



Tomorrow's Leaders Today

Next month, on February 15, University of Vermont Extension will celebrate its 100th anniversary. This is the third and final issue in a series of publications that UVM Extension is distributing during its Centennial year. This series highlights the ways in which we help individuals, businesses, and communities put research-based knowledge to work across the entire state.

The two earlier issues published in our Centennial year, leadership in food systems and community engagement, can be found at uvm.edu/extension/centennial. We invite you to read this issue and our previous issues online and to join us in conversation on our Facebook page [facebook.com/uvmextension](https://www.facebook.com/uvmextension). Please leave your comments about the stories of our efforts, your experience with our

Extension programs, and keep up to date about ongoing UVM Extension programming that serves Vermont.

Our last issue focuses on the future, Vermont's youth. This edition is about our programs for youth, the citizens who are tasked to carry on our traditions, manage our natural resources, and develop policies for improved community development and economic opportunity.

Youth development, through programs such as 4-H, continues to be a core component of UVM Extension and has been a key element of our mission for 100 years. New, exciting programs like the Youth Agriculture Project combine understanding food systems with growing food for the local community, as well as teaching youth leadership, improved communication, and job skills that are in high demand in today's workforce.

Today, UVM Extension engages 7,184 youth in 4-H opportunities that include traditional 4-H clubs to collaborative afterschool programs, and provides learning and leadership opportunities to thousands of young Vermonters from Holland to Shaftsbury. Our Migrant Education Program provides educational opportunity to hundreds of young workers and children of families who labor on farms across the state and who contribute to the agricultural economy of Vermont. In addition, our kinship care program impacts youth by providing support to the heroic efforts of grandparents, aunts and uncles, and other family members who provide loving and stable settings for their next of kin.

Over the past 100 years much of Extension's work has been developing the strengths and talents of Vermont youth in leadership and communication, increasing youth involvement in communities and

strengthening families. While much has changed during this time, UVM Extension's commitment to our youth and to the future of the state has not.

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On the cover: From left to right, Amanda Mikes, Zack Wood, and Lura Jane Bacon participated in last year's Work and Learn program, where they learned about food systems, developed leadership skills, and worked together to sell their products locally. Read more about the 4-H Youth Agriculture Project and its programs on page 8. Photo: 4-H Youth Agriculture Project.

Support UVM Extension



4-H youth, American Legion volunteers, UVM students, parents, and community members of all ages came together in support of military kids by sewing pillowcases for children of deploying service members. Extension programs focus on strengthening the connection between youth and community. Photo: John Alden

Vermont's Next Generation

By Mark Aiken

Young and want to start a business? It's a vicious cycle because you don't qualify for credit until you *build* credit. UVM Extension's newest statewide program – the Vermont Youth Agricultural Individual Development Account (IDA) program – helps aspiring farmers learn about the fiscal responsibilities for small business owners while giving them the opportunity to raise capital for their agricultural endeavor.

The Youth Agricultural IDA program is connected to a requirement within the Farm Bill that calls for participating states to extend IDA programs. Vermont is the only state whose program focuses on youth – specifically those aged 14 to 21.

"IDA programs are not new," says UVM Extension's Ali Zipparo, coordinator of the Vermont program which kicked off this January. "What's new is an IDA program focused on young people in agriculture."

Participants of the new program complete a 20-hour curriculum that includes sessions in financial literacy, business management, equity and capital management, and entrepreneurship.

Meanwhile, participants learn valuable lessons in saving money. Up to \$500 earned during the course of the program can be deposited into their savings accounts, while the program matches every dollar saved with an additional two dollars. Participants exit the program armed with skills they need to manage the financial aspects of their businesses and up to \$1500 of capital to put toward their agricultural ventures or their family businesses.

Autumn was a period of recruitment for Zipparo and her colleagues Mary Peabody and Ben Waterman. "I was highly impressed with how much some of the young people who approached us

For 100 years UVM Extension has been helping individuals, businesses, and communities put research-based knowledge to work. Each year, thousands of Vermonters enroll in our classes to learn everything from nutrient management planning to tax preparation. Our classes are not limited to adult learners either: last year, over 7,000 youth participated in the UVM 4-H Program, one of the best proven youth development programs in the country.

If you have benefitted from a UVM Extension program, whether it was as a 4-H'er 30 years ago, or as an aspiring farmer learning about production agriculture this summer, please consider what UVM has done for you, and what you can do to make sure we are around for another century.

In honor of our 100th anniversary, we are asking you, our alumni, for support. Please consider a tax deductible gift to the UVM Extension Centennial Fund to help us to continue to provide practical education for the next 100 years. You can give online at www.uvmfoundation.org, or call 802-656-1396 for more information about how you can get involved.

were already engaged in — or even running — farm operations," Zipparo says.

Zipparo expects to see 30 enterprising young farmers complete the program between now and the summer of 2014. Proposed business proposals include livestock operations, dairy farming, honey-making, maple sugaring, community supported agriculture (CSA) farming, value-added ventures, and logging operations.

If you are interested in the Vermont Youth Agriculture IDA Program, or know anyone who might be, please contact Ali Zipparo, UVM Extension's IDA Coordinator at azipparo@uvm.edu or call 802-656-9139. You can also visit the program website at: www.uvm.edu/extension/youthagida.



Keeping Kids with Family

By Melissa Pasanen

Fifteen years ago, when Brenda Hamlin's sister called to ask if they could take in her kids while she was going through a rough time, she said, "Yes, sure we'll take them." I didn't question it," recalls Hamlin. "I think that it's good for the kids to be with family."

Joan Vance, foster parenting and kin care specialist with University of Vermont Extension, agrees with Hamlin. Over the last decade national foster care and adoption experts have also recognized the increase and the value of kinship care, as well as the many challenges facing kin care providers. These providers are most often grandparents taking responsibility for children coming from difficult circumstances. A 2008 federal law, Fostering Connections, prioritized support for kinship care and maintaining family connections for youth in foster care.

Keeping Kids with Family is Better

"Research has shown across the board that kids in kin care have better outcomes," than kids in foster care, explains Vance, noting that it helps them feel more secure, builds positive self-identity, and provides crucial support for young adults when they age out of the foster care system at 18. The growth in kinship care has also driven a need for help with everything from the financial burden, to navigating the legal system, to the sensitive task of keeping lines of communication open and safe between children and birth parents. "It's heroic work," Vance says, "people stepping up for kids, raising other people's children as their own."

Vance works in conjunction with the Child Welfare Training Partnership, a collaboration between the Vermont Department for Children and Families and UVM's Department of Social Work. She also partners with Vermont Kin as Parents (VKAP), a statewide nonprofit for which Brenda Hamlin works in administrative support. Hamlin and VKAP's executive director, Lynn Granger, both praise Vance's research initiatives to help the state better

understand the dynamics and needs of the kin care community.

"Research shows that the ability to stay connected to family and to learn about family helps kids," Granger emphasizes. "It helps them understand who they are, where they're from, gives them a sense of belonging, especially for teenagers who are just trying to figure out who they are as an individual." Vance also helps develop and evaluate workshops and training programs for foster parents, including kin caregivers and social workers. Working with VKAP, Vance is helping to lay groundwork for a county-based kinship navigator pilot program to provide local support for caregivers around the state. She is also establishing a Northeast regional resource network.

Helping Families Care for Family

Vance's contributions are a great example of what UVM Extension can provide to the community, says Dr. Gale Burford of the UVM Department of Social Work. "It really overlaps with their mission and their expertise in developing healthy families and communities by bringing those resources to those with greatest need," Burford says.

Cindy Walcott, deputy commissioner of Vermont's Department for Children and Families, has also worked closely with Vance. "Joan has brought expertise to many different tables in the state, and her work is helping us understand this important area," Walcott says. "The bottom line is that a lot of children are living with relatives because there is some problem or disruption in their family," Walcott says, explaining that situations may range widely from parental military service to having an incarcerated parent. "Oftentimes the children have also had fairly disrupted upbringings and they're challenging to parent. These families need our understanding and our support."

Families like the Hamlins demonstrate the greatest of family values: the need to care for one another. Circumstances have



At home with Dyllan, Emily, Brianna, and their new puppy. Photo: Melissa Pasanen

The Face of Family

Like every busy household with kids, Brenda and Craig Hamlin's home in Essex Junction always has a lot going on. On a recent afternoon, dinner simmered on the stove as the family prepared to attend a school concert. Brianna, 17, who would be performing, showed off her beautifully braided hair. Emily, 7, collected eggs from the family's backyard chickens. Her twin, Zachary, ran outside to play with friends and Dyllan, 12, popped in and out of the kitchen. A new puppy added to the happy bustle.

The one small difference in the Hamlin household is that the youngsters in the house are not the couple's biological children, although each is related by blood to Brenda or Craig Hamlin. This makes the family part of a growing movement called kinship care, in which relatives step up for youngsters whose birth parents cannot care for them. Together, they are one of many new faces of family in Vermont. For more information and resources, please go to www.vermontkinaspaparents.org.

led the Hamlins to take in other young relatives, including adopting three of their grandchildren and taking in a great-niece. Hamlin has no regrets, although she says it does take lots of physical and emotional energy and resources. But it's all worth it, she says, smiling at Emily coloring next to her at the kitchen table. "Family loves you," Hamlin says. "Besides, family belongs together. We take care of our own."



Kinship Care in Vermont

As of October, 2012, of just under 1,000 Vermont minors living in custodial care, 20% live with relatives as licensed foster parents (DCF).

2,100 Vermont children live in a home headed by a grandparent (Census 2010).

551 children live under minor guardianship, the majority with family (UVM Extension).

The Many Faces of UVM 4-H

By Melissa Pasanen

Volunteer 4-H club leaders like Clara Nadeau of Holland and Mary Fay in Jericho would both agree that helping young members find their voice is one of the most rewarding parts of their job. When Nadeau accompanies her club to the national dairy conference in Wisconsin, when Fay takes her group to the horse show in Kentucky, or when either club attends the Eastern States Exposition, it is the youngsters' poise in public and their ability to present information clearly and articulately that makes their leaders most proud.

"The children in our community have just blossomed with 4-H," Nadeau says. Fay adds, "I'm so proud of my older kids, the officers of our club, when they help make the younger ones more comfortable talking in front of everyone."

"4-H is a life and job skills development program," explains Sarah Kleinman, state 4-H program director. "Our mission is to provide positive youth development opportunities that allow for school-age youth to develop life and job skills necessary to contribute to society as responsible, capable and caring citizens."

The common thread between the clubs and enrichment programs, as well as camps and youth leadership activities also offered through 4-H, is their hands-on approach and emphasis on four essential elements: mastery, belonging, generosity, and independence. Those elements tie well into the original four H's: head, heart, hands and health.

STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering, Math

It might surprise people to learn that 4-H provides broad skill-building resources to such a wide audience, but these offerings are a key part of the national youth development program housed at the country's land grant universities in every state. While the agricultural aspect of clubs might be 4-H's most visible symbol, all of Vermont's 100-plus clubs support the 4-H mission of science education, which can be



4-H connects youth of all ages to other youth, and 4-H members to community through adult leaders, mentors, and volunteers. Here members from three 4-H clubs come together with adult volunteers to complete a community service project for children of deployed service members.
Photo: John Alden

found in almost everything they do. "It's really about youth participating in activities that interest them," continues Kleinman. "That could be cooking, digital photography, shooting sports, or community service."

In one recent program, the fourth and fifth-graders in Winooski were making movies, but first they heard a quick overview of how videography captures moving images just like digital photography captures still images. Then they jumped into brainstorming plot lines: one group mapped out a bullying scenario and what they would do to address it, while the other collaboratively spun an intricate tale of horror and romance. The eight students were participating in the first meeting of 4-H Tech Wizards, an after-school program that emphasizes hands-on experiences and activities with technologies like video

production, website development, and robotics. It is one of a wide variety of after-school and in-school enrichment programs supplied by UVM Extension's 4-H program, free of charge to schools and educators statewide. Many of these programs, like Tech Wizards, focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), a priority area for the entire national education community.

After-School and Enrichment Programs

UVM Extension 4-H offers turn-key enrichment programs to schools and educators, complete with manuals, equipment, extra support materials, and additional training for educators. Sometimes Extension is even able to provide a 4-H educator to lead the program. "We know we need stuff that will get kids excited, but we also need to educate the providers," says Kleinman, who heads up a

team of 14 educators, half of whom are based in the counties in which they work.

Tom Fontaine, a science and math teacher at Kurn Hattin, a residential school for at-risk children in southern Vermont, works closely with the 4-H educator based in Brattleboro to offer enrichment programs in subjects like forensics, geocaching, and photography to his students. "4-H programs have done miraculous wonders with motivating our students in the classroom with hands-on science and technology," Fontaine says. "It's not only stimulated my kids but has helped with their attitudes towards learning, towards behavior and towards responsibility." With the high cost of sophisticated technical equipment, Fontaine says, "We would never in a million years be able to offer this depth of



4-H programs help youth focus and achieve by engaging in projects they enjoy. Embedded in those projects are lessons in science, engineering, technology, and math. Project goals help kids of all ages develop skills that will help them in the work world, including public speaking, communication, record keeping, and group work. A connection to community through volunteers who bring skills to teach and service projects to benefit their communities, helps 4-H'ers develop a commitment to community that lasts through adulthood (Tufts University 4-H Study of positive Youth Development).
Photo: John Alden

programming to our kids. UVM Extension's enthusiasm and commitment to reaching out to us is invaluable."

In the Northeast Kingdom, Diane Janukajtis partners with the Lamoille County 4-H educator in her job as After-School Program Director for five schools in the Caledonia North Supervisory Union. "The 4-H model of experiential learning really fits with what we're trying to do," she says. "They're inquiry-based and hands-on and they come with so many free wonderful materials and staff. They let us offer high-quality programs with little expense and prep time. It really enables us to do our work better." Beyond STEM programs like Tech Wizards – which has been "a huge hit" at Lyndon Town School, Janukajtis says – she and her team have offered 4-H cooking, babysitting, and gardening programs. In addition, Caledonia and Lamoille county 4-H educator Lindsay Jones is working with area middle schoolers on a leadership club with a focus on community service.

Youth Leadership

Leadership development is a huge part of the 4-H mission, explains 4-H Teen and Leadership Program Coordinator Lauren Traister, who coordinates a number of teen and preteen-focused efforts across the state, many of which are open to non-4-H members. "The teenage years can be difficult, when they are figuring out what their identity is and what their identity could be," Traister says. "We try to help them find avenues that are exciting to them to connect with other youth with similar interests so that they can have that sense of belonging, of being part of something." Whether they are participating in an environmental science conference or camp, taking trips to the state or national capitals, or playing a role in the annual Teen Congress gatherings, the goal is for youth to develop a base of skills that will help them be "college-, career-, and civic-ready," Traister says. "We're trying to build a strong foundation for society."



Derrick Cram is a dedicated 4-H alumnus who lives the model of caring for community. He pursued his love of spinning music through 4-H and has carried that passion into a successful DJ and entertainment business. Cram gives many of his volunteer hours to supporting youth in 4-H and encourages others to do the same. Photo: Courtesy of Derrick Cram

4-H "Jam Man" Derrick Cram

Back when he was a sixth grader, if you'd told Derrick Cram that 4-H would help him build a successful DJ career and DJ company with clients around the Northeast, he would probably have laughed. "As a kid, I thought 4-H was a great way to get to the fair," Cram, now 30, says. His mother had done 4-H before him and the club she started in their hometown of Leicester focused on dairy with some food, gardening and leadership activities.

As he grew older, Cram became very involved in the Teen Congress statewide, regionally and nationally, as well as going on the Citizenship Washington Focus trips twice. "It was a big thing," he says, "being able to relate to kids from other regions and talking about issues and figuring out our own solutions." Compared to high school cliques, Cram found his 4-H peer group gave him "a new chance to make friends, to fit in. Whenever you walked through the door, everyone had a smile and you felt supported."

It was on the Lake Champlain cruise at the end of Vermont Teen Congress that Cram had his first career break after he begged the organizer to let him DJ. In retrospect he realizes the risk he (and the organizer) took, but he was an instant hit and soon had gigs all over the state from fellow 4-H'ers. Now his Brandon-based Jam Man Entertainment employs 13 DJ's, including three who are 4-H alumni, and Cram has traveled for business as far as Las Vegas and China. "4-H fueled my passion; it gave me confidence," he says, "and all the leadership stuff really helped me build my business, hold meetings and speak in front of people."

Now Cram spends his spare time giving back to 4-H with donations in-kind, in time, and in financial support of 4-H programs and mission. Cram encourages others to do the same, stressing that you never know the difference you'll make.

For more information about how you can get involved, please call 802-656-1396 or consider giving online at www.alumni.uvm.edu/giving/extension

MaKayla Foster, 14, of Middlebury has been involved in 4-H, she says, "as long as I can remember" and, over the last few years, has participated in many of the preteen and teen leadership programs including Teen Congress, Mini Congress (for preteens) and Teen Leadership Weekend. Her 4-H club focuses on arts and crafts, and community service projects like collecting handmade cards for active duty military personnel at Addison County Field Days. "4-H is about so much more than animals," she says. The teen programs, she adds, have really helped her "build confidence being in a different environment. They've given me confidence in myself and my abilities in what I can do." The high school freshman particularly enjoyed the "Raise Your Voice Day at the Capitol" in Montpelier. "The whole event emphasized standing up and having a voice," Foster says. "Just because you're a kid doesn't mean that you don't have a voice."



Vermont 4-H

To find out more about 4-H, or to get involved, contact your local UVM Extension office (toll-free in Vermont):

Bennington	1-800-287-1552
Berlin	1-866-860-1382
Brattleboro	1-800-278-5480
Burlington	1-800-571-0668
Middlebury	1-800-956-1125
Morrisville	1-866-260-5603
Newport	1-866-260-5561
Rutland	1-800-281-6977
St. Albans	1-800-639-2130
St. Johnsbury	1-800-545-8920
Springfield	1-800-278-5471

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Helping Kids COPE with Divorce

By Mark Aiken



COPE (Coping with Separation and Divorce) instructors Jeff Hess and Susan Fay consult before meeting participants for their four-hour class at the St. Albans courthouse. The COPE program aims to ease the strain of divorce on children by providing parents and partners with tools to help them deal with or avoid the stresses that come with family reconfiguration.

Photo: John Alden

There's no way around it — divorce is a difficult process and it's often most difficult for the children. For this reason, University of Vermont Extension and the Vermont courts joined forces to make the process smoother. For 20 years, Vermont family courts have been guiding couples filing for separation or divorce to a COPE class (Coping with Separation and Divorce).

When two people disengage as a romantic couple, reconfiguring their lives into two households is not easy. "It's often a time when emotions are high and energy is low," says Extension's Marcia Bedig, COPE coordinator. "The courts decided they wanted more educational opportunities for litigants."

Bedig estimates that 35,000 parents have participated in COPE sessions statewide since the program's inception. "Parenting is such an important job and

one that comes with so little training and support," Bedig says. Providing relevant information and the opportunity for discussion is very rewarding."

All About the Kids

During difficult times, there is much to be gained by sitting with a group of people who are in the midst of similarly hard experiences. This bonding, however, is not the primary focus of the program. COPE is about kids. "It's not divorce that hurts children. It's the *handling* of divorce," Bedig says. "We want people to focus more on their kids than on their grievances with each other."

Susan Fay, an experienced COPE instructor who helped write the original curriculum, approaches each COPE session with the same goal. "I want to raise awareness about what children are experiencing," she says.

Classroom Communication

The program uses 18 instructors who lead one or two COPE sessions per month. The instructors lead in pairs, to address the communication needs of both men and women throughout the class. COPE uses small-group brainstorming sessions, videos, and role-playing activities instead of lectures. "There's actually a lot of laughter," Bedig says, and even downright hilarity as Fay and her co-instructor role-play teen-parent interactions with the class.

"It's the laughter of recognition of ourselves flailing about and the teen twisting us into knots," says Bedig. "Every parent can relate, and the atmosphere in the classes is therefore not one of gloom and doom."

Most people attend COPE classes with their partner; some do not. The program promotes cooperation, though, and can serve to lay solid groundwork for these new households. "The challenge is realigning as parenting partners," Bedig

says. "We advocate adopting more of a business-like mindset." This way, everyday contacts like pick-ups, drop-offs, or even attending youth soccer games don't become emotional drains. "For this reason, the course does a lot to cover communication," she says.

Bedig also keeps sight of Extension's larger goal of bringing research to the public when she organizes the COPE program. She believes that participants leave COPE classes with new insights, practical advice, and — above all — hope. At the end of the class, participants fill out evaluation forms, and the staff goes over all of them. "These are telling," says Lucas. "They indicate that people are getting something from the program." These, he says, and the people that he meets in grocery stores year after year. "Thanks," they say. "That class really made a difference."



Learning to COPE

COPE instructors are talented — and well-trained. "They all have some experience mediating, teaching, or counseling," Bedig says. Many of the most experienced instructors have led 300 COPE classes or more. New instructors interview with Bedig, observe classes, and then work with an experienced instructor partner. Bedig observes instructors regularly, and the entire team participates in annual trainings. "Marcia is on top of the latest research," instructor Susan Fay says of Bedig. "She's full of new information, and she keeps us up-to-date."

"Everyone who participates in the classes has such a unique situation," says Thomas Lucas, an 18-year veteran instructor in the COPE program. "It would be hard to know what to teach everyone, so I just want everyone to leave with a couple ideas that help their kids."

Parents leave the course with support, too, including a parent handbook which includes local and national resources that expand on topics touched on in the four-hour class. "The goal is that parents will be inspired to learn more and to access beneficial resources," Bedig says.

Vermont's Migrant Education Program

By Melissa Pasanen



Migrant youth ages 22 and younger are eligible to receive instructional support to help them with their educational goals. From basic literacy, to GED's, in-school placements, and out-of-school instruction, UVM Extension partners with the Vermont Department of Education to deliver this service on farms and in farm communities throughout Vermont. With an estimated 1,200 to 1,500 migrant farm workers on dairy farms alone, the need for support and education is critical.

Photo: Melissa Pasanen

my name and explain the program. It's seamless and helps me enroll the students in school, get them healthcare and other resources, and connect them with the community."

In regions where Extension staff provides instructional support for young migrant workers, this almost always takes the form of weekly on-farm visits to provide English language lessons interwoven with life skills. "We try to increase cultural competency between employers and employees, help them communicate for better safety," says Shea. "Sometimes we just throw the whole lesson plan out and walk around the farm translating." In a few rare cases, VMEP has helped enroll younger students in high school while they continue to work. Shea hopes to connect more students with online GED or other high school diploma programs, perhaps even in their native countries.

During a recent evening session on a central Vermont dairy farm, Antonio, 20, went over his homework assignment with VMEP tutor Sally Black who works with six students on six different farms. "They are super-motivated and enthusiastic," she says. "Even after a long day of work, to show up with a notebook and pen in hand shows me they value the program and the lessons."

Shyly, Antonio read aloud a short essay about a visit to New York to see some family members and then shared one of his first lessons from before he knew any English. In Spanish he wrote, "My dream is to learn to speak English very well and later to teach at the schools in my country, El Salvador." A year ago when Antonio first arrived, "I didn't speak English, nothing at all. My boss ask me to do something and I don't understand. English opened the door to a new world," he says with a big smile.

As they worked, the farmer stopped by. Like many Vermont dairy farmers, he depends heavily on migrant workers to keep his business afloat, to fill positions he is no longer able to fill with local labor; UVM Extension estimates there are 1,200 to 1,500 migrant workers employed on dairy farms around the state. "Without their help, we wouldn't be able to have these cows," the farmer says, referring to Antonio and a few other Spanish-speaking farmhands. "We needed help to communicate with them. It certainly helps when they can understand us."



Educating Our Communities

Recently, the number of migrant students served each year in Vermont has hovered between 450 and 500, divided somewhat equally between in-school and out-of-school youth. In-school youth are generally the children of farmhands on large dairy operations. "They move from school to school and have a harder time being successful; they're kind of in survival mode," Shea says. In Vermont, this group is mostly native English speakers and after they are identified by Extension, supplemental instructional support is provided by local or regional school systems.

The out-of-school group is 90 percent Spanish-speaking, largely from Mexico; 97 percent work in dairy and the average age is 19, although some are as young as 14. Extension staff provide instructional support to this group in nine counties; the rest are covered by school systems, in accordance with federal laws that guarantee access to education for these young workers.

For more information on migrant education in Vermont, contact: www.uvm.edu/extension/mep.

In 1960, journalist Edward R. Murrow first illuminated the plight of migrant farm workers; the government responded with the federal Migrant Education Program of 1966, ensuring migrant farm children up to the age of 22 receive the necessary support for academic success. More than half a century later, University of Vermont Extension continues to help fill this need, although "today's farming community is different," says Erin Shea, state program coordinator for UVM Extension's state identification and recruitment coordinator (VMEP).

The New Face of Migrant Workers

Single men and women are the new faces of migrant farm workers in Vermont, Shea explains, many of them under the age of 22 and eligible for educational assistance. Shea's team works with Mary Mulloy, VMEP state director for the Vermont Department of Education. Participant identification and recruitment are two key aspects of the program, followed by instructional support. UVM Extension handles the identification and recruitment of eligible youth and provides some instructional support to the program.

"Erin and her team are critical partners," Mulloy says. "Extension has a great reputation for knowing the agricultural and farm system in Vermont. You need to be able to walk onto a farm and understand what you're seeing. This is very sensitive and difficult work, to show up on a farm cold turkey and try to find every eligible student like the federal government charges us to do."

Building Meaningful Relationships

In Vermont, school-aged children in families make up half of all those served in the migrant education program. Joyce Ploof works as a VMEP support specialist for Franklin Central County Supervisory Union, which serves all eligible in-school students in its region after they've been identified by Extension. "Extension recruiters are already out on the farm and have established relationships with the farmers. They play an invaluable role," Ploof says. "They mention

Learning by Doing, the 4-H Way

By Mark Aiken

Brattleboro High School senior Jessica Ortlieb heard about the 4-H Youth Agriculture Summer Work and Learn program at school. It was her first job, and, until then, the idea of a career in agriculture had never even crossed her mind. “I had never considered a career in agriculture before. Now I see a whole new range of careers I might be interested in,” she says. Next summer she plans to apply to a local farm operation that grows shrubs, perennials, and annuals.

The 4-H Summer Work and Learn experience is a youth mentoring program, that provides classes, workshops, and hands-on learning to support youth in agriculture. “We’re targeting more 14-21 year-olds now,” says project coordinator Liz Kenton, and focusing more on the needs of teens and young adults involved in agriculture.

The 4-H Youth Agriculture Project covers a wide variety of agricultural topics, delivered through UVM Extension outreach programs. Through these programs, youth learn life skills in agriculture including a variety of safety topics like tractor safety (see box).

Work to Learn

Summer Work and Learn, the central program of the 4-H Youth Agriculture Project, accomplishes its goal by putting kids in learning and leadership roles. “I knew nothing at first,” says Ortlieb. “We had lots of supervision in the beginning,” including leadership training, team-building activities, and direct hands-on supervision. “Eventually they gave us more independence,” she says, including the task of overseeing the distribution of labor.

“Halfway through, someone had the idea of assigning two different work leaders each week,” Ortlieb explains. Participants worked 20-hour weeks, with weekly leaders coming in for an extra half-day to prioritize tasks. They assigned responsibilities like weeding, cleaning, washing, marketing, and deliveries to a

market or food shelf. For Ortlieb, the stints as leader were valuable opportunities.

“It was difficult at first,” she says. “I had to build confidence.” By the end of the summer, she felt more comfortable speaking up – which helped not only in her job, but at home, at school, and in her social life. On a professional level, she earned an OSHA accreditation for her farm-safety training and stayed on part-time at the farm after Work and Learn ended.

Leaders of tomorrow... and today

One of the funding sources for the Summer Work and Learn is Vermont’s Department of Labor, and with this funding comes an obligation to provide opportunities for at-risk teens and teens with fewer opportunities. UVM Extension’s Sarah Kleinman, Vermont’s 4-H program director, believes in setting the bar high. “At-risk kids sometimes work with lower expectations,” she says. “That leads to low achievement.” Programs that set kids up for success and achievement help build contributing members of society.

“Youth are not just the leaders of tomorrow,” Kleinman says. “Given the opportunity, they can be the leaders of today.” And that’s good news for the future of agriculture in Vermont.



Jordan, Alisha, and Ruth work among the beets at the 4-H Youth Agriculture Summer Work and Learn program. These kids and all participants learned about Vermont food systems, managing agricultural tasks and teams, shared leadership, and communication. All Summer Work and Learn participants manage their own agricultural products by growing, harvesting, and marketing their crops.

Photo: UVM Extension 4-H Youth Agriculture Project

To learn more about the 4-H Youth Agriculture Project, including the Summer Work and Learn Program, please contact project coordinator Liz Kenton at Liz.Kenton@uvm.edu or toll-free at 1-800-278-5480 ext. 17.



Teaching Safety First

Here in Vermont, where small family farm operations are prevalent, farming can be dangerous business for kids as well as adults. Nationally, there are 150 tractor rollover fatalities each year and thousands more injuries. Seven out of 10 farms go out of business within a year of such an incident. In fact, farmers are 800 percent more likely to be injured on the job than the average worker, and tractor-related incidents are hardly the only causes of on-the-farm fatalities and incidents.

“You are talking about a very diverse environment,” says Kristen Mullins, 4-H Youth Farm Safety Project coordinator. “You have machinery, livestock, pesticides, chemicals, and long hours.”

Here, young people often have big responsibility and increased exposure to risk. Take 10th graders Haley and Alison Boise, who work at the Clifford Farm in Starksboro. The Boise sisters administer medications to calves, work with acidic cleaning agents, and operate ATVs and other machinery and equipment. “We are definitely concerned about safety,” says Alison Boise. “We pay close attention.”

The 4-H Youth Farm Safety Project aims to increase that attention to safety by reaching young people through programs, tables at exhibits, expositions, and open houses, and workshops at schools, conferences, and events. There is even an online game under construction called “Keeping It Farm Safe.”

This past summer, 53 youths aged 12 to 15 attended 4-H Farm Safety Camps at UVM and Vermont Technical College. “We bring information to the youth so they can take personal responsibility as they build their mastery on the farm,” says Mullins.

Farm Safety Camp activities and curricula have real on-the-job applications. Camp participants watch videos of interviews with people who suffered accidents working with farm equipment. “Then we actually went out and looked at – and worked with – that same equipment on the UVM farm,” says Alison Boise. “We inspected and operated the equipment to see if there was anything wrong.” But 4-H Farm Safety Camp focuses on much more than machinery. “The material didn’t just apply to farming,” Alison says. “The first aid information – and most everything – goes way beyond agriculture.”