TRAINING AND SAVINGS PROGRAM FOR VERMONT’S NEXT GENERATION OF FARMERS SEEKS YOUTH PARTICIPANTS!

Burlington, VT – Know of a young person, age 14-21, who is ready to prepare for a future in agriculture?

The UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture's Youth Agriculture Individual Development Account (Youth Ag IDA) program (found online at http://www.uvm.edu/extension/youth/vtyouthagida/) is accepting applications for its next program round. We are seeking youth who are involved with or interested in agriculture to participate in a one-year program that will both provide learning opportunities to help acquire important business management skills, and help each participant save money towards the purchase of a business-related asset. Young farmers will exit the program possessing both seed capital and financial literacy skills: key components in establishing an independent enterprise or assuming more of a management role in the family farm operation.

Upon successful completion of the program, the participant's savings will be matched at a rate of 2:1 (up to a total of $1,000 in match funding), giving young farmers two program dollars for every dollar they save toward the purchase of a productive farm asset.

What does this look like?

- Participants attend a year (approximately 10-20 hours- depending on preference) of fun, informative, hands-on learning experiences (these classes have an estimated $1,500 value)
- Participants complete approximately ten hours of online coursework
- Participants complete a business plan
- Each young farmer saves $500
- The program matches the young farmer's savings with $1,000
- The young farmer participant will then have that $1,500 to use for an asset purchase

The program will provide structured financial literacy training, business management coaching and mentoring from qualified farm business management specialists and established farmers. Participants will develop basic skills necessary to leverage their equity, manage capital productively and be a successful entrepreneur.

Even more importantly, participants will leave the program armed with increased confidence, their business plan and the skills that can help them put that plan into successful action, as they join the vibrant agriculture and food systems community that makes Vermont such a great place to live, grow, and appreciate the local bounty. Says UVM Extension
Associate Professor and Community Economic Development Specialist Mary Peabody, “We’re excited to continue to offer this combination of education, hands-on experience and the 2-for-1 match. It’s a great combination that helps these students get started right.”

Applications and more information can be found on the program’s website at http://www.uvm.edu/extension/youth/vtyouthagida/. The deadline for applications is May 15, with the program kicking off in June. Please email Program Coordinator Liz Kenton with questions: ekenton@uvm.edu.

Individuals requesting a disability-related accommodation to participate in this program should contact Liz Kenton at 802-257-6967 x308 by May 15, 2015.

The Youth Ag. IDA program was established in 2012 with funding from the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program of USDA-NIFA, grant #2011-49400-30589, and several generous local supporting businesses and families. It is the only agricultural IDA program in the country that focuses on youth. In the program’s first two cycles, 13 youth have purchased the assets that will help them launch new ag-focused businesses here in Vermont, and three more are finalizing their business plans.

Established in 1994, the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture provides timely information to Vermont communities and the UVM campus. The Center cultivates partnerships, supports innovative research and practices, and informs policy to advance sustainable food and farming systems. Learn more at http://www.uvm.edu/~susagctr/.

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