

Youth as Community Organizers

Final Report for CS04-023

Project Type: Sustainable Community Innovation

Funds awarded in 2004: \$10,000.00

Projected End Date: 12/31/2005

Matching Non-Federal Funds: \$5,500.00

Region: Southern

State: Florida

Principal Investigator:

[Ellen Huntley](#)

Florida Organic Growers

Project Information

Abstract:

The goal of this project is to create a trained group of youth leaders well versed in the issues surrounding sustainable agriculture, and utilize those leaders to educate and promote sustainable agriculture within Alachua County among broad based local citizens. The program design supported the achievement of the project goal. Nineteen youth benefited from the training through employment in sustainable agriculture. These same youth communicated the values of sustainable agriculture to 500 people directly and 5000 consumers indirectly.

Introduction

Youth Employment Project (YEP) is a four-year project of Neighborhood Nutrition Network and Florida Organic Growers. Since its formal start in the year 2001, forty-four high school aged youth have been employed through YEP. The goal of the project is to grow food for sale and service to others in order to build a healthy community.

Project Objectives:

Train 19 youth leaders in theories of sustainable agriculture, community building, and local government policy as it relates to rural communities and agriculture.
Hire 2 youth as community liaisons to act as mobilizers in creating partnerships with community development agencies, local civic groups, and farm personnel.
Promote outreach to community.
Plan and host an activity during Alachua County's Sustainable Agriculture Week to promote rural farming, sustainable agriculture, local restaurants, community education and involvement.
Plan and host a hands-on activity to train local citizens in value added production as an entrepreneurial extension of sustainable agriculture.

Cooperators

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Research

Materials and methods:

SSARE Innovations project was designed to for youth employed through agriculture to develop as leaders in their community and teach others about the cornerstones of sustainable agriculture. The methodology of the project was to implement the objectives in a real and relevant way for the lives of youth.

Research results and discussion:

Specific objectives achieved are:

Train 19 youth leaders in theories of sustainable agriculture, community building, and local government policy as it relates to rural communities and agriculture.

A total of nineteen youth completed training in sustainable agriculture and community building during the project length. They also learned sustainable agriculture, marketing, service and life skills through 4000 hours of meaningful work experience and employment. Each individual youth earned between \$500 and \$900 during their employment in the project

Youth and adult staff completed a four-hour in the summer of 2004 and an eight-hour team building training in academic year 2004-2005. 18 youth at the Southeast Region Heifer Project International project partners meeting and 100 youth at the national Rooted in Community Conference took part in training.

Training of youth in sustainable agriculture was facilitated by adult staff Diedre Houchen. Special speakers/trainers included: farmer Jody Venn, Hank Herrera, Erika Allen of Growing Power, farmer Dorothy Grady and Scott Marlow of RAFI-USA. Youth taught 65 adults about sustainable agriculture and their farming, marketing and service practices during a tour at the 2004 Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SSAWG) Conference and Trade Show.

Youth coordinated weekly service deliveries to community groups assisted a minimum of 100 people per month.

Proposed beneficiaries: 118

Actual beneficiaries: 302

Hire 2 youth as community liaisons to act as mobilizers in creating partnerships with community development agencies, local civic groups, and farm personnel.

Two youth were interviewed and hired for the following two positions:

Community Liaison and Marketing Liaison. Ernest Lee served as the community liaison and Quentin Andrews served as the marketing liaison. Youth completed more than 200 hours during the four week summer youth employment program to develop relations with community members that the youth share and donate and sale produce. In addition to coordinating and supporting weekly service and market outlets, the two liaisons also delivered a workshop in professional development for youth and adults members of Southeast Heifer Project International groups. They participated in the national sixth annual Rooted In Community Conference in July 2004 and lead youth discussions at the conference.

Proposed beneficiaries: 14

Actual beneficiaries: 19 youth

Promote outreach to community.

Through a cooperative effort between adult supervisor's and the marketing liaison's leadership, the youth sold their own produce at a local farmers' market and raised the following amounts for produce and income:

Sales of fresh produce to 100 regular customers:

Youth raised \$3375.60 (14% increase over 2003-2004 sales (\$2883.10) and 59% increase over 02-03 sales (\$1355.06)).

Value-added products:

Youth raised \$1381 (35% decrease of 2002-03 sales (\$2,139.75) and 20% decrease from 01-02 sales (\$1733.20). The decrease in annual sales of value-added is accounted for by two reasons: 1) a seven month instead of ten month season and 2) low and late production of strawberries.

Through a cooperative effort between adult supervisor and the community liaison, the youth staff grew 1500 pounds of produce for delivery to 10 local food service providers in 2004 and 2005. More than 100 people a month were served through this effort.

Youth assisted one community garden and one school garden in summer maintenance. 150 people were served through this effort.

Also the general public was contacted through newspaper advertisements for the sustainable agriculture promotion called "Parade of Restaurants."

Proposed beneficiaries: 5085

Actual beneficiaries: 5085

Plan and host an activity during Alachua County's Sustainable Agriculture Week to promote rural farming, sustainable agriculture, local restaurants, community education and involvement.

Youth and adults worked together to complete Parade of Restaurants to promote rural farming sustainable agriculture, local restaurants and community involvement. The first Parade of Restaurants was held during Sustainable Agriculture Week. Enjoy a delicious dinner artfully prepared by the best chefs in Gainesville and support the important work of NNN and ICA by purchasing tickets for one or more of the Parade of Restaurant dining events. Chefs at Ivey's, Mildred's, Paramount, Emiliano's, Book Lover's, Satchel's and The Hungry Ram will prepare dishes from ingredients grown and produced in North Central Florida. Local growers will discuss their farms and farming practices at each venue. Students involved in both the NNN and ICA programs will help with the event and assist the chefs as well.

Parade of Restaurants

Income Expenses Net Income

\$4,105.00 2499.36 \$1,605.64

Youth shadowed chefs to gain professional culinary art experience at local restaurants during the "Parade of Restaurant" fundraiser outreach event called "Parade of Restaurants." 165 consumers attended Parade of Restaurants and enjoyed a meal made with local produce. \$1600 was raised to benefit Neighborhood Nutrition Network and Institute of Culinary Arts at Eastside High School. Nine local farmers participated in the event and built a relationship with local chefs to begin or continue sales of produce to local restaurants.

One restaurant owner and chef, Rick Griffin, followed up on a relationship with the youth staff after the Parade of Restaurant event. Chef Griffin began to volunteer every other week during the youth's work schedule at the farm and kitchen.

Projected beneficiaries: 5020

Actual beneficiaries: 181 plus general public reached through newspaper and radio.

Plan and host a hands-on activity to train local citizens in value added production as an entrepreneurial extension of sustainable agriculture.

Youth planned a special event for their family, friends, market customers, service and project partners to learn how they grow, market and preserve produce. Forty

people attended the event called, "Let's Jam It." Youth led effort to invite participants at event and prepared tours of their farming, sales and seasonal jam making practices.

One youth announced to the participants that she and her co-workers had promised to try new foods when accepting their job. She claimed that she successfully had done this and was proud of her efforts.

Projected beneficiaries: 40

Actual beneficiaries: 40

Participation Summary

Educational & Outreach Activities

PARTICIPATION SUMMARY:

Education/outreach description:

Youth educated 60 members of the southeast farming community through a tour during the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group 2005 Annual Conference.

Youth liaisons/organizers educated Heifer Project International project participants from Alabama, Georgia and Florida about professional development for future careers.

Youth liaison/organizers participated in the national sixth annual Rooted In Community Conference in July 2004 and lead youth discussions at the conference for 100 youth.

Project Outcomes

Project outcomes:

The goal of this project is to create a trained group of youth leaders well versed in the issues surrounding sustainable agriculture, and utilize those leaders to educate and promote sustainable agriculture within Alachua County among broad based local citizens. The program design supported the achievement of the project goal. Nineteen youth benefited from the training through employment in sustainable agriculture. These same youth communicated the values of sustainable agriculture to 500 people directly and 5000 consumers indirectly.

Beneficiaries reached three levels: local, regional and national. The number of actual beneficiaries reached or exceeded the number of projected beneficiaries.

Youth staff completed perform reviews and rated themselves with their supervisor on the development of job and outreach skills.

Recommendations:

Potential Contributions

The project promoted consumer involvement to support farmers' local markets and

for youth to serve as spokespersons to the community about sustainable agriculture. Future contributions may be made by continuing youth employment and youth development through agriculture production.

Future Recommendations

Continued implementation of training and employment of youth is needed to build a long-term relationship between farmers and young consumers. Developing agriculture and marketing practices that are successful and that are suitable to teach young adults (ages 14 to 21) is essential to relate the value of sustainable agriculture to a new generation to become responsible consumers. Including experts in youth development to support youth in their needs is necessary for the success of any youth involvement in agriculture.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture or SARE.



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