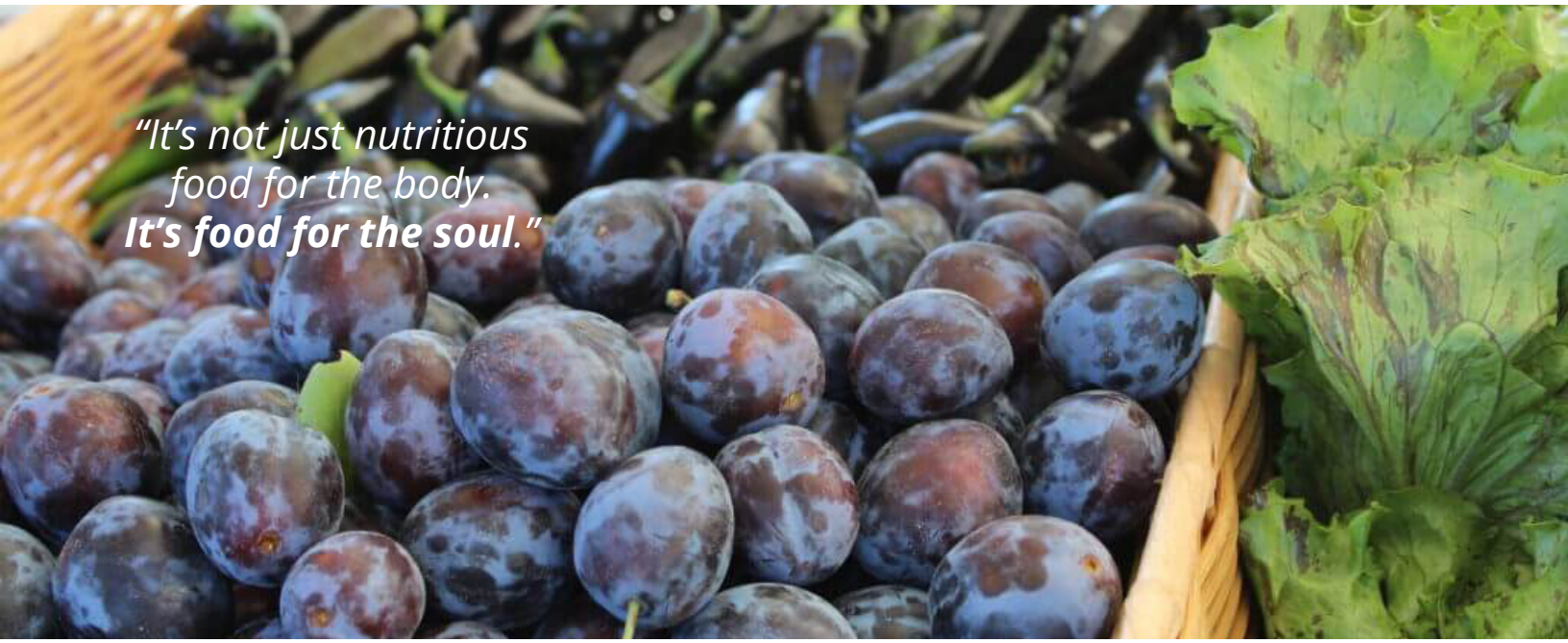
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

When Health Is More Than Health Care

Lauren L., Lia S., and Justice A. - Portland, Oregon



That's Medicaid *shares stories of people covered by Medicaid at critical points in their lives, underscoring the importance of stable health insurance coverage in building a Culture of Health.*

Leaders at CSA Partnerships for Health have been thinking outside the box since 2016 to make their community healthier, partnering with eight Federally Qualified Health Centers in the Portland area to provide Medicaid and low-income patients access to produce from local farms. To participate, patients arrive at a health center each week to pick up the food.

"People in the program have said their physical, emotional, and mental health has improved," according to **Lauren**, CSA Partnerships for Health director. "They are better able to afford healthy meals."

The organization receives funding through the state's Community Benefit Grant effort and produce is covered for participants through Medicaid flexible spending, allowing the nonprofit to serve more than 250 households annually.

"We're addressing food insecurity, but another interesting benefit is the social cohesion we see with the participants," says **Lia**, who works at one of the partner clinics. "It's not just that people walk up, grab a box, and leave. We have cooking and tasting classes for the produce and people are having conversations about what they are cooking. It does a lot to connect the community."

The participants echo this sentiment—the benefits go well beyond traditional health care.

"My local clinic referred me to this program, and I feel a sense of connection and gratitude when I get the produce," says **Justice**, a Medicaid recipient and second-year participant. "It's not just nutritious food for the body. It's food for the soul."