

Sarah Buck case study



THE CHALLENGE

In certain rural California communities, access to safe drinking water isn't simply a matter of turning on the kitchen faucet. But with the help of The California Endowment and the folks who work with Sarah Buck at Rural Community Assistance Corporation, two pilot communities in the state (Eastern Coachella Valley and South Kern) will soon have healthy alternatives.

"Our group was tasked with creating the Aqua4All program," explains Sarah. "The goal is to increase access to, and consumption of, safe drinking water in these rural communities and hopefully to improve the health of the predominately disadvantaged families and children."

THE SOLUTION

While Sarah's group had done a lot of work in the past around water and wastewater technical assistance, the idea of delivering safe water through bottle filling stations was a whole new thing.

"We're partnering with different organizations to install about 145 bottle filling stations in the two pilot communities. We're putting them in schools and parks, in community facilities like health clinics, libraries, youth clubs...places frequented by the public."

"People like the carbon filter option because it makes the water taste better, and the bottle counter feature is a nice touch as well."

According to Sarah, ezH2O® Bottle Filling Stations include some key features that people in the area appreciate. "Elkay® offers us a wide variety of products and options to choose from. Like refrigeration, which is pretty important when it can hit 115°F outside. People like the carbon filter option because it makes the water taste better, and the bottle counter feature is a nice touch as well."



Sarah Buck case study (continued)

THE RESULTS

While the pilot program is still in progress, Sarah says the initial feedback has been very encouraging.

“From an equipment standpoint, we’ve heard the ezH2O units have been easy to install, they’re very sturdy and seem pretty resistant to vandalism. From the communities, the reactions have been very, very positive. They all really love their new units.”

Right now, research is underway to understand exactly how the new bottle filling stations are affecting water usage in the communities. In addition to monitoring water consumption data, focus groups and observational studies are being done to understand how people are interacting with the new water sources.

THE FUTURE

“If we can get the communities to drink more safe water, we think they’ll be healthier overall. So we’re trying to encourage a culture of refilling reusable water bottles at these stations, especially getting kids into the habit.”

Sarah added, “We also do some work around solid waste, so we’re hoping that a secondary impact of the program will be a reduction in the amount of discarded plastic bottles.”

Once the pilot program is complete, Aqua4All is expected to be rolled out to more communities statewide.