

Community Food Mentors Strengthen Self Sufficiency Skills of Food Pantry Users



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Project Goal

Emergency food recipients at food pantries will increase consumption of fresh produce and strengthen food self-sufficiency skills as a result of interactive demonstrations conducted by volunteer peer educators.

Methods

1. Community Food Mentors (CFMs) undergo specialized training in basic nutrition, food safety, cooking & preserving fresh produce, poverty awareness and cultural sensitivity.
2. Master Gardener Volunteers grow crops specifically earmarked for CFM distribution at food pantries throughout the growing season.
3. Community Food Mentors demonstrate food preparation techniques, provided recipes and taste tests, and distribute free produce at food pantries during regular emergency food distribution times.
4. To determine long term program impact, emergency food recipients are surveyed six months after participating in CFM demonstrations and receiving donated produce.

Implications

With training and support from Cooperative Extension, volunteer peer educators can effectively engage emergency food recipients at food pantries to improve their diets and food self sufficiency skills by using more fresh produce when preparing meals.

Extension staff train Community Food Mentors in food safety, food preparation, food preservation and demonstration skills.



These food preparation skills and recipes are demonstrated by Community Food Mentors at food pantries.

MONTH	FEATURED PRODUCE	SKILLS TAUGHT	SAMPLE RECIPES
July	Kale	Washing and Storing Produce	Kale cranberry stir fry Kale white bean soup Kale chips
August	Summer squash	Storing Leftovers Safely	Garden ratatouille Zucchini lasagna Garden skillet sizzle
September	Onions, Tomatoes	Freezing Produce	Chili Roasted tomato and spinach pasta
October	Carrots, Winter Squash	Roasting Root Vegetables, Preparing Winter Squash	Carrot spinach quiche Tropical carrot salad Glazed butternut squash

Master Gardener Volunteers grow crops for CFMs to distribute to emergency food recipients at food pantries.



Community Food Mentors conduct cooking demonstrations, offer taste tests and distribute free produce, healthy recipes, and food safety/storage bulletins at food pantries.



Results

Data from participants surveyed 6 months after intervention, 2016 – 2018, n = 80

