

Youth voices in agriculture

Final Report for LNE03-191

Project Type: Research and Education

Funds awarded in 2003: \$49,007.00

Projected End Date: 12/31/2005

Matching Federal Funds: \$36,563.00

Matching Non-Federal Funds: \$39,690.00

Region: Northeast

State: Pennsylvania

Project Leader:

[Maria van Hekken](#)

The Food Trust

Project Information

Summary:

The Youth Voices in Agriculture Project aims to strengthen the regional food system by increasing the voices of young people, rarely heard in the policy discussions, to inform, educate, network with, and collaborate with food and agricultural professionals. The project has three phases, each integrating students to promote agriculture alongside professionals. Across all phases of the work more than 200 youth and professionals were directly impacted from the project, exceeding performance targets. Products resulting from the work include a case study/lessons learned manual.

Few consumers have much information or awareness about the food system that sustains them. This is especially true of younger people. Food sources, freshness, and the importance of nutritional value are issues that too often do not get addressed. Meanwhile, many local farms struggle to find markets for their products. Increased consumption of local produce by young people can strengthen the regional food system while improving their health. Youth Voices gives attention to the ideas and opinions of youth on these vital issues.

Students from New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland planned new activities that strengthen the food system and promote good nutrition. Participants planned a "Youth Voices Professional Development Workshop" at the 2003 Future of our Food & Farms Summit. Students planned follow-on activities and collaborative projects which were implemented and evaluation conducted for a final report.

Introduction:

Few consumers have much information or awareness about the food system that sustains them. This is especially true of younger people. Food sources, freshness, and the importance of nutritional value are issues that too often do not get addressed. Meanwhile, many local farms struggle to find markets for their products. Increased consumption of local produce by young people can strengthen the

regional food system while improving their health. Youth Voices gives attention to the ideas and opinions of youth on these vital issues.

Students from New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland planned new activities that strengthen the food system and promote good nutrition. Participants planned a "Youth Voices Professional Development Workshop" at the 2003 Future of our Food & Farms Summit. Students planned follow-on activities and collaborative projects which were implemented and evaluation conducted for a final report.

Performance Target:

The performance targets of this 18-month project are: 1) 75 adult workshop participants will have learned new ways to increase rural and urban youth awareness of the regional food system and participation in it, generate active youth support for farming in the region, boost youth awareness and purchases of local food, and increase consumption of healthy food. 2) 20 youth participants (including middle and high school students) from the Greater Philadelphia area, Maryland, and New Jersey will have learned new ways to increase their awareness of and active participation in the region's food system. 3) 15 participants will have initiated up to five new youth activities as a result of the training, at least three of which will be collaborative (two or more organizations). At the end of the project, participating Cooperative Extension and other agriculture professionals will have significantly increased their knowledge and skills in working with youth on activities to strengthen the food system.

For a full discussion on performance targets achieved, see Outcomes section below.

Cooperators

- [Robert Halman](#)

rhalman@umd.edu

Executive Assistant to the Secretary for Interagen

University of Maryland

50 Harry S. Truman Parkway

Annapolis, MD 21401

(410) 841-5782 (office)

- [Clair Hershey](#)

hersheycl@aol.com

Farmer

Hershey Brothers Farm

2019 Locust Grove Road

Manheim, PA 17545

(717) 468-2681 (office)

- [Hope Jackson](#)

hj1@umail.umd.edu

4-H Extension Educator
Maryland Cooperative Extension
(410) 313-2708 (office)

- [Allison Karpyn](#)

akarpyn@thefoodtrust.org

Evaluator

The Food Trust

1201 Chestnut Street

Fourth Floor

Philadelphia, PA 19107

(215) 568-0830 (office)

- [Karima Rose](#)

krose@thefoodtrust.org

Project Manager, School Market Program

The Food Trust

1201 Chestnut Street

Fourth Floor

Philadelphia, PA 19107

(215) 568-0830 (office)

- [Stephan Tubene](#)

stubene@umail.umd.edu

Director Small Farm Institute

University of Maryland

7320 Ritchie Hwy, Suite 210

Glen Burnie, MD 21061

(410) 222-6759 (office)

- [Ellen Williams](#)

williams@aesop.rutgers.edu

4-H Agent Monmouth County Cooperative Extension

Rutgers Cooperative Extension

(732) 431-7263 (office)

Research

Materials and methods:

(It is important to note that the first snowstorm of the season took place on the day of the 2003 workshop at the 5th Annual Future of Our Food and Farms Summit in Wilmington, DE, which had 23 participants.) The second workshop in 2004 was held in Philadelphia, PA at the 2004 6th Annual Future of Our Food and Farms Summit and had 120 participants, 70 of which were scholarship recipients.

Phase I: More than 35 students participated in projects in the three participating states. They worked with project staff and cooperators including Cooperative Extension, 4-H Extension, 4-H Extension specialists, and The Food Trust. From their experiences, students selected which activity to develop into a case-study/lessons-learned manual (May 2003). Through conference calls among project staff and a staff meeting with students from each state, the Professional Development Workshop agenda was set. Extensive promotional materials were disseminated widely by project staff through the mail, Internet and email throughout the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast regions. (August 2003). Workshop speakers (students) were selected by the students themselves with guidance from project staff collaborators. The youth-project case studies and lessons-learned manual was completed, and the manual published in November.

Phase II 2003: "Youth Voices Professional Development Workshop" at the December 2003 Future of Our Food and Farms Summit. The workshop was conducted on December 5th in Wilmington, Delaware; 23 participants attended including 16 adults and 7 students. At this training workshop, students presented the materials from their case studies, the case studies manual was distributed, and participants engaged in a structured discussion about the students' experiences. Participants then identified and planned potential follow-on activities and collaborative projects. As noted earlier, the snowstorm reduced the number of participants and presenters in 2003, requiring some adjustments to the program. However, in the program content of the original project design generally remained the same. Although some of the students could not attend, most went on to participate in the collaborative projects. This was possible because most adult collaborators were able to attend the program and participate in the development of the project proposals.

Phase III 2004: "Youth Voices Professional Development Workshop" was conducted at the December 2004 Future of Our Food and Farms Summit, on December 3rd in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 120 participants attended, 70 of whom were scholarship recipients, including 29 adults and 41 students. (It should be noted that if there were funds available, the program could have provided far more youth scholarships because the interest was there.) We estimate sufficient interest to have allowed approximately 32 additional student scholarships.

The Youth Voices workshop held at the 2004 Summit was split into two sessions. The three collaborative projects initiated as a result of the 2003 Summit were very successful and were the basis of the first session. In addition, youth projects from throughout the region were highlighted, and future collaborative activities were planned at the second session at the Summit lunch, as well as in subsequent discussions, which are still taking place through emails and phone calls.

The three mini-grant projects that were begun as a result of the 2003 Summit were:

1. Jan Scholl, Penn State, Voices in Action
2. Ellen Williams, 4-H Agent, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Monmouth County, NJ State Liaison, Youth Voices In Agriculture Project
3. Jennifer Rulf, UNI

These projects were very successful and exceeded our expectations in terms of both accomplishments and collaboration. Follow-on mini-grant projects being planned were decided in 2005. The recipients were Eve's Garden, Urban Nutrition Initiative and

Eve's Garden is a community based greenhouse and community garden in

Waterfront South, a neighborhood suffering from environmental injustice in Camden, NJ. During the school year, Eve's Garden teaches art and gardening to the students of Sacred Heart Elementary School. During the agricultural season, Eve's Garden teaches gardening, runs a stand at the Camden Farmer's Market, and has worked with the Work Group's New Jersey Youth Corps and the Urban Nutrition Initiative of Philadelphia on a full array of sustainable living and organic seed to table projects. The Youth Voices mini grant enabled Eve's Garden to form a partnership with The Work Group's New Jersey Youth Corps and UNI (urban Nutrition Initiative). Eve's Garden collaborated with the Work Group on a bi-monthly basis during the week, with site visits and work days, and four weekend workdays. The group constructed a "living wall" in a community garden made of found driftwood, and constructed a bread oven made of materials found around Camden, including broken concrete and clay. The organization also rehabbed a city-owned lot into a community garden. Young people planted flowers in television sets, tires and motorcycles.

In addition, students collaborating with the UNI component of the project participated in a series of educational and outreach efforts. For example, two UNI garden interns presented at the NOFA New Jersey Organic Gardening Workshop in New Brunswick, New Jersey on March 6, 2005. Students presented their involvement in urban agriculture, school-based farmers' markets and nutrition education to an audience of 20 participants. Many of members of the audience were teachers and parents of school-age children and following the workshop there was a lively discussion about school-based efforts to improve nutrition. Participants appreciated the youth perspective on school gardens. Also, at while at the Organic Gardening Workshop UNI youth interns learned about "lasagna gardening" and soluble fertilizer made from worm castings.

In addition, a group of Urban Nutrition Initiative (UNI) staff and garden interns traveled to Hartford, Connecticut in June 2005 to visit with youth from the Grow Hartford project and other community-based organizations.

Three youths from Philadelphia visited with a team of peer community health educators from the Hartford Hispanic Health Council. The students presented their urban agriculture projects from Philadelphia to a team of staff members at the HHC and to the peer educators. Additionally, UNI interns and HHC interns participated in several hours of team building activities. Youth interns from Philadelphia visited Grow Hartford's flagship urban farm in downtown Hartford. At the farm students learned about sustainable agriculture techniques including drip irrigation, overwintering crops in hoopouses and composting.

Grow Hartford operates on a larger scale than the school-based garden projects in Philadelphia. UNI interns and Grow Hartford interns exchanged ideas about running successful farmers' markets, profitable crops and their favorite locally-grown foods to eat. One of the wonderful follow-up activities to this trip was that an intern from Grow Hartford, Luz Santos, moved to Philadelphia in July and completed a summer internship with the Urban Nutrition Initiative building a school garden at Deburgos Elementary School.

In the Summer and Fall of 2005, students participating in the Healthy Food For Healthy Kids component of the work worked four hours/week maintaining and improving the garden, building a compost bin, setting up a farmer's market, and preparing healthy foods from the garden for lunch. As their "final exam" (which they passed with flying colors!) the students gave garden tours to invited guests and prepared a feast from the garden of corn, oven-roasted potatoes, zucchini-tomato casserole, and Greek peasant salad. They concluded the summer program by hosting a "Field Days" event for a small group of youth leaders and educators from the Urban Nutrition Initiative in Philadelphia. This gave the Springer student leaders

an opportunity to show off their garden, to learn from the more experienced UNI students, and then host a field trip to The Calvert Farm, which is a small organic CSA farm in Rising Sun, Maryland. Although there were no written tests, students were able to convey the following information to guests and to other students during garden tours: 1) how to plant seeds in the garden, 2) how to identify specific vegetables and to distinguish them from weeds, 3) how to use landscape fabric to discourage weed growth, 4) how the drip watering system works, 5) parts of a plant & the scientific definition of fruits versus vegetables, 6) differences in flowers and pollination characteristics among different vegetable species (self-pollination versus wind pollination versus insect pollination), 7) how to properly harvest a variety of garden crops. By preparing food for themselves and guests, they demonstrated the ability to clean and prepare/cook vegetables and fruits from the garden. They also learned how to plan events, and best of all, they had fun!!!

Research results and discussion:

Milestone 1. Workshop speakers (students) will have been selected by project staff and collaborators including Cooperative Extension, 4-H Extension specialists, and The Food Trust staff; the students will have selected what activity will be written up in a case study, including lessons learned. (May 2003)

- o Staff from The Food Trust and Rutgers Cooperative Extension worked collaboratively to identify what students would participate in the grant.
- o At the 2003 Conference 12 students presented information on the agriculture work that they are doing in their communities. So of the presentations were through games, power point and a brief exert from a hand puppet play developed by the students.

Milestone 2. Professional development workshop agenda will have been set and promotional materials distributed by mail, internet, and email. (August 2003)

- o Through conference calls among project staff and a staff meeting with students from each state, the Professional Development Workshop agenda was set. Extensive promotional materials were disseminated widely by project staff through the mail. Internet and email throughout the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast regions (August 2003). Workshop student speakers were selected by the students themselves with guidance from project staff collaborators.

Milestone 3. Youth project case studies/lessons-learned section of the manual will have been completed, and manual published. (October 2003)

- o Milestone- The youth project case studies and lessons-learned manual was completed. The manual was published in November 2003.

Presented below are six case examples of youth involvement in agriculture, nutrition education, and food system education in Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania through the SARE Youth Voices program. Accounts of these success stories were submitted to The Food Trust by the students and their advisors, and can be reviewed in their entirety and original context in Youth Voices in Agriculture: Case Studies in Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. (see attached)

1. Growing, Selling, and Teaching about Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

The Food Trust staff members came to Pennsylvania schools once a week to teach nutrition lessons. Students were instructed how to plant seeds and maintain gardens. The students were also taught to operate business and keep track of inventory through the School Market Program. Students operated fruit salad stands in which sales profits from fruit salad vending were shared among the student employees.

2. Summer Program, Marketing & Research

The Summer Program consisted of three components, including nutrition education

research for a peer presentation, working at The Food Trust farmers' markets and offering nutrition education material to consumers, and teaching nutrition lessons at Congreso de Latinos Unidos summer program sites. The comprehensive experience gave Philadelphia students exposure to educational research that was implemented to educate community members and peers.

3. "Five A Day through Theatre & Roleplay" - Youth Promoting Nutrition Education as Five-A-Day Players

The "Five-A-Day through Theater and Role play" program in Monmouth County, New Jersey employed a creative arts education approach to nutrition education, specifically the promotion of the consumption of five servings of fruits and vegetables a day. The student theater troupe highlighted the importance of fruits and vegetables in maintenance of physical and mental energy, reduction of obesity, and prevention of such chronic illnesses as heart disease, cancer and diabetes. Educational skits were presented to engage audiences in interactive arts activities including skits, improvisation, puppetry, music and visual arts.

4. Youth-Run Farmstand, Horticulture and Plant Science Lessons, Gardens, Tree Sales

Youth provided knowledge of growing fruits and vegetables as well as communication, career awareness, and teamwork through a youth-run farm stand, horticulture and plant science lessons, gardens, and Christmas tree sales. The project was a collaborative relationship between Youth Corps and Uptown Middle School. The project is taught Atlantic City, New Jersey youth about agriculture, leadership, and nutrition. Youth Corps teenagers were peer mentoring students in organizing a fully operating in which fruits and vegetables were grown.

5. Community Education on Agriculture: From Farm to Table

Young people created educational displays that traveled to Clever Clover 4H Club events in Mercer County, New Jersey. They showcased several of the products that come from the major livestock and crop commodities. The displays also illustrated the complete production process, from farm to table. The Clever Clovers believe that the displays greatly enhanced their efforts to educate the public about where food comes from.

6. Consumer Education - Organic Food

Maryland students improved their understanding of food systems by conducting first hand research that included visiting food stores, organic farms, farmers markets and natural food stores to compare labeling, packaging, freshness and cost. In all cases they were given a tour of the site, talked with managers, and purchased similar products, which were used to determine end results.

The Youth Voices project completed the first phase as outlined. Rural and urban students from New Jersey, the Greater Philadelphia area, and Maryland who have ongoing or are planning new activities that strengthen the food system and promote good nutrition were identified. Assisted by Extension, 4-H and other advisors, the students prepared case studies that documented their experience with the activities and lessons learned which were then compiled into a manual.

Milestone 4. Workshop conducted (December 2003)

- o Despite the inclement weather, 23 participants attended the 2003 Youth Voices in Agriculture workshop at the December 2003 Future of Our Food and Farms Summit in Wilmington, Delaware. (16 adults and 7 students).

- o At this training workshop, students presented the materials from their case studies, the case studies manual was distributed, and participants engaged in a structured discussion about the students' experiences. Participants then identified and planned potential follow-on activities and collaborative projects. Three of these

projects were selected to receive \$1,500 mini-grants.

Milestone 5. 75 Extension agents and other agriculture professionals will have identified ways to increase awareness of youth about their participation in the regional food system, specifically increased purchases of local food and active youth support for farming in the region. (December 2003 to August 2004)

o A total of 120 participants attended the 2004 Summit, equaling 143 total participants for the 2003-2004 events, 80% (n=96) of which were adults. End of program evaluations revealed that on average, four out of every five participants believed the program taught new ways to increase rural and urban youth awareness of the regional food system and participation in it, generate active youth support for farming in the region, boost youth awareness and purchases of local food, and increase consumption of healthy food.

Milestone 6. 20 rural and urban youth from the Greater Philadelphia area, Maryland, and New Jersey will have learned new ways to increase their awareness of and active participation in the region's food system. (December 2003 to August 2004)

o More than 35 students participated in these projects in Greater Philadelphia, New Jersey and Maryland in 2003 and 2004. Approximately 30 students were involved with the project in varying degrees, facilitating programming around mini-grant projects. Students demonstrated creative ways they had discovered to increase awareness of food systems at the workshops.

Milestone 7. 15 participants will have initiated new youth activities as a result of the workshop, of which at least three and up to five will be collaborative efforts, one from each participating state. (December 2003 to August 2004)

o In 2004 and 2005, a total of 3 collaborative youth activities took place, involving Urban Nutrition Initiative, Penn State Voices in Action and Rutgers Cooperative Extension. During the grant period, more than 10 youth activities have occurred in all. (6 individual activities occurred in 2003, 3 collaborative activities took place in 2004, and 1 cumulative collaborative activity was achieved in 2005).

In Phase III, these follow-on projects were then developed and implemented, the evaluation conducted, and the second "Youth Voices Professional Development Workshop" was held at the 2004 6th Annual Future of Our Food and Farms Summit in Philadelphia, PA. At this training workshop, attended by 120 participants, students and adults presented materials from their mini-grants projects, and followed with structured discussions and/or hands-on demonstrations of their experiences. Of the 120 who attended the workshop, 70 participants received scholarships. Participants again identified and planned follow-on activities and collaborative projects.

Participation Summary

Education

Educational approach:

In the initial Phases of the project a manual was compiled. Assisted by Extension, 4-H and other advisors, the students prepared case studies that documented their experience with the activities and lessons learned in the first year of the project. Outreach, as noted in earlier sections of this report was ongoing through youth activities, workshops and collaborative projects with agricultural professionals.

No milestones

Additional Project Outcomes

Project outcomes:

Impacts of Results/Outcomes

The Youth Voices in Agriculture project has had a range of impact. Reaching more than 200 youth and professionals the project successfully implemented and exceeded expectations for each milestone and provided youth with a new outlook on the importance of agriculture. Through the development of projects in each phase of the initiative youth along with professionals shared ideas and developed plans and activities to strengthen the regional food system.

Over the course of the project, nearly 80% of participants believed that the sessions were useful (38%) or extremely useful (41%), and no participants reported that the sessions were not useful. Youth Voices participants found that the program increased their awareness of ways that youth can become involved in buying and selling local food (80%), generated active support for local farming (74%) particularly among youth, served as an opportunity for dialogue and networking (73%), helped to promote the consumption of local healthy food (85%), and generally met expectations (76%).

End of workshop evaluations revealed that participants learned new ways to create new programs with children and youth regarding food. Attendees reported that they learned:

- “How it’s possible to start to work with children & youth in food programs.”
- “How important the 5 a Day program becomes once you have traditional agricultural production paradigms.”
- “There’s interest in farming all over the country, no matter if it’s a rural or urban area.”

Outcomes: Reflecting on Performance Targets

The Youth Voices project includes three performance targets to be met. The performance targets are listed below followed by a summary of project activities in achieving goal(s).

Total Participation to Date:

- A total of 143 people attended the Youth Voices in Agriculture workshops at the 2003 and 2004 Summits.
- A total of approximately 65 students were actively involved with the Youth Voices in Agriculture program activities.
- A total of 140 participants participated in the mini-grants workshops, field days, and food and nutrition resources activities.

1) 75 adult workshop participants will have learned new ways to increase rural and urban youth awareness of the regional food system and participation in it, generate active youth support for farming in the region, boost youth awareness and purchases of local food, and increase consumption of healthy food.

A total of 23 participants attended the 2003 event (16 adults and 7 students) and a total of 120 participants attended the 2004 event, equaling 143 total participants, 80% (n=96) of which were adults. End of program evaluations revealed that on average, four out of every five participants believed the program taught new ways to increase rural and urban youth awareness of the regional food system and participation in it, generate active youth support for farming in the region, boost youth awareness and purchases of local food, and increase consumption of healthy food.

2) 20 youth participants (including middle and high school students) from the

Greater Philadelphia area, Maryland, and New Jersey will have learned new ways to increase their awareness of and active participation in the region's food system.

In 2003, 7 students and in 2004, 41 middle and high school students from the greater Philadelphia area, Maryland and New Jersey participated in the Youth Voices Workshops. More than 35 students participated in projects in the three participating states in 2003 and in 2004 approximately 30 students were involved with the program to varying degrees, working to facilitate programming around the mini-grant projects. Students demonstrated the creative ways that they discovered to increase awareness of food systems and nutrition at these workshops.

3) 15 participants will have initiated up to five new youth activities as a result of the training, at least three of which will be collaborative (two or more organizations).

Three collaborative youth activities occurred in 2004 and 2005, UNI project, Penn State Voices in Action Project, and the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Project. Over the course of the grant more than 10 youth activities have occurred. (Six individual activities occurred in 2003, three collaborative activities occurred in 2004, and one cumulative collaborative activity was achieved in 2005.

Economic Analysis

The economic impact of the project can be found in the youth awareness of agriculture work in the Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland region. Young people worked together with farmers to ensure a greater understanding of their work, as well as the availability of a diversity of crop production. The economic consequences due to the exposure and understanding local farmers have given young area residents will continue to pay off in the future, as potential long-term area shoppers have an exposure and understanding of local agriculture.

Farmer Adoption

n/a

Assessment of Project Approach and Areas of Further Study:

Areas needing additional study

There continues to be a need to educate youth, particularly those living in urban areas about the importance of local agriculture. For many, the cycle of food and the importance of farming are lost. In addition there is limited research on the long-term impacts of interventions that educate youth and professionals about perspectives on food and farming. Finally, as more people become engaged in a fast food culture, the links between local food and health become an area needing study.

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.



This site is maintained by SARE Outreach for the SARE program and is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award No. 2019-38640-29881. SARE

Outreach operates under cooperative agreements with the University of Maryland to develop and disseminate information about sustainable agriculture. [USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.](#)

© 2022 Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education