



WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



FARM TO FORK FIELD DAY PROGRAM

BY THE NUMBERS

Over 2 seasons of Farm to Fork Field Trips:

- 1,025 youth participated
- 20 field day events were held
- 10 elementary schools, 3 with multiple grades, attended the program
- 5 youth community groups participated
- 23% visited a farm for the 1st or 2nd time
- 81% increased their ability to make a difference by helping harvest food for the hungry
- 4,000+ pounds of carrots, squash, and cucumbers were harvested for distribution at the Clark County Food Bank

2016

ISSUE

Washington State University Extension programs have promoted healthy living through a variety of delivery methods for individuals and families for more than 100 years. Today, health issues continue to be significant to youth and families in our state. In Washington, 24% of youth ages 10-17 and 27% of adults are overweight or obese (Department of Health, 2013). There is a strong need for people to identify the health benefits of increasing fruit and vegetable consumption and recognize the bigger picture of food systems. Putting food on the table is not only an experience that begins at the grocery store. It is important to understand that it grows locally and each person can be involved in its production and/or finding more of it locally. This is especially critical in urban settings where people are farther removed from the production of their own food. Teaching and showing youth where their food comes from and how it gets to their table can influence their desire to increase their local selection of produce for a healthy diet.

Agricultural literacy is an important way to encourage healthy eating behaviors through education about food systems. Pairing this with hands-on activities involving growing food increases the chances youth will make changes in their food choices.

RESPONSE

In an effort to connect youth to local food access and help them understand where their food comes from, 4-H and Food \$ense have worked together to develop the WSU Clark County Extension's Farm to Fork Field Days. This field trip experience gives youth the opportunity to visit the Heritage Farm and learn about local food access.

In 2014, the WSU Clark County Extension faculty, staff, and volunteers worked together to pilot the Farm to Fork Field Day program. The goal was to increase the awareness and knowledge of agriculture and the role it plays in the lives of young people in Clark County. Through Farm to Fork, area youth from schools and community groups came to the Heritage Farm to learn more about how their food grows and gets to their tables at home.

Since the pilot project, Farm to Fork has been promoted in school classrooms and community youth programs encouraging youth to participate in hands-on farm experiences. Groups participate in farm- and food-topic-related workshop stations. The topics of these stations include: planting, weeding, and harvesting produce, worm composting, water resources, bees and pollination, uses of animals and animal byproducts, food systems, and other farm-based activities.



QUOTES

“I learned why eating fresh vegetables are healthier for you than old vegetables.” 5th grader from Burton Elementary School

“Vegetables fresh from the garden taste different than the ones from the store.” 4-H summer camp participant

“Today I learned how to make a square foot garden.” 5th grader from Fircrest Elementary School

“I think I would like to be a farmer.” 5th grader from Ellsworth Elementary School

FUNDING AND PARTNERS

- Clark County Master Gardener Foundation: \$1,500 grant per year to help buy supplies and provide funding for 4 school buses.
- Farm to School 2-year grant 2016-2017: Provides part-time coordinator to enhance educational stations and partnerships, and develop a Farm To Fork Field Guide. Also provides funds to bring 2 groups of youth from each of 5 schools.
- **Partners:** Clark County Food Bank, Clark County Master Food Preservers, Clark County Master Gardener Foundation, Clark County Master Gardeners, Clark County Food \$ense Program, and Clark County 4-H

In the fall, youth have opportunities to harvest carrots and other produce that is donated to the Clark County Food Bank. The field trips are specifically connected to the classroom education series taught by Food \$ense and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program educators. The class leaders teach about healthy food choices, food systems, gardening, and food production.

The teaching stations are staffed by volunteers from 4-H, Master Gardeners, Master Food Preservers, Master Composters, Clark County Watershed, and other community agriculturally based organizations.

IMPACTS

The Farm to Fork program helps youth connect what they are learning about nutrition and gardening in the classroom with a hands-on experience. For many of these students, this is their first time visiting a farm. The learning station topics are all focused around agriculture and designed to increase knowledge of agriculture.

Since its inception in 2014, 1,025 school-age youth from ten schools and five community groups have participated in this educational experience. Through participation in the Farm to Fork activity, 81% of the youth surveyed increased their ability to make a difference in the community through feeding the hungry; 77% understand why agriculture is important and how it affects everyday life; and 91% understand the different roles animals play on the farm. All the youth have expanded their appreciation for and interaction with how food grows, and the environment where their food is grown.

Several of the schools have sent 4th or 5th graders to the Farm to Fork field days for two or more years. The teachers and principals feel it is a valuable field trip for the youth that helps them understand where their food comes from and learn more about the food system.

One youth experienced harvesting, washing, and bagging carrots to be given out at the Food Bank. A few weeks later he was opening his weekend food backpack, which is provided at his school, and he pulled out a bag of carrots just like the ones he harvested. He screamed with delight that he picked and bagged those very carrots. He truly experienced the farm to table concept.