

Success Story

Eat the Streets: Increasing Exposure to Fruits and Vegetables on Main Street in Westbrook

SUMMARY

In 2016, **Maine SNAP-Ed** and **Healthy Rivers (Opportunity Alliance)** teamed up with a **University of New England** graduate student and the Downtown Westbrook Coalition to build and install eight garden planters in Blue Note Park in Westbrook. The goal of this project was to help people gain access to healthy foods. Beans, cherry tomatoes, and herbs are just a few of the things residents will be able to pick while visiting the park. These planters will also help to maintain an active and attractive downtown. Nutrition Educators engage students of Westbrook in conversations about healthy eating and lead hands-on activities such as sprouting seedlings in the classroom to grow in the community planters.



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 2017, Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators are helping to establish ten community gardens across the state, including these Main Street planters.

SOLUTION

The planters will be maintained by seven local businesses that have committed to watering and weeding their assigned planter for the entire growing season. Each business will have information inside their shops about the Maine SNAP-Ed program and other resources related to food security. Nutrition Educators provide programming to a variety of ages that highlights the planters in regards to growing, harvesting, and using the produce in healthy cooking. The planters serve a secondary purpose to motivate families get outside and explore the local downtown.



SUSTAINING SUCCESS

While 2017 will be the first year of planting, volunteers and community members are already predicting successes based on the excitement generated by local residents and businesses.

Visit the Portland Press Herald for more details related to this story: <http://www.pressherald.com/2017/04/24/westbrook-project-adds-an-edible-touch-to-downtown-scene>.

PLANTER CARETAKERS

- Al Nakeel Market
- Bank of America
- Big Fin Poke
- Fajita Grill
- Westbrook House of Pizza
- Saco Bay Physical Therapy
- Tropical Sun Tanning

"...it dawns on them [the students] that those flowers turn into green beans or tomatoes, they think it's magical."

—Nicole Anderson, Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator

PARTNERS IN SUCCESS

- St. Anthony of Padua Parish
- Westbrook Regional Vocational School
- We Compost It
- Johnny's Select Seeds
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension

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.

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