



Virginia SNAP-ED Innovates

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education DURING COVID-19

Virginia SNAP-Ed provides education and technical assistance across the Commonwealth to promote food security through phone, online, and in-person programs and social marketing.

Challenge

Face-to-face, in-person education was limited because of the closure of many agency buildings or meeting areas.

Many individuals did not have access to digital learning opportunities.

Food security, social isolation, and higher levels of anxiety were reported.



Virginia schools modified their operations in 2021 requiring SNAP-Ed Educators to be more adaptable to the new school learning environment.

Individuals and households with low income continued to report low access to food, particularly fresh produce.



Solution

FNP Talks Phone Education



Peer Educators offered lessons by phone (and video-conferencing when possible). FNP Talks included topics on shopping with limited food options, keeping shelf stable foods on hand, and how to grow your own garden

Teen Cuisine @ Home Online Cooking Classes

The evidence-based program, Teen Cuisine, was adapted for delivery online with synchronous food preparation and nutrition classes for teens and their families.

Through funds from the Walmart Foundation and the National 4-H Council, participants also received cooking and ingredient kits.

Virginia Fresh Match, Virginia Farmers Market Association, and the Virginia Family Nutrition Program Partnership

Virginia SNAP-Ed supported community gardens and container gardens, Gardens to Go, to eligible communities. The goal of Gardens to Go was to provide SNAP-Ed eligible clients (adults and youth) with soil, pots, and vegetable plant seeds or starts along with gardening education.

Results

823



FNP talk lessons were delivered by

17 Peer Educators

17 locations across Virginia participated in Teen Cuisine @ Home



300 teens received cooking kits and food kits



One partnership, **the Giving Garden**, involved pairing a community garden with a food pantry to provide clients with fresh produce.

33

locations were provided Garden to Go supplies.

Virginia

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Success Stories

Virginia SNAP-Ed Peer Educator:

"Hailee [participant] is cooking more and she is using the cooking skills she learning from Teen Cuisine curriculum. Making choices to cook and use recipes from Teen Cuisine. She was a junior in high school and now she just graduated high school. She is actually starting her adult life cooking and eating at home verses fast food! ... It is very rewarding to know what I taught her she is using and has chosen to make a life style change being in my class."

Teen Cuisine

Virginia SNAP-Ed Participants:

"Learning meal planning has helped me to reach my personal nutrition goals."

"Thank you. Your program has helped me feed my family healthy foods and we are feeling more energy and eating more fruits and vegetables."

FNP Talks

www.ourvalley.org

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Giving Garden provides free vegetables, fruit to anyone

Mea Hibbert
Contributing writer

On an almost-90-degree morning Monday, Maria Dunn and her mother, Alice Brown, picked out free potatoes, tomatoes, corn, yellow squash, cayenne peppers, cucumbers and apples at the Giving Garden Produce Stand set up in front of the Salem Food Pantry.

"These fresh vegetables are more healthy," said Dunn. "I do a lot of stir frying."

"You don't have to worry about sodium from canned vegetables," added Brown.

Like the other 34 people who came to the produce stand that day, they appreciated getting freshly picked vegetables and fruit. Anyone can come for free produce on Monday mornings from 10 a.m. to noon or when all is given out.

Giving Garden volunteers Cindy Martin and Mindy Caesar — with moral support from her 6-year-old son Levi — helped customers select what they wanted and bagged it for them.

"This is a volunteer effort," explained Salem Farmers Market Manager Isaac Campbell. "We have a core group of a dozen volunteers at the garden, and we harvest every day. The garden is a partnership by Salem Presbyterian Church, Christ the Redeemer, the City of Salem and Virginia Cooperative Extension," he added.

"Everybody loves to have a neighbor to give extra produce,"

Campbell said. "This is kind of the community neighbor."

The garden is located across Clay Street from the Presbyterian Church.

Not only do customers get free vegetables, but also can take home recipes from the Extension Service that suggest ways to fix the produce. This week was the recipe was a colorful Vegetable Pasta Salad, using tomatoes, bell peppers and squash.

As Dunn and Brown left, Nick and Heather Dunaway and their 4-year-old daughter Ellie arrived.

"We like the free veggies because where we live, we can't grow them," Nick Dunaway said. "We have a little one who loves vegetables."

So far this summer, the Produce Stand has handed out more than 1,000 pounds of vegetables and fruit, Campbell said. About 500 pounds were donations from Salem Farmers Market vendors, such as Greenwood Farms that donated new potatoes, both white and red this week.

Rocky Ridge Farm vendor Kristie Sowers provided party pan squash, a round, flat variety that was new to many of the customers.

Later this week, Giving Garden volunteers plan to pull out some of the plantings and put in a second planting of zucchini, yellow squash and broccoli that will be ready later into September, Martin said.

It was customer Ann Herberger's first season visiting the Produce Stand. "You've got me eating good vegetables," she said, as she picked out Roma tomatoes for sauce. "You can eat real cheap this way."

She continued, "It takes some time to prepare fresh vegetables, but it's worth it. You can't get this quality in vegetables from the grocery store."

After Herberger came a man visiting for the first time who particularly appreciated the tomatoes. "There are a couple that have my name on them," he said. Any produce left on Mondays is donated to the Food Pantry.

Nearby in the shade, volunteers from Central United Methodist Church were offering free lunches. Bev Bonderman and Lynda Breedlove had chicken salad sandwiches, cookies, watermelon, slices of strawberry cake and apple pecan cake, peanut butter and strawberry jelly sandwiches for the little ones, juice boxes and cold water.

"This is the eighth year we've been providing free lunch," Bonderman said. "Everybody needs God's love." Two more volunteers from Central were handing out lunches at the Clothes Closet.

For more information on the Giving Garden or its Produce Stand, contact Isaac Campbell at 540-375-4098.



PHOTOS BY MEA HIBBERT
Giving Garden Produce Stand volunteer Cindy Martin helps customer Ann Herberger pick out fresh tomatoes, corn, peppers and other produce Monday.



Four-year-old Ellie Dunaway is excited to pick out vegetables with her parents, Nick and Heather Dunaway.

Virginia Fresh Match, Virginia Farmers Market Association, and the Virginia Family Nutrition Program

For further information and resources go to eatsmartmovemoreva.org

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