

Success Story

Edible Main Street: Increasing Exposure to Fruits and Vegetables on Main Street in Norway

SUMMARY

In 2016, **Maine SNAP-Ed** and **Healthy Oxford Hills** teamed up with the **Center for an Ecology-Based Economy (CEBE)** to build planter boxes to line Main Street in Norway. The goal is to demonstrate **how to grow vegetables and herbs** with the hope of inspiring people to grow their own food. This project started with 12 planters and added 4 more in 2016. Each planter has an accompanying educational description and suggested culinary use for its contents. In its first year, an estimated **732 SNAP-eligible residents** were exposed to community-grown produce on Norway's Edible Main Street.



CHALLENGE

Obesity is a growing epidemic across the United States and is associated with increased risk for **chronic diseases** like diabetes. In Maine, 2 out of 3 Maine adults and 41% of Maine children are overweight or obese.

Eating more fruits and vegetables adds nutrients to diets, reduces the risk for chronic disease, and helps manage body weight when consumed as part of overall healthy diet.

Maine SNAP-Ed works with local community coalitions to support sustainable changes that help **reduce the burden of obesity** across Maine.

MAINE



SNAP-Ed

Healthy Eating on a Budget

Maine SNAP-Ed

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education

Maine SNAP-Ed is a **USDA-funded program** that teaches low-income Mainers the knowledge and skills needed to make healthier lifestyle choices. In 2015, the program began implementing Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) change strategies in a variety of local community settings. By making sustainable changes to the environment, Nutrition Educators are fostering healthy behaviors that aim to **reduce the burden of obesity across Maine**.

In 2015, Maine SNAP-Ed PSE efforts reached 2,498 individuals eligible for SNAP and a total of 7,118 Mainers were reached.

In 2016, Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators helped establish five community gardens across the state, including these Main Street planters.

SOLUTION

The planters aim to **increase exposure to healthy foods**, like vegetables and herbs, by allowing those that pass by to sample them. Each planter has a laminated ring-bound book that identifies all the plants with photos, harvesting tips, and different ways to use the produce. Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators assisted in the creation of the **educational material attached to the planters** and provide ongoing **programming that highlights the planters' contents** in regards to harvesting and using the produce in **easy, healthy recipes**. Volunteers that tend to the planters (weeding and watering) note that they have also been a tool to increase community engagement with residents and local business owners.



SUSTAINING SUCCESS

The work of the Edible Main Street project has shifted from building and planting to focusing on **engagement of volunteers** to help maintain the planters. Community members are recruiting and training volunteers to help with watering, weeding, and general maintenance of the planters. Business owners and those living along Main Street have taken unofficial ownership of some of the planters to ensure the planters are well maintained. Plans for 2017 include growing a variety of vegetables and herbs through succession planting that are then harvested at varying times throughout the summer and fall.

The work continues to help engage community members in a conversation about the local food system and the part they play in increasing access to healthy foods for people throughout the greater Norway area—starting with their very own Main Street.



PARTNERS IN SUCCESS

- Center for an Ecology-Based Economy
- Healthy Oxford Hills
- Western Maine Health
- Local Main Street Businesses
- Community Volunteers

"We see everything from children eating their first edible flower to nibblers trying out the different greens and herbs as they walk down the street."

CEBE Volunteer

—Nicole Anderson, Maine
SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator

For more Success Stories from the Maine SNAP-Ed program, or to get in touch with your local Nutrition Educator, please visit www.mainesnap-ed.org.

Data sources are available upon request by emailing mainesnap-ed@une.edu.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. Maine SNAP-Ed is funded by the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, which is administered by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services and implemented statewide by the University of New England through contracts with local community organizations. Maine SNAP-Ed educates low-income families on low cost, healthy eating and active lifestyles.