Using garden-based nutrition and workplace/entrepreneurship in combination is a relatively new approach to teaching urban youth about foods, cooking, and nutrition and workplace readiness. Presented as an after school youth program, it provides experiential learning at all phases that will build life skills while involving parents and other local residents. The program takes advantage of the qualities of gardening: it is a great way to teach and inspire; it's relatively inexpensive; can take place on a small scale, indoors or out; it's easy to do and offers immediate, tangible rewards. By using plants and gardens as educational tools youth learn to think and act like scientists, develop environmental responsibility, and explore subjects across the curriculum.
Science Literacy/Gardening

Nearly 75 youth were involved in gardening projects that ran from 12 to 24 weeks depending on the group and the organization partner. Special needs high school students were involved in a 24 week program that extended from March to August beginning with indoor classroom gardening and extending through the summer to an outdoor community garden.

School enrichment programs for the 4th grade and special needs students combined activities from National Garden Association’s Grow Lab, CCS Gardening Series, and Iowa’s Growing in the Garden. Evaluations indicated overall gains in knowledge and attitudes with significant gains for plant needs, plant parts and function, and germination.

In Pleasantville, over 60 youth participated in two plant science programs implementing activities from Junior Master Gardener.

- 100% could identify one pest to plants
- 80% of students could identify two reasons why plants are helpful
- 90% of surveyed students could list two things that plants need to survive
- 90% of students could list two plant parts
- 80% of the students could identify a plant part that they eat
- 80% could explain the difference between a fruit and vegetable

Food and Nutrition

Nearly 1,000 youth participated in the Roots of Knowledge 4-H healthy lifestyles programs offered. The first phase of the program covers basic nutrition and physical activity lessons throughout the schools in Atlantic City. The second phase of the plan provided exercise and conditioning activities. The third phase provided more in-depth work with developing exercising routines, conditioning programs, and cardio workouts. The programs ranged from 1 hour in-depth workshops with smaller classes or a series of 1 hour sessions once a week for 4 to 8 weeks for entire grades. As a result of the programs:

- 100% of students could correctly identify foods in the fruit, dairy, grain groups
- 94.8% able to identify foods in the meat/bean and vegetable group
- 93.5% indicated they would tell someone what they had learned

Over 200 youth participated in activities and lessons that combined nutritional education with exercise activities. The nutrition lessons provided reinforcement of information learned and provided a base of planning an exercise routine. Youth reported:

- How to eat properly when working out (88%)
- Important things to live a healthy life by eating right and exercising (80%)
- Sportsmanship; if your friend can’t do something you still cheer them on; teamwork (80%)
- Exercise routines to improve my basketball skills (78%)
- To drink plenty of water when working out (72%)
- How to play fairly in sports (67%)
- How to do mean, median, range, and rounding when figuring out my heart and pulse rates (23%)

Workforce Readiness

A total of 286 youth received 96 hours of lessons and activities through workforce readiness and entrepreneurship programs. With assistance from an NFL/JC Penney grant, 7 teens were trained to implement workplace readiness activities to middle school youth. A total of 101 youth received 20 hours of workplace readiness education in four separate programs taught by the teens. 4-H After school Youth Workforce Skills Survey demonstrated significant gains for all 18 rated abilities; overall pre-program mean was 1.74 and the overall final post-program mean was 2.58. Review of the post session evaluations (scale of 1-5; 1-low to 5-high) by the adult mentors and teen teachers indicated the participants’ overall response to the program was 4.0, enjoyed the experience (4.75), and learned new information (4.25).

Twelve (12) Youth Corps members were trained to develop marketing pieces, set sale prices, set up record keeping, and customer relations for 3rd annual Poinsettia Sales. Over $1100 in sales were made with a profit of $604.30 to be used as “seed” money to start up the 2006 farmstand operations.
The Uptown Classic Produce completed a successful fourth year of operation with many repeat customers that had anticipated its reopening for the summer. This year, 9 Youth Corps members received 10 hours of pre-opening training and 20 hours on-the-job training during the 9 week program. Prior to opening the farm stand, the produce. They learned more about customer relations, “curb” appeal, keeping records, using spreadsheets, communication, and interpersonal skills. Significant changes for thinking, decision making, problem solving, working marketable skills, and managing were recorded. There was also significant increase for being self-responsibility & discipline, teamwork, and relating communication, cooperation.

A total of 100 youth participated in six separate 10 week certification programs to develop skills to become successful babysitters. During the program the participants learn about safety, healthy snacks and food, emergencies, communication with the parent(s), and certified CPR training.

The Uptown Classic Produce completed a successful fourth year of operation with many repeat customers that had anticipated its reopening for the summer. This year, 9 Youth Corps members received 10 hours of pre-opening training and 20 hours on-the-job training during the 9 week program. Prior to opening the farmstand, the teens were involved in 2 hour daily sessions on purchasing, pricing, marketing and advertising, management and job duties, sanitary and produce quality, and Jersey Fresh produce. They learned more about customer relations, “curb” appeal, keeping records, using spreadsheets, communication, and interpersonal skills. Significant changes for Thinking decision making, problem solving, working marketable skills, and managing were recorded. There was also significant increase for being self-responsibility & discipline, teamwork, and relating communication, cooperation.

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Seeds to Success - Gloucester County

- Trained staff provided weekly lessons and activities in areas of workforce preparation, food and nutrition education, produce identification and character education over the course of eight (8) weeks: including: using a scale, writing checks (Paying the Farmer), price list, writing a resume, trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, decision-making, citizenship, fruit fly bingo, vegetable extravaganza, fruit salad scramble, vegetable scramble and plan a meal.
- Twenty nine (29) students completed individual resumes as a result of a lesson on resume writing and accompanying hands on activity.
- Farmstand workers/students were encouraged to voluntarily complete the “Employee Daily Journal Form” yielding a total of 72 journals providing incite to their educational experience.
- Six college age interns were recruited and trained to supervise/guide the youth in their day-to-day workplace experience.

FUNdamental Finance: Financial Basics Lesson Series and Farmstand Business Operation. 115 students from four high schools participated in this training.
Pre- and post-testing showed that youth who participated showed improvements in their ability to write a check and fill out a bank deposit slip.

Youth who worked at the youth farmstand demonstrated through a pre and post season skill-a-thon a statistically significant improvement in the following four skills: ability to make change/process vouchers, produce identification, properly bagging produce and use of a produce scale/knowledge of equivalent weights.

Community Impact: Community Development, Food Security and Community Service

- The Farmstands generated total sales of $11,120 and brought affordable, nutritious foods (19,595 pounds of produce) to an estimated 1,854 consumers.
- Eleven percent of farmstand sales were sold to senior citizens and young families via the Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program produce voucher program (250 voucher redeemed).
- 201 completed Customer Satisfaction Surveys. The results showed that most customers feel/know they help local farmers by shopping at the farmstand and a large majority expressed that the youth were helpful, friendly and respectful.
- Interviews conducted with the four farmers/growers who participated in the program yielded extremely favorable results: 100% realized a new income opportunity, 100% learned that youth farmstands reach new audiences they had not considered and that youth farmstands are an effective mechanism for sustaining small farms and agriculture in southern New Jersey.

Jersey Fit:
Food and Nutrition and Healthy Lifestyles Practices

- Through Jersey Fit, an eight-week program, 230 youth learned how to select, handle and prepare healthful meals and snacks that include more fresh fruits and vegetables – with emphasis on identifying and selecting locally grown produce.
- Pre- and post-testing showed that youth improved their knowledge of how to select and prepare fruits and vegetables, identify produce grown in New Jersey, and clean and store produce.

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