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SARE Grant FNE00-342 Processing Champlain Valley Apples \$2,400.00

Our goals of this project would educate individuals on increasing their employment opportunities; guidelines to process apples; educate on how to have their own kitchen certified by New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets; how to access Adirondack Kitchens for mass production; and how to cooperatively market the processed items.

We had four project methods:

Phase I - Coordinate with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Franklin and Clinton Counties and Adirondack Kitchen Project to mail an informational packet to its area farmers, agri-businesses and processors. We then would establish meetings at CCE based on the results of the informational packet.

An informational letter was sent out to over one hundred-fifty farmers, agri-businesses, and processors from related list of individuals generated by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Franklin County. The Franklin County Cornell Cooperative Extension office included additional information from their office in this mailing. Materials were sent to individuals upon their requests. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Clinton County refused to participate. They were more interested in only working with their maple syrup producers. They felt the apple orchards had their own markets established at the wholesale level.

Phase II - Establish a class on basic processing techniques, provide guidelines to having your kitchen certified, educate individuals on how to have a recipes approved for processing, approved jars, labels, and insurance.

The informational letter established a date of August 31, 2000 for a class on processing techniques. Twenty-two individuals attended. Names available upon requests by SARE. These individuals requested additional classes on specific subjects so we added six additional classes. We labeled the classes "Someone's in the Kitchen with Dinah". Additionally documents were provided to these individuals from the New York State Department of Agriculture on home kitchen approval. Rick James is the state representative for this area. Recipe approval guidelines by the New York State Agriculture Experimental Station, Cornell University, Geneva, New York were handed out. Dr. Olga Padilla-Zakour publishes a Venture newsletter and coordinates the experimental station in Geneva. They publish an excellent book called Food Processing A Guide to Creating a New Business. I recommend this to any processor who is interested in the food business. Labeling guidelines were included in the packet. New

York State Department of Agriculture and its coordinator Donald Whitehead publish these. Agency Insurance of Plattsburgh provided an insurance presentation. Additional information was also included and discussed with the participants. (See attachments)

Phase III - Provide a guided tour of Adirondack Kitchens; coordinate with the Small Business Development Center and Adirondack North County Association to provide a workshop on establishing markets.

There were eleven total individuals who took the Adirondack Kitchens tour over the space of two months. I had a key to the building since I was on the Board of Directors. The kitchen was establishing itself at this time. These individuals agreed to contact the Small Business Development Center by themselves if they choose to pursue a business of processing Champlain Valley Apples. Individuals in this area found the start up costs of a new business as the major set back in getting any business up and running. The main deterrent of any of these individuals were lack of marketing skills by the individuals and feeling over-whelmed with the regulations and liability. Adirondack North County Association agreed to do a meeting only if we had at least thirty individuals sign up. We could not reach that limit so ANCA did not establish a meeting. Individuals were provided with ANCA information. I attended a meeting in Saranac Lake with ANCA. Participants who had apple products available for resale were given the opportunity to have their products in the Adirondack Cooperative Farms, Inc. basket. Picture attached.

Phase IV - Meet with potential markets in the Plattsburgh area.

The establishment of markets is key to any success. Meetings with the owners and managers of the Champlain Valley orchards provided insight into the readily available apple products for processors. I did not limit my visits to markets in the Plattsburgh area but also looked at markets in Malone. I researched and contacted statewide grocery chains including national chains such as Aldi's, Wegman's, Price Chopper, and SYSCO. I provided information on the NYS Small Scale Food Processors organization and the New York State Specialty Food Directory to participants of this grant.

I met with the following businesses and individuals. These businesses would process Champlain Valley Apples and/or provide a market for apple related processing products:

*Adirondack Kitchens - Dave Evans & Rosemary Redmond
Cornell Cooperative Extension Franklin County - Nancy Welch
Cornell Cooperative Extension Clinton County - Dan O'Connell
Small Business Development Center, Plattsburgh - Merry Gwynn
Adirondack North County Association - Saranac Lake
New York State Department of Agriculture - Rick James
Market Barn - Malone
Steen Orchard - Leona Steen
Pytlak Orchards - Cindy Pytlak (extensive apple basket products)
North County Fund Raising - Sherri Amsel
Garrands Farm Market, Plattsburgh - Wayne Garrant*

*Rulfs Orchard & Road Side Stand – Patty Sheehan
Harvest Herb Company – Wendy Harrington
Northern Orchard Co. – Cindy Mulbury
Mohawk Indian Reservation – Angela Bendict-Dunn
Double K Ranch – Barb Kreiger
Bonsteels Produce – Bruce Bonsteel
Suprenalt Berries – Bruce Suprenalt
Simply Chocolates – Pam Perry
Hesseltine Farms – Charlie Hesseltine Jr.
Seed Corn – Shelly Lindahl
Red Sky Trading Company – Cheri Safford
Adirondack Cheese Company – Cynthia Major
Let's Serve – Don & Vivian Papson (apple butter)
Saranac Sourdough – Eileen Black
Underwood Herbs – Jane Desotelle
The Market Place – Kelly Facticeau
Wayne Rabideau (producer of apple jams and jellies), Thomas St. Mary, Lisa Whitmer,
James Carter, Lucille Bowen, Craig Hitchcock (apple pancake mix).*

Adirondack Cooperative Farms, Inc. utilized participant's apple products in their basket. This basket was sold throughout physician's offices in Plattsburgh and Malone.

Project Success – one financially successful woman was Leona Steen who started her own roadside stand after meeting with me. She received all of the guidelines of starting her own processing kitchen and met with Rick James from the New York State Department of Agriculture. She sells apples, fruits, jams, jellies, and fresh baked goods. She has an exemption under Article 20-C of the state agriculture law. She has enlarged to selling Christmas trees at her stand and is planning on planting a pumpkin patch. Her filer is attached.

Failures – Adirondack Kitchens the certified processing kitchen closed its door in February 2003. The facility was in my opinion too large with too much overhead. It did not promote feasible markets.

Lessons Learned – There is a large potential market for Champlain Valley apple products. Markets are available. What I foresee occurring is a smaller kitchen will be established with a key marketing element established. If you have no markets you are dead in the water.

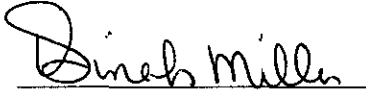
Outreach – I continue to provide education to referrals from Cornell Cooperative Extension Franklin County on processing related questions.

Outcomes – The one outcome that I want to provide to SARE is an extremely important marketing idea. While I was doing this project I was introduced to a fund raising organization that targets schools with Adirondack products including food items. The proverbial light bulb went off. Why can't every state agriculture department and every

state education department get together to market their own state agriculture products throughout their schools for fund raising? This is a huge untapped market for not only the promotion of states agriculture items but also the growth of individual markets. I plan on sending letters to the New York State Department of Agriculture and New York State Department of Education to see if a coordination of this marketing idea can be established.

I have attached a copy of my budget and final report.

I wish to thank the Northeast SARE program for giving me this opportunity to promote Champlain Valley Apples.


Dinah Miller

3-7-03
Date