

Success Story

Library Connections

Partnering with Community Hubs to Deliver SNAP-Ed Programming

SUMMARY

Libraries are an important part of society that provide equal access to knowledge and public resources, as well as educational programs for all ages. Libraries are community hubs, making them valuable collaborative partners for providing SNAP-Ed programming. Maine SNAP-Ed has partnered with libraries across the state to serve community members and, at the national level, to develop tools for facilitating partnerships with libraries.



Photo by Patricia King

- In summer 2021, 1,065 lbs., or nearly 4,213 servings, of **gleaned produce** were distributed through the Rockland Library with the support of a Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator.
- Patrons of the Newport Library attended a 10 Tips for Adults nutrition education series and received a **take-home container garden kit** upon completion.
- At the Curtis Memorial Library, the educator partnered with library staff to develop an educational booklet about produce featured in the “**Plant Library**” and provided nutrition education.
- Maine SNAP-Ed staff participate in the national **SNAP-Ed in Libraries** workgroup, with members from SNAP-Ed programs and library staff from universities across the country.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

In 2019, Maine ranked 7th in the nation for total number of library visits. Maine also ranked 6th in the nation for number of public-access computers and 1st in the nation for number of print materials per capita. For children’s and young adults’ programming, Maine ranked 3rd and 6th, respectively, in total number of programs offered.

In Maine, 13% of residents or 1 in 8 Mainers are food insecure. About 1 in 5 children in Maine are food insecure. A person or family is considered food insecure when they do not have regular access to food for an active, healthy life because of limited funds



Maine SNAP-Ed

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education

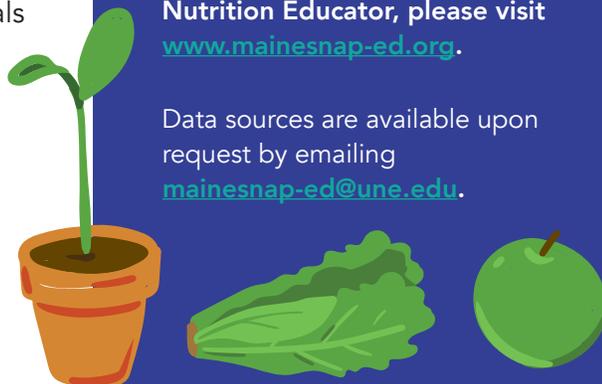
Maine SNAP-Ed is a USDA funded program that offers nutrition and cooking classes and supports projects that address food and physical activity needs in the community. Trained Nutrition Educators reach Mainers in all 16 counties. Nutrition Educators are integrated into the communities they serve and work where Mainers eat, live, learn, play, shop, and work.

The **SNAP-Ed in Libraries**

workgroup formed in 2021 and is comprised of representatives of SNAP-Ed programs and university library staff across the country. Two Nutrition Educators and one Implementing Agency staff in Maine participate in this workgroup. The primary goal of the group is to create a SNAP-Ed in Libraries toolkit to help facilitate future partnerships.

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.



to buy groceries. As resource hubs for community members, Maine libraries are critical sites to provide food insecurity resources and programming to people across all ages. Many of Maine's libraries also serve as Summer Food Service Program sites in both rural and urban communities.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Maine SNAP-Ed partners with libraries using two evidence-based approaches – direct education and policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change strategies.

In Knox County, the Nutrition Educator partnered with two town libraries to offer gleaned produce. The educator was aware of perceived stigma of visiting food pantries and wanted to distribute food at a site that people were visiting for other reasons. She hoped that community members would grab some produce while checking out books or after using the library computers. Library staff helped to promote the program on social media and in person to library patrons. Some attendees started bringing friends with them each week, adding a social element to the project. Thousands of servings of produce were distributed at these two libraries in a single summer.

In Penobscot County, an educator delivered multi-level programming at the local library by providing nutrition education for adults and take-home container garden kits for class attendees. Each kit had three seed packets, pots, soil, instructions, and recipes for the garden produce.

In Sagadahoc County, the educator partnered with Curtis Memorial Library to teach nutrition classes and support the library's "Plant Library," the onsite garden. The educator featured produce from the garden in her nutrition classes and worked on the educational booklet for the garden, adding health benefit information and recipe suggestions.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

Maine SNAP-Ed will continue to partner with community libraries to offer education and PSE programming to Mainers of all ages. So far in 2022, five Nutrition Educators have delivered nutrition education at five different libraries. As the growing season unfolds, educators will continue to support gardens and will coordinate distribution of gleaned produce from local farms. To help scale up and share best practices, Maine SNAP-Ed staff will continue to support the **SNAP-Ed in Libraries workgroup**, contributing to a toolkit that will be shared nationally.

Multi-level programming is a key part of SNAP-Ed work, with the aim of reaching individuals with reinforcing interventions or activities. An example of multi-component programming is providing **education classes** at a location at which a **community garden** is being supported by a nutrition educator. In 2020, of the 36 successfully implemented PSE change strategies, direct education was provided as complementary activity for 21 of those strategies. Marketing activities, staff training on policy implementation, and parent/community involvement are other complementary activities in multi-level programming. In 2021, Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators delivered nutrition classes to 7 libraries, reaching 81 people.



Photo by Nancy Wood

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 Office for Family Independence (OFI) at the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and implemented statewide by the University of New England (UNE) through contracts with local community organizations. Maine SNAP-Ed educates families experiencing low income on low-cost healthy eating and active lifestyles. Contact mainesnap-ed@une.edu or (207) 221-4560 for more information.

