

Profile from the Field

Contact: Marie Flanagan, NCR SARE Communications Specialist
120 BAE, Univ. of Minnesota | 1390 Eckles Ave. | St. Paul, MN 55108
ph. 612.625.7027 | f. 612.626.3132 | mart1817@umn.edu

Foodbanking and Farming with Youth in Dayton, Ohio

Project Titles: Foodbanking and Farming with Youth in Dayton, Ohio

Coordinators: Lee Truesdale

Location: Dayton, Ohio

SARE Grants: \$2,000

Duration: 2016-2018

To read the full project reports, go to <https://projects.sare.org/> and search for project number YENC16-107.

The Foodbank, Inc. in Dayton, Ohio has been a hub of activity since the coronavirus outbreak. With massive COVID-19 drive-thru distributions and assistance from the National Guard, this community food supplier has shared 17.8 million pounds with more 900,000 people this year in Montgomery, Greene, and Preble counties, Ohio.

“Our community here in Dayton has had a difficult two years, starting first with a water crisis in February of 2019, 15 tornadoes in May of 2019, a mass shooting in August of 2019, and now COVID,” Lee Lauren (Alder) Truesdale, Chief Development Officer at The Foodbank. “Our team’s response to many of these emergencies, providing critical emergency food assistance, is only possible because our team knows how to be flexible, we know how to work together amid crisis, and we have the best supporters.”

Childhood hunger is a critical assistance area of concern for The Foodbank; a 2019 analysis showed their service area had a child food insecurity rate of 20.7%. In 2016, The Foodbank staff wanted to make an effort to engage more young people with their civic-minded, food-based mission.

With support from an NCR-SARE Youth Educator grant, The Foodbank worked



In Dayton, Ohio, The Foodbank, Inc. has distributed more than 4 million pounds of food since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak. They also help area youth learn more about sustainable growing, local food systems, and food insecurity.

with area farmers, schools, community centers, and Extension personnel to develop ten lesson plans about sustainable farming. The plans focused on land stewardship, sustainable growing practices, and the impact that urban growing could make on solving hunger in the Miami Valley.

“Our building and growing space sit in a very urban community, and we find that many students don’t get the chance for hands-on ‘field trips’ due to limited school funding,” said Truesdale. “We try to create a fun and accessible space for young

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children to learn and older youth to gain job and life skills.”

The Foodbank’s growing space is three acres of former industrial land. Throughout the summers of 2017 and 2018, 385 youth ranging in age from 3-16 years old planted, cared for, harvested, and helped distribute food. They learned about planting, composting, pollinators, beneficial insects, harvesting, and food preparation. Youth also learned about local food insecurity figures and the problem of hunger in the Miami Valley.

“Fresh produce can be an item that is out of reach for families living with a limited food budget,” said Truesdale. “If we can help supplement what families are buying with their small SNAP stipends, or limited budgets, by providing fresh produce, dairy products, and lean proteins, then we can help create a healthier community, and families can use the funds they have to pay for other necessary expenses.”

The Foodbank’s SARE-supported youth education classes were the first ‘formal’ youth classes offered at The Foodbank. While the COVID-19 outbreak prevented classes for summer 2020, they hope to have youth back on site in 2021. During reduced operations 2020, staff workers were able

to work on educational amenities. They added an in-vessel composting system and will add a greenhouse this fall, and will incorporate both into their youth education programs.

“The Foodbank truly benefited from SARE funding and enjoyed working with our community to both educate youth about food insecurity and how to sustain their own lives by growing healthy food,” said Truesdale.

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