

FARM-TO-TABLE FOOD SYSTEM SUPPORT

The COVID-19 pandemic brought rapid, major change to Vermonters and the state's economy. Early on, UVM Extension focused on the impact to Vermont's farm and food system, from producers to consumers. Through their support of Vermont's farm and food system, UVM Extension experts help build resiliency, safety and confidence for producers and consumers in these uncertain times.

Developing Guidance for Growers In mid-March, the UVM Extension Horticulture Team made phone calls to 121 farms to assess grower needs, concerns and ideas. Using survey data and the latest research, they developed science-based guidance for growers eager to protect public health while continuing public sales. This specific advice clarified broad Federal guidance, informed new Vermont State guidelines, and helped food businesses act with confidence. (go.uvm.edu/guidance4growers)

Improving Handwashing Stations When planning for the 2020 summer season, the Bennington Farmers' Market identified need for a moveable, public handwashing station. The UVM Extension Agricultural Engineering Team developed two designs; each version can be assembled for under \$200 using inexpensive, readily available parts. The "Improving Handwashing Stations" factsheet details assembly and components. (go.uvm.edu/handwashingstation)

Providing Practical Food Safety Information UVM Extension's food safety specialist wanted to understand COVID's impact on the food industry and provide practical information to alleviate public concerns over purchased foods. This led to a podcast series (go.uvm.edu/podcasts) focused on food manufacturers' production adaptations and increased understanding of businesses' adjustments to online sales, supply chains, changing markets, staffing limits and more. For consumers, a comprehensive online Q&A focused on handling and consumption of groceries and take-out foods (go.uvm.edu/covidfoodsafety) continues to be a valuable resource.

Establishing a Virtual Farmer Conversation Network In April and May, eight UVM Extension programs partnered to offer the "Online Conversation Series: Sourcing and Selling Vermont Food in the Time of COVID-19." The Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Vermont Tourism Research Center collaborated with farmers, agricultural service providers and community members to deliver the seven-webinar interactive series. 439 people learned about COVID-19 protocols for farm stands, virtual events, and equity and access in local food systems. The strategies, challenges and resources helped farmers make quick adjustments to new realities of local food sales, embrace the opportunity to have successful businesses, and serve communities in new ways. (go.uvm.edu/sellvtfood)

Finding Solutions for Selling Online Extension's Agricultural Business team tailored their extensive digital marketing experience to fit the unique pandemic-related needs of producers in Vermont and New England. They continue to work directly with producers to find solutions for online and direct-to-consumer sales, and present webinars and informational podcasts. The team is developing an online digital marketing planning course and continues advising through the farm and forest business coaching program. (go.uvm.edu/agbusiness)

Visit uvm.edu/extension to learn more.

"We are helping farms continue to bring in revenue, stay connected to customers, and prepare for improved safety when businesses are able to open to visitors in the future."

Lisa Chase, UVM Extension



VIRTUAL ENRICHMENT & ENGAGEMENT FOR YOUTH

When COVID-19 caused schools to close quickly in the spring, 4-H staff realized teachers would need time to adapt to online remote instruction. To help bridge the learning gap, 4-H stepped in with daily virtual youth enrichment programs for kids of all ages. Monday through Thursday, they dedicated an hour to programming designed to foster structure and continuity. Through synchronous, real-time engagement, young people not only explored new topics, but also made friends and maintained social connections during a time of unexpected physical isolation.

Distance Learning Socials Each Monday, youth “met” to learn about birding, photography, tree identification, community service, and more. Those who joined received a take-home challenge, then regrouped on Thursdays for an informal share-out of their findings and experiences. By going beyond a “watch this video and discuss” format, participants gained a real sense of belonging within the group and curiosity surrounding the topic. The nine sessions offered engaged a total of 103 young people, 25% of whom attended more than once.

QuaranTeen Time On Tuesdays, students in grades 7-12 explored college and career pathways, skill building and leadership opportunities. Ten sessions reached 125 individual teens exploring topics including “How to Advocate for Yourself,” “How to Match Your Interests with a Promising Career,” and “Youth Voices Matter: A Conversation with Lt. Governor David Zuckerman.”

QuaranTeen Virtual Science Cafés On 12 Wednesdays, 208 students in grades 7-12 explored science, engineering and technology by connecting with real scientists, learning about their work, and asking questions.

Cloverbuds Connect Challenges This activity is designed for the youngest 4-H audience (K-2, ages 5-7). Participants watch a video demonstrating an activity and are then challenged to try it themselves, record the action, and post the video on the secure “Flipgrid” portal - all with adult supervision. New activities are distributed each Friday, covering topics like butterflies, dairy, recycling, trees and more. Since June, there have been 721 views of 21 videos, equaling 40.8 hours of shared learning.

Out of the Box-es In Rutland and Addison Counties, 2,000 youth received free activity boxes from 4-H. A direct response to the gap created by COVID-19, 22 organizations collaborated to design, build and distribute themed positive youth development activities every other week during the summer. Themes included Dairy Month, food, exploring nature and more.

Animal Scoops Fun, interactive sessions provide learning on bees, wildlife, domestic animals and more through trivia, videos, books and recipe activities for youth ages 8-18.

Gardening & Nutrition From garden to kitchen, youth in grades 6-12 explore harvesting and learn how to prepare and preserve crops.

For more information about current youth opportunities, visit go.uvm.edu/4h-at-home.

SPRING TEEN PROGRAMMING

2 PROGRAM SERIES

22 WEBINARS

333 PARTICIPANTS



“I’m so grateful that [“Elsa’s] been able to set meaningful goals to keep her engaged with life, not just computer screens in this time of remote learning and social distancing.”

Elsa’s mom reflecting on her daughter’s Distance Learning Socials participation



IN RUTLAND, ADDISON AND BENNINGTON COUNTIES, 2,000 YOUTH RECEIVED ACTIVITY BOXES FROM 4-H.