

# Centering Communities: Making Lasting Connections for Health



**MAINE**



**SNAP-Ed**

Healthy Eating on a Budget

**ANNUAL REPORT 2024**

# Building on Community Strengths to Improve the Lives of All Mainers

Nutrition and food security are essential to the health of individuals, families, and communities across Maine. The results in this annual report show that Maine SNAP-Ed works and is a proven tool that provides nutrition and food security leading to:

- improved health behaviors,
- chronic disease prevention-focused environments, and
- stronger, more self-sufficient Maine communities.

Maine SNAP-Ed engages with local community partners to build and strengthen environments that empower individuals and families to make healthy lifestyle choices. Healthier food, nutrition, and physical activity behaviors reduce the risk of chronic disease and help reduce healthcare costs. The community spread on pages 14 and 15 shows the impact of investing in locally led approaches that reached adults and youth in Maine with health education programming and community supports that improved access to healthier food and opportunities to be physically active.

To add to the impact, Maine SNAP-Ed has been in the news! This past year, Maine SNAP-Ed's work with community partnerships received attention and coverage from local news and media outlets. Snippets from five news stories that describe and uplift community successes are located throughout this report. A clip of the Boothbay Register article is on the right-hand side of this page. Articles from the Bangor Daily News, Sun Journal, and Harvest magazine are highlighted on page 6, and an article from The County is noted on page 18.

In keeping with the theme of featuring newsworthy SNAP-Ed results, this report includes two in-depth stories: the "Power of Produce: Farmers Market Incentive Program" on page 13; and "Nudging Towards Healthy Choices: Collaborating with SNAP Retailer to Promote Healthy Shopping" on pages 16 and 17.

This annual report demonstrates that in 2024, Maine SNAP-Ed invested in local communities, strengthening their ability to improve and sustain the health, well-being, and economic stability of the people of Maine, particularly those most vulnerable.

The screenshot shows a news article from the Boothbay Register. The article title is "Fostering healthy lives, together" and it is dated Friday, 02/23/2024 at 1:45pm, by Fritz Freudenberger. The main image shows two women, Jess Breithaupt and Larissa Hannan, standing next to a white van with its back open, loading boxes of sweet potatoes. Below the image is a caption: "Jess Breithaupt, left, food security connector at HLC, and Larissa Hannan, director of HLC, move sweet potatoes into the HLC van to distribute to the community in 2023. Courtesy of Healthy Lincoln County". The article text discusses the work of Healthy Lincoln County (HLC) in providing nutrition education and distributing fresh produce. A quote from Larissa Hannan is included: "While we don't do everything, we do try and involve ourselves in a lot of different projects," she said. "So that gets us a wide variety of partners, which we're so fortunate for. So, even if we don't do something, we can definitely try and get someone to the right place, whatever service they might be looking for." The article concludes by stating that the organization began in 2001 and now works with over 60 community partners in areas including government, finance, health, religion, agriculture and education.

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# Maine SNAP-Ed 2024: Investing in Community Health

## Direct Education

Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators delivered **7,522 free classes** from evidence-based, trauma-informed curricula reaching a total of **21,746** youth and adult participants. Many of those participants attended multiple classes in a series, resulting in more than **119,053 contacts**.

Curricula	Participants
Pick a better snack™	8,738
Growing Active Readers	4,293
Food Smarts Kids	2,664
Eat Well Play Hard in Child Care Settings	2,092
10 Tips for Adults	971
10 Tips for Teens	779
Cooking Matters for Kids	729
Cooking Matters at the Store	546
Cooking Matters for Adults	331
Cooking Matters for Teens	234
Cooking Matters for Child Care Professionals	131
Cooking Matters for Families	82
Come Cook with Me/Kaaley Ila Kari	80
Cooking Matters for Parents/Caregivers	67
Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Online Course	9



## Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) Change Interventions

Nutrition Educators **joined community partners** in schools, clinics, libraries, and other community spaces to ensure all Mainers have **access to nutritious food** and **welcoming spaces for physical activity**.

**28 NEW** or **EXPANDED PSE change interventions**, reaching over **9,000** Mainers in **89 community sites**. When combined with **13 MAINTAINED PSE** strategies, Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators reached **15,000 youth and adults**.

### Top PSE Changes

- **Gleaning excess farm produce** for Mainers eligible for SNAP
- Point of decision prompts to make **healthy shopping choices**
- **Community signage and StoryWalks®** to promote physical activity

## Social Marketing and Media

The Maine SNAP-Ed **SHOP, COOK, EAT** Healthy on a Budget social marketing campaign uses **multiple platforms** to drive community members to the Maine SNAP-Ed website to **find recipes, sign up for a class, and gain access to other local nutrition and physical activity resources**. In 2024, it resulted in:

**2,667,846** impressions on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Google platforms — **UP 8.78%** from 2023.

**3,585,570** impressions were achieved through targeted television ads airing a 30-second "Maine SNAP-Ed in Motion" video.



**Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators are based in the following organizations, working to empower their communities, build on existing assets, and create healthy, accessible environments for all Mainers:**

City of Bangor

City of Portland, Public Health Division

Coastal Healthcare Alliance (MaineHealth)

Coastal Healthy Communities Coalition (University of New England)

Healthy Acadia

Healthy Androscoggin (Central Maine Community Health)

Healthy Communities of the Capital Area

Healthy Community Coalition of Greater Franklin County (MaineHealth)

Healthy Lincoln County (MCD Global Health)

MaineGeneral Medical Center

Healthy Oxford Hills (Western Maine Health/MaineHealth)

Mid Coast Hospital (MaineHealth)

Penobscot Bay Community Health Partnerships

Somerset Public Health (Redington-Fairview General Hospital)

The Opportunity Alliance

University of New England Center for Excellence in Public Health

Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness

- Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians
- Mi'kmaq Nation
- Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkomikuk
- Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik
- Penobscot Nation

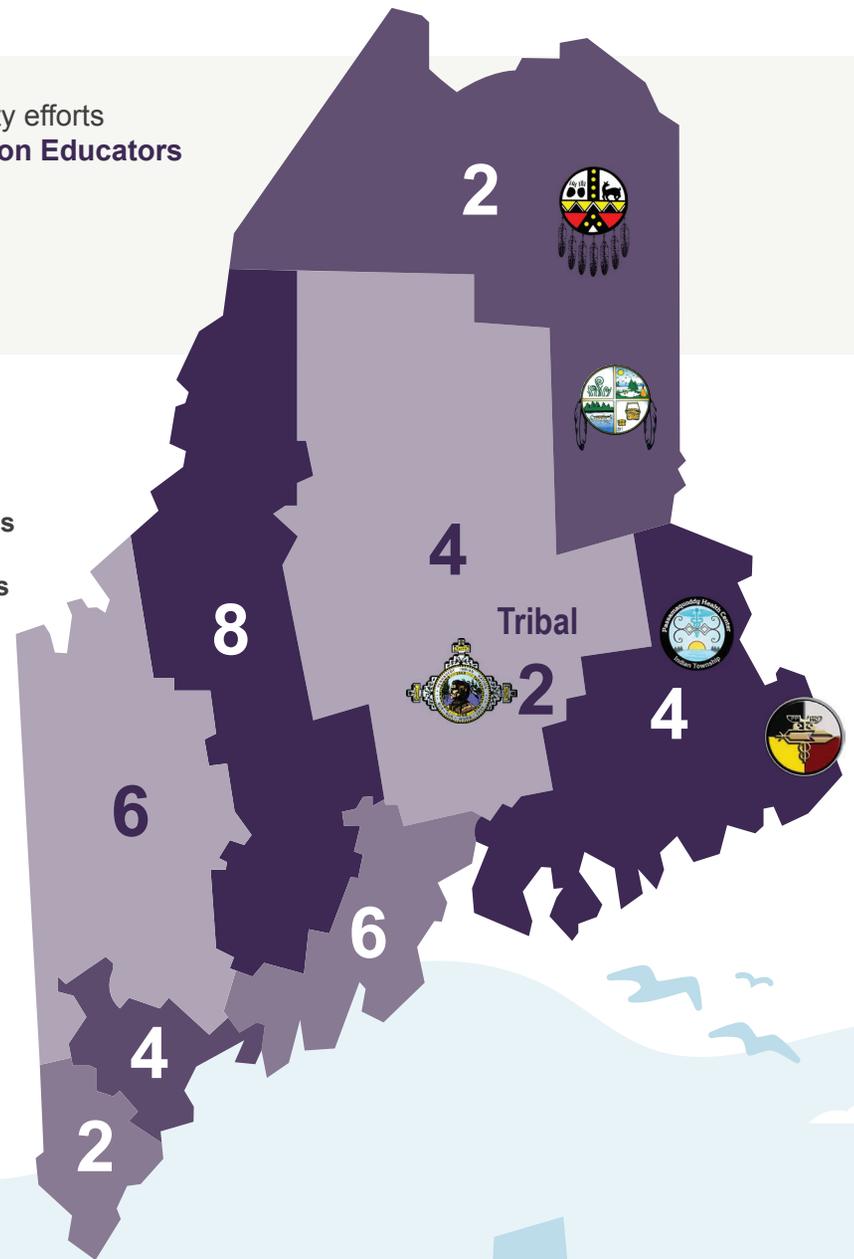
# Statewide Collaborations

**38 Nutrition Educators** work across all **16 Maine counties**, building on community efforts to promote health and well-being. **The numbers represent the number of Nutrition Educators in each of the 9 public health districts in 2024.**

2 Aroostook    4 Cumberland    6 Midcoast    2 Tribal    2 York  
 8 Central    4 Downeast    4 Penquis    6 Western

## Local Partners: Collaborating for Healthy Communities

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>105</b> Eligible Child Care and Head Start Programs | <b>10</b> Adult Education, Job Training, TANF, and Veteran Services Sites     | <b>176</b> Eligible Schools and Youth Education Sites |
| <b>37</b> Individual or Public Housing Sites           | <b>22</b> Health Care Clinics and Hospitals                                   | <b>28</b> Community or Recreation Centers             |
| <b>12</b> Libraries                                    | <b>31</b> Food Pantries, Food Banks, Congregate Meal Sites, and Soup Kitchens | <b>8</b> Faith-Based Centers                          |
| <b>9</b> Before- and After-School Programs             | <b>11</b> Emergency Shelters and Temporary Housing Sites                      | <b>14</b> Farmers Markets                             |
| <b>7</b> Gardens                                       | <b>6</b> Residential Treatment Centers and Group Living Arrangements          | <b>6</b> Food Stores (Small and Large)                |



# SNAP-Ed in the News

## Sharing tips about cooking matters

LOCAL NEWS

"To make a pasta dinner, you're going to take pasta and then a protein. The protein could be beef, turkey, chicken. It could be tofu. It could be beans."

Speaking to a group of seniors at Notre Dame de Lourdes Church in Skowhegan, Theresa Dendy, from Somerset Public Health, shares some ideas that she hopes will get them to start thinking a little outside the box when cooking, or in this particular case, outside the box of pasta.

"It doesn't have to be the exact spaghetti recipe we're used to. It doesn't have to be spaghetti sauce and meatballs," she says. Dendy is leading a Cooking Matters for Adults class, which aims to teach people how to choose and cook healthy foods, all while staying within a budget.

"A lot of what we hear is that it is expensive to eat healthy, so we try to give people as many tips as we can, like meal planning and buying bulk items and using them in multiple recipes. We talk about using variety, switching out different fruits and vegetables," Dendy explains.

Cooking Matters is a program run by the Good Shepherd Food Bank that is offered through Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed). It was brought to Notre Dame de Lourdes Church, part of Christ the King Parish, through a partnership with Catholic Charities Maine and a grant from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.

"I go to St. Sebastian Church in Madison, so that's how I came across the

partnership. I really love what I do, and I wanted to expand teaching it," says Dendy. "I thought how awesome would it be if I could work with the church community that I am a part of. Then, Father [James Nadeau] told me about Catholic Charities Maine, so that is how the collaboration started."

"Food is a great thing to build programs around because it is a great unifier," says Bill Wood, an outreach specialist with Catholic Charities Maine Parish Social Ministry.

Although Dendy teaches Cooking Matters to all age groups, the six-week program at Notre Dame was designed for seniors and was centered around cooking with a crockpot.

"I love that each of them got a crockpot. It's a very useful tool," Dendy says. "It's so versatile. I love that they can really expand what they're cooking. They can cook different things and freeze a lot from the crockpot."

Recipes have included frittatas and slow chicken tacos, which Dendy says provided a perfect opportunity to use a healthier substitute.

"The recipe recommends putting sour cream on it, but you can use plain Greek yogurt instead. It's going to taste pretty much the same, but it's going to give you protein, and it's going to be lower in saturated fat. So, it's a healthier version. They were all skeptical to try it, but they tried it, and they loved it," she says.

Other topics included using the USDA's MyPlate as a guide to make sure they're getting the correct balance of the different

nutritional groups, figuring out unit pricing, and the importance of reading labels.

"I used to skim over the labels, but now I read them so that I know what I'm getting in my food," says Violet Ferland of Skowhegan.

"We've become a little bit more cognizant of the labels of the things we purchase, looking for things like salt and



sugar but also the good, the bad, and the ugly, as Theresa says, when it comes to fats and trans fats, so that was enlightening," says Greg Theriault of Skowhegan.

"We are careful about what we eat, but with the MyPlate and the food groups, you now have a picture in your mind of that plate and how you should do the grains, and the proteins, and the veggies," says Terry Theriault, Greg's wife.

"It's not just cooking. It's how to shop, what to look for, how to make positive choices," says Jean Tekverk of Skowhegan.

Dendy always tries to tailor her sessions to the participants' needs. In the case of the Skowhegan group, she says she knew many of them had years of cooking experience, so there was less emphasis on how to cook and more on sharing tips and ideas.

"They have really good tips for each other. They have tips for me. I have tips for them. I love the learning experience where we can all learn from each other," she says.

"A lot of us live alone. We've been widowed or separated for many years, so getting into a group, we get different input as to how people manage cooking, whether for one, or three, or five," says Tekverk.

The participants say they have not only benefited from the classes but have enjoyed attending them.

"I like the camaraderie. We all add to what the conversation is about, and I feel that I've gained a lot of knowledge," says Ferland. "She is so good at explaining everything, and I just enjoy the whole thing." ■

## Since 1847 Sun Journal

### Healthy Oxford Hills cooking class wraps up with celebration

[SJ\\_sunjournal.com/2024/08/22/healthy-oxford-hills-cooking-class-wraps-up-with-celebration](https://www.sunjournal.com/2024/08/22/healthy-oxford-hills-cooking-class-wraps-up-with-celebration)

August 22, 2024

NORWAY — There was a joyous, celebratory mood in the basement of the Norway Christ Episcopal Church during the last of six weekly cooking classes on Aug. 13.

"We have a lot of fun," instructor Justine Casalnova said of the classes.

The free Cooking Matters classes were offered through the MaineHealth Stephens Hospital Healthy Oxford Hills program, along with the Good Shepherd Food Bank, the University of New England, and Maine SNAP-Ed—a nutrition education resource.



Instructors and participants in the last of six weekly Cooking Matters classes, provided by Healthy Oxford Hills, work in the basement kitchen of the Christ Episcopal Church in Norway on various tasks. Each week the class learned nutrition facts and cooked a meal and dessert. *Evan W. Houk/Advertiser Democrat*

Casalnova and Stephanie Cordwell led the classes, providing education on healthy nutrition and guiding the participants in making a different recipe each week.

Each member of the class received a workbook filled with recipes and took home groceries each week to recreate the recipes.

## BDN BANGOR DAILY NEWS

### Healthy Acadia, Porter Memorial Library to launch StoryWalk® Project in Machias

MACHIAS — Healthy Acadia, Maine SNAP-Ed and Porter Memorial Library have teamed up to launch a StoryWalk® on the library grounds in downtown Machias. StoryWalk® is a literacy-boosting project that places an illustrated children's book, taken apart and displayed page by page, along an easily accessible community walking route.

A StoryWalk® is an innovative and interactive way to engage with a children's storybook while enjoying the outdoors. It combines the joy of reading with physical activity and the beauty of nature. In a StoryWalk®, the pages of a picture book are spread out sequentially along a walking path or trail. As visitors stroll along the path, they can read the story.

StoryWalks are often set up in parks, gardens, nature trails, or other outdoor spaces accessible to the public. It's a wonderful activity for children and families to immerse themselves in a story while enjoying the surroundings and getting some exercise. Plus, it's a great way to make reading and learning a dynamic and memorable experience.

The StoryWalk® at Porter Memorial Library will feature a different book each month, carefully selected to be woven with themes tied to the season. At the end of their walk, visitors will find a healthy recipe inspired by the book that they can make at home.

# Leveraging Community Assets

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, provides a monthly benefit for Mainers experiencing low income to purchase nutritious food.

Additional SNAP benefits include:

- Employment and training supports through **SNAP E&T**
- Free nutrition education classes through **SNAP-Ed**
- Bonus dollars to spend on local fruits and vegetables with **Maine Harvest Bucks** and **Farm Fresh Rewards**

SNAP is also an **economic benefit** to local communities – **each dollar in federally funded SNAP benefits generates \$1.79 in economic activity.**<sup>3</sup> SNAP recipients spend their money in their local communities soon after receiving their benefits. This then has a **multiplier effect on the economy** beyond the initial money provided to SNAP participants. The increased spending by SNAP households “multiplies” throughout the economy, as SNAP-participating businesses that supply the food and other goods—and their employees—have additional funds to spend in our local economies.<sup>4</sup>

Just like SNAP, SNAP-Ed has a generative effect on Maine communities. The capacity to **leverage resources** is an important measure of Maine SNAP-Ed’s impact. To better understand how **SNAP-Ed funding stimulates other local agencies and businesses** to co-fund beneficial interventions, the program tracks **leveraged resources** from implementing partners. A **cost value for community contributions** such as dedicated space, gleaned produce, new equipment, materials and supplies, volunteer time, and communication activities that co-invest in new, ongoing, or sustained interventions is calculated annually.



In 2024, Nutrition Educators reported **\$113K in leveraged resources**

The greatest total value was gleaned produce at

**\$42K,**

followed by volunteer staffing at

**>\$41K**

# Youth Education

## Pick a better snack™

Research suggests that **taste-testing fruits and vegetables as part of a multicomponent intervention increases fruit and vegetable consumption among children**, and it is a suggested strategy to improve nutrition.<sup>5</sup> The influence of teachers' personal health behaviors on classroom environments has also been documented as having a positive influence on children's health status and behaviors.<sup>6</sup>

**Pick a better snack (PABS)** promotes healthy eating and physical activity by introducing students to a variety of fruits and vegetables through **monthly taste-testings** and engaging students in fun movement activities. Materials such as family newsletters and Bingo cards are sent home to reinforce the PABS messaging.

“ We thoroughly enjoyed the lessons! Parents would comment on how they observed their child making better choices at home or requesting foods from the store. ”

“ Works well with our curriculum and district health and wellness policies. ”

— PABS Classroom Teachers



In 2024, PABS reached  
**8,738 students**

in eligible elementary schools where 50% or more students qualify for federally funded free or reduced-price meals.

### After completing PABS:

- **97%** of teachers reported that **more students** now can **identify healthy food** choices
- **91%** of teachers reported that **more students** are now **willing to try new foods** offered at school
- **68%** of teachers reported that **more students** were likely to **choose fruits or vegetables** in the cafeteria or during classroom parties

### For their own behaviors, teachers reported that they now...

- encourage the students to be physically active (90%)
- offer healthy food choices to students at parties or as snacks or rewards (83%)
- remind families to bring healthy snacks for school parties (77%)

## Food Smarts Kids and 10 Tips for Teens

Self-reported data from two additional youth curricula that reached over **1,600 students** demonstrated that

**60%** of youth participants improved at least one health behavior. The health behaviors measured were eating fruits and vegetables, drinking sugar-sweetened beverages, engaging in physical activity, and, for teens, reading nutrition labels.



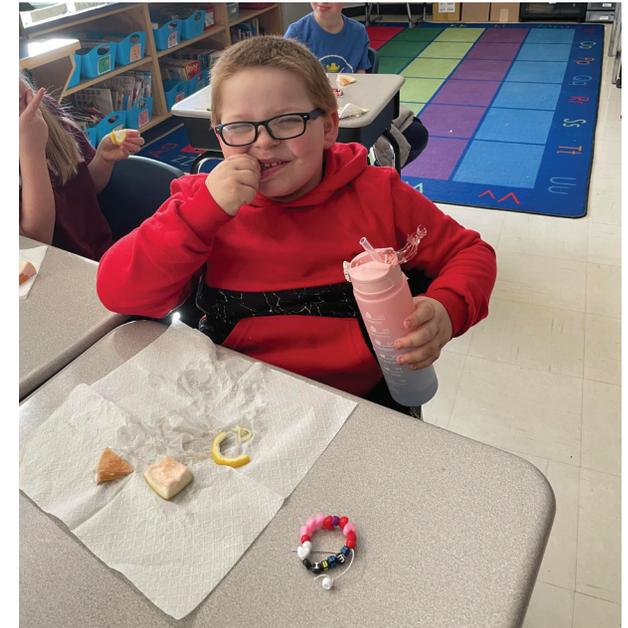
### 10 Tips for Teens Participant Voice:

*“What was the best or most useful part of the 10 Tips classes?”*

“ The most useful part was becoming better at cooking. The best part was becoming healthier. ”

“ Learning to read nutrition labels and not just follow the advertising or label. ”

“ Giving us examples on more healthy snacks and drinks rather than unhealthy things. ”



Additionally, after participating in Maine SNAP-Ed, students 9 to 18 years old reported:

**a 31% increase**

in vegetable consumption

**a 53% increase**

in reading nutrition facts labels

# Adult Education

## Cooking Matters®: Partnering with Good Shepherd Food Bank for Hands-on Cooking and Nutrition

**Cooking Matters® classes** are designed to address nutrition security by inspiring families to make **healthy, affordable food choices**. Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators partner with community sites to bring **Cooking Matters® direct education series to parents, caregivers, and youth** ages 8 to 18.



In 2024, Cooking Matters® programming accounted for

# 52% of SNAP-Ed adult reach

### Cooking Matters® Participant Voice: “How has this course affected your life?”

- “ Lots of nutrition info I can use at home. Great recipes that are affordable. ”
- “ It has encouraged me to adjust meals/ ingredients based on what is one sale and to better meal plan to save money and stretch ingredients. ”
- “ I have definitely added more fruits and veggies into my diet, and I feel good about it because they taste good! ”

Participants in *Cooking Matters for Adults* receive a **\$10 gift card for groceries, with donations from Hannaford Supermarkets**. *Cooking Matters at the Store* is a guided **grocery store tour** providing easy ways to shop for healthy foods – the tours can be held at retail sites or as “pop-up” tours wherever adults are gathering at community sites.

**Health care sites, early care and education facilities, and individual or public housing** were the **top three settings** for adult Cooking Matters® programming (190, 147, and 133 adults reached, respectively).

After participants completed the **Cooking Matters for Adults series...**

**79%** reported an increase in **healthy food preparation behaviors**

**89%** reported an increase in how often they **eat fruit or vegetables**

**57%** reported an increase in **skills and strategies** for making healthy food choices and/or behaviors

## 10 Tips for Adults

In 2024, 10 Tips for Adults accounted  
**44% of SNAP-Ed adult reach**

Health care sites, public housing, and food assistance sites such as food pantries and food banks were the **top three settings** for 10 Tips for Adults programming (313, 184, and 74 adults reached, respectively).

## 10 Tips for Adults Participant Voice: “How has this course affected your life?”

- “Very informative and helpful class. Highly recommend to those looking for a healthy lifestyle.”
- “It’s fun, informative and tasty!! Learned about new (to me) MyPlate. Never heard of it before!”
- “Learned new ways to shop & cook on a budget.”

## Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) Change Interventions

Across the state, communities are engaged in innovative, successful public health initiatives to create environments where all Mainers can thrive. SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators connect with local organizations to initiate and promote **long-lasting, sustainable changes to make healthy choices accessible and welcoming for everyone.**

In 2024, Nutrition Educators worked on **72 PSE change interventions:**

Increase access to local fruits and vegetables	21
Community public health supports	15
Healthy grocery acquisition	13
School wellness	8
School and early child care gardens	6
Community gardens	6
Healthcare clinical-community linkages	2
Early child care wellness	1



As a result, there were **41 nutrition and physical activity supports newly adopted or maintained in Maine communities**

- **28** new or expanded PSE supports in **42** sites
- **13** maintained PSE supports in **47** sites

**Over 15K Mainers reached**

- NEW PSEs = **9,599**
- MAINTAINED PSEs = **5,409**

## Multi-Level Programming

PSE change efforts are primarily implemented in the same settings where Maine SNAP-Ed classes are conducted, ensuring that supportive environments are complemented by **evidence-based nutrition and physical activity lessons**. Nutrition Educators also promote environmental changes **with social marketing, staff training on continuous program and policy implementation, and parent/community involvement**.



Of the 41 strategies in which a new support was adopted or an ongoing support maintained in 2024, all but one, or **98%, included at least one of the four complementary components**. The breakdown of **multi-level programming to maximize and sustain** SNAP-Ed public health interventions in 2024 is as follows:

- Direct education **71%**
- Parent/community involvement **85%**
- Marketing **34%**
- Staff training **42%**

## Sustained Programming

Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators work on **PSE sustainability** so that Maine SNAP-Ed can invest in communities to co-create long-lasting changes that outlast SNAP-Ed involvement. Nutrition Educators work to identify ongoing funding and an organization that is not dependent on SNAP-Ed funding to assume responsibility for newly adopted PSE changes. They also work on creating policies to maintain the change, securing support from community allies, and developing monitoring and reporting systems to inform the long-term quality and impact of PSE programming.

Of the 41 total strategies with successful new, expanded, or maintained supports in 2024, Nutrition Educators reported that **93%, or 38 of the strategies, included sustainability efforts**. This is higher than the past two years (82% in 2023 and 65% in 2022).

The following sustainability strategies are fully or partially in place to ensure long-lasting PSE changes in Maine communities:

**87%**

have support from community partners

**76%**

have an outside organization that has assumed responsibility

**76%**

have identified an outside funding source

**58%**

have a monitoring system

**16%**

report that a policy has been adopted fully or partially that will require changes to be maintained

# Power of Produce: Farmers Market Incentive Program

The **Power of Produce (PoP) Club**, for youth, and **PoP Plus**, for older adults, are proven systems change interventions<sup>7</sup> implemented throughout the nation to create mechanisms for distributing local produce to families. PoP engages community members at local farmers markets and empowers them to make healthful food choices. **Passports and tokens incentivize healthy shopping choices and support local farmers.** Customarily, participants check in at the PoP booth each week, engage with SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators, and receive tokens to purchase healthy foods at the market. Vendors redeem the tokens for reimbursement. Maine farmers markets participate in PoP with community-led approaches designed to meet the specific needs of their shoppers and in accordance with market capacities. Staffing and promotion may vary, but **all interventions aim to promote market participation, increase vendor revenue, and support healthy communities.**

In 2024, there were **Power of Produce (PoP)** interventions in **4 Maine farmers markets**, reaching an estimated **650 adults and children.**

## Making an Impact:

### PoP Club for Youth

All participants who completed a survey after attending PoP Club for youth reported that their children are **more interested in attending the market** and most said their **children help choose fruits and vegetables more** after participating in the intervention.

### PoP Plus for Older Adults

For participants providing feedback after attending the PoP Plus experience:

**50%** reported more interest in attending the farmers market

**45%** reported choosing more fruits and/or vegetables at the market

**48%** reported trying more new fruits and/or vegetables at home

**27%** reported eating more fruits and/or vegetables



Participants' favorite parts of the program were

- **Interacting with community and people**
- **Receiving tokens** to support purchases of fruits and vegetables
- **The information** received from the Nutrition Educator.

"I would tell a friend PoP Plus is great"

"all seniors should try!"

# Centering Communities to Empower Families and Support Healthy Environments

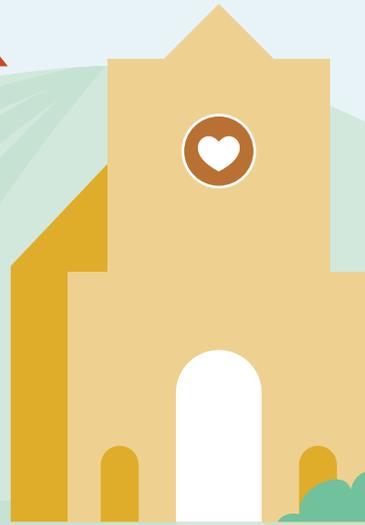
Education at 10 adult education and job training sites: 97 adults reached



Gleaning at 8 farms and 25 distribution sites, such as food pantries: 1,327 Mainers reached



Education at 8 faith-based centers: 79 adults reached



“Power of Produce” farmers market clubs: 661 youth and families reached



9 libraries hosted nutrition education: 69 adults and 19 youth reached



Education at 13 community recreation sites: 432 youth and families reached



Education at 102 child care centers: 2,367 children reached



Healthy recipe prompts at 1 food pantry and 1 small grocery retailer: up to 1,850 Mainers reached



Education at 9 emergency shelters and temporary housing: 142 adults reached



Education at **32 individual or public housing sites**: 322 adults and 12 youth reached

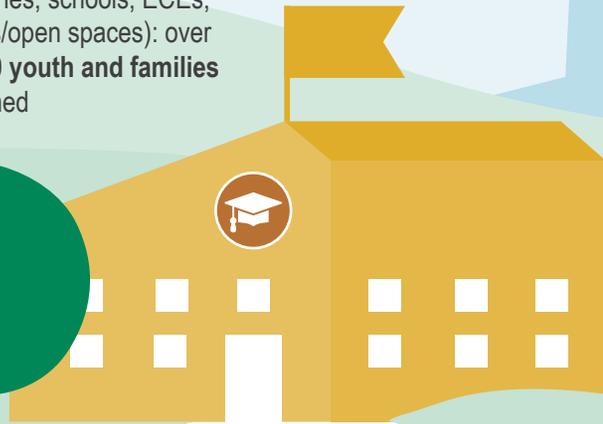


Education and **\$10 gift cards** provided with **Good Shepherd Food Bank** and **Hannaford Supermarkets**: Over **800 people** reached

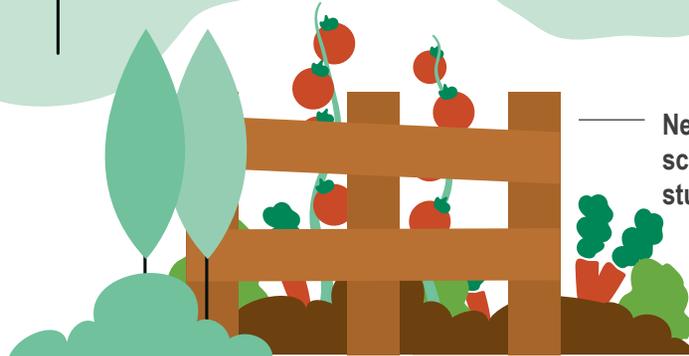
Education provided for **17 health clinics and hospitals**: **503 adults and families** reached

Education at **172 schools**: **16,456 students** reached

**StoryWalks®** at **12 sites** (libraries, schools, ECEs, parks/open spaces): over **3,100 youth and families** reached



New gardens at **2 schools**: over **950 students** reached



**313 subscribers** received **50 weekly text messages** with a link to healthy living resources



# Nudging Towards Healthy Choices: Collaborating with SNAP Retailer to Promote Healthy Shopping

The **Tipped Trailer Co.**, a small discount grocery store in Newport, and a **Nutrition Educator** at the **City of Bangor Public Health and Community Services**, partnered to implement **ongoing, point-of decision prompts**, in the form of **signage and recipe-ingredient bundling displays** that “nudge” shoppers towards **easily accessible healthy foods**.

In 2024, an estimated **500 individuals** were reached through the recipe-ingredient bundling display, and over **100 copies of the Maine SNAP-Ed 10 Tips for Adults Cookbook** were distributed to shoppers. Direct education programming at a community library across the street from the food retailer provided multi-layer programming. **Sustainability efforts and adapting the bundling system to food pantry sites** will be the next phase of this initiative.

## Social and Community Context

According to Feeding America (2022),<sup>8</sup> **Penobscot County has a food insecurity rate of 14.3%**, with 21,870 people experiencing food insecurity. This is higher than the state of Maine rate (13.0%) and the national rate (13.5%). The county has

large rural areas, and over 8,000 people experiencing low income in Penobscot County also have low access to grocery stores.<sup>9</sup>

**Research indicates that nudges in grocery retail or distribution settings, which are strategies designed to “nudge” food purchasing behaviors in a certain way, influence shoppers’ purchasing of fruits, vegetables, and other nutritious food items.**<sup>10</sup> Research also shows that **providing recipes or recipe-ingredient bundles increase the likelihood of shoppers’ selecting healthier foods items.**<sup>10,11</sup> Recipe-ingredient bundles make it easier for shoppers to shop and eat healthy because the bundles reduce the time and effort necessary to find the recipe ingredients in a store.<sup>11</sup>

Designing and implementing recipe-ingredient bundles in a community-engaged way, e.g., collaborating closely with grocery store or food pantry managers throughout project planning and implementation, is beneficial and key to this type of project as food retailer/pantry managers have knowledge about their consumers’ habits. Additionally, a community-engaged approach can allow for increased sustainability efforts and commitment from the grocery stores or food pantries.

## Community Assets

The **City of Bangor Public Health and Community Services** has been working for years on community-based interventions to increase nutrition security for residents of Penobscot and Piscataquis counties. The organization’s SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators provide nutrition education classes to youth and adults and they engage with community partners to implement public health interventions across their service area.

The **Tipped Trailer Co.**, “a discount grocery storefront providing name-brand grocery items at severely discounted prices,” was the champion of this SNAP-Ed retail initiative. The store’s mission is “to provide the community with affordable groceries without compromising on the shopping experience.” The store owner established Tipped Trailer Co. as a SNAP retailer, playing a vital role in ensuring access to nutritious food for the community. The engagement with and support from the Tipped Trailer Co. owner was key to the success of this recipe-ingredient bundling project.

The **Newport Cultural Center**, which is the town library and museum, also served as a community partner supporting this project, providing a nearby location for direct education programming and promotion of the recipe-ingredient bundling project.



## Collaborative Action

**Healthy Grocery Acquisition**, one of the policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change strategies within the Maine SNAP-Ed project, is designed to initiate or expand public health interventions that improve access to healthy foods, such as marketing healthy foods and beverages through signage and other environmental strategies, at retail or food pantry settings. In **Penobscot County**, a Nutrition Educator at the City of Bangor identified this nutrition access strategy as a priority objective for PSE change in 2024.

The educator partnered with the Tipped Trailer Co., a small food store, in Newport, Maine to implement ongoing, point-of decision prompts, in the form of signage and recipe-ingredient bundling displays that make it easier and less time-consuming for shoppers to access healthy foods.

The store owner worked with the Nutrition Educator to select recipes that included ingredients normally available for purchase in the store. The owner arranged **ongoing eye-catching end-cap displays of recipe cards**, designed by the Nutrition Educator, along with key ingredients for the recipes, and free copies of the Maine SNAP-Ed *10 Tips for Adults Cookbook*. The four recipes highlighted and distributed at the Tipped Trailer Co. were Spinach and Chicken Bake, Peach Salsa, Veggie Skillet Eggs, and a Mediterranean Stew. The Tipped Trailer Co. owner provided monitoring of the project through the store's point-of-sale system for the number of EBT sales while the bundling displays were in place.

The educator applied an **accessibility and availability lens to her PSE change work**. The recipe cards were designed to be accessible by considering reading level, colors, inclusion of photos, and resource availability, sharing recipes that did not require specialized cooking equipment or utensils.

## Building on Strengths



The recipe-ingredient bundling display at the Tipped Trailer Co. **reached an estimated 500 individuals**, as tracked through the store's EBT sales. Additionally, over **100 copies of the Maine SNAP-Ed 10 Tips for Adults Cookbook** were distributed through the end-cap displays.

SNAP-Ed multi-component

programming through in-person nutrition education was provided at the Newport Cultural Center, located across the street from the store. Promotional flyers for the bundling project were provided to participants in the education series.

As the primary community partner, the Tipped Trailer Co. is ready to help ensure the success of the recipe-ingredient bundling system long term, with sustainability efforts in progress or in place for this environmental change initiative. The project will continue in 2025 to fully develop sustainability at the Tipped Trailer Co. and to inform approaches for expanding and adapting the healthy recipe-ingredient bundling system for other food access sites, such as food pantries and food banks serving Penobscot County residents.

“ Collaborating with SNAP-Ed has been highly beneficial in developing healthy, engaging displays. These in-store setups inspire and empower customers to assemble quick, nutritious meal options, making healthy choices easy and accessible. community. ”

– Owner of the Tipped Trailer Co.

# Social Marketing

The **SHOP, COOK, EAT Healthy on a Budget** social marketing campaign promotes healthy living for Mainers.

- In 2024, it resulted in **2,667,846 impressions** on the Maine SNAP-Ed Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Google platforms.
- An additional **3,585,570 impressions** were achieved through **targeted television ads airing the 30-second Maine SNAP-Ed in Motion** video.
- **122 posts** were shared on Facebook and Instagram. The most popular group among Instagram and Facebook followers were women, with Instagram skewing younger (ages 35-44) and Facebook skewing older (ages 45-54).
- Maine SNAP-Ed's website had **102,728 visitors**.
- The Maine SNAP-Ed YouTube channel saw **615,977 impressions with 262,332 clicks and views**, representing a **42% engagement rate**.

## Maine SNAP-Ed Texting Campaign

- **313 subscribers** received **50 weekly text messages** with a link to **healthy living resources**, resulting in 472 clicks.



## Pumpkins and more highlighted Houlton's annual Harvest Fest

by Kathleen Phalen Tomaselli • 6 months ago

0 Comments



HOULTON, Maine – The traditional Harvest Festival in Houlton's historic downtown square on Saturday drew farmers, families and especially kids hoping to paint two, maybe three pumpkins, despite the weather being much too warm for an actual harvest.

The annual event started 11 years ago as a fundraiser for the town's Riverfront Committee but was handed over to the town's farmer's market several years ago.

"The Market renamed it Harvest Festival and made it more kid and family centered," said Jane Torres, executive director of the Greater Houlton Chamber of Commerce. "It has become a celebration of the fall harvest."

It might have been a summer balmy 80-degree Fahrenheit, but promises of fall were everywhere on Saturday. Cornstalks were propped up against nearly every shade of pumpkin – large, small, round and oval – and baskets and pots of fall-colored mums dotted booths and walkways.

Two Littleton sisters, Annalise, 12, and Brenna, 6, Schwalbert and Hodgdon friend Clair Coker, 11, were sleept in dark blue paint and loads of glitter as their pumpkin canvases took shape.

The girls said they were still deciding on what to paint next as they wrapped up their second or third pumpkins.

Maine SNAP educator Jennie Schools used a fresh pumpkin from **Gallifreyan Farm** in Linneus to make pumpkin mini muffins for sampling at the fest as part of her power of produce program. And she even toasted the pumpkin seeds for tasting, to show how various fresh vegetables and fruits can be used for healthy eating.

Kids were especially drawn to Schools' movement wheel that they could spin for various activities.

Nancy Wright, who owns Wright Brothers Farm in Littleton, was at the festival with her grandchildren and the pumpkins they grew, donating about 70 to the kids' pumpkin painting activities.



HOULTON, Maine — September 14, 2024 — The Houlton Harvest Festival celebrates the harvest of the County. Mia Clara Coker, 11, of Hodgdon (left), Annalise Schwalbert, 12 of Littleton and Brenna Schwalbert, 6, also of Littleton, create festive pumpkins. (Kathleen Phalen Tomaselli | Houlton Pioneer Times)

# State Nutrition Action Council

Members of Maine’s **State Nutrition Action Council (SNAC)** are actively engaged in multi-sector, state-level initiatives to achieve food and nutrition security and healthy living access for all Mainers. The collective impact of the SNAC is only possible through the ongoing commitment and dedication of its members, who represent the following state-level organizations and their community-based affiliates.

**Lead – Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Family Independence, Maine SNAP-Ed State Agency**

**Co-Lead – University of New England, Center for Excellence in Public Health, Maine SNAP-Ed Implementing Agency**

## SNAC Feature

**54,131** Maine Harvest Bucks (MHB) postcards were sent to SNAP households, and **2,955** postcards were returned (5% return rate). At the 10 participating Maine Senior FarmShare Program (MSFP) markets and stands targeted with the postcard, there were **1,400** new MSFP sign-ups, increasing access to **\$50 worth of local produce** for eligible seniors.

- Markets with both **SNAP-Ed and MSFP partnership performed the best** than those without by 20% (6% vs 5% postcard return rate)



Good Shepherd Food Bank’s Farm Fresh Rewards (FFR) program provides eligible Mainers with a **50% year-round discount on all fruits and vegetables** purchased using their SNAP/EBT card at 14 locations across Maine.

Promotion included: **800** rack cards, **1,000** business cards, marketing materials like stickers, shelf-talker banners and sandwich board signs, and a 57% increase in social media interactions from 2023 to 2024.

Redemption increased **54%** resulting in close to **\$380K** for participating stores

## Recognizing Our 2024 SNAC Members:

Fedcap, Families Forward

FoodCorps Maine

Full Plates Full Potential

Good Shepherd Food Bank

Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future

Hannaford Supermarkets

Let’s Go!

Maine Dairy and Nutrition Council

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry – Maine Senior FarmShare Program

Maine Department of Education – Child Nutrition

Maine Department of Health and Human Services – Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention | Office of Aging and Disability Services | Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program | Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program

Maine Farm to Institution

Maine Federation of Farmers’ Markets

MaineHealth Center for Health Improvement

Maine Network of Healthy Communities

Maine SNAP-Ed Subrecipient Director and Nutrition Educator representatives

Representative from Maine’s Immigrant and Refugee community

University of Maine Cooperative Extension Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)

Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness

YMCA Alliance of Northern New England

“ We saw an uptick in the number of people attending the market on the weekends after the postcards were mailed out and noticed a significant increase in the number of EBT shoppers who visited on those days. ”

— Nutrition Educator

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program–Education (SNAP-Ed) is a federally funded grant program that supports evidence-based nutrition education and obesity prevention interventions and projects for persons eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) through complementary direct education, multi-level interventions, and community and public health approaches to improve nutrition.

Maine SNAP-Ed offers nutrition and cooking classes and supports projects that address food and physical activity needs in the community. Trained Nutrition Educators reach Mainers in all 16 counties. Nutrition Educators are integrated into the communities they serve and work where Mainers eat, live, learn, play, shop, and work.

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IG [instagram.com/snaprecipe](https://www.instagram.com/snaprecipe)



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1. Mail: USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 1320 Braddock Place, Room 334 Alexandria, VA 22314; or
2. Email: [FNSCIVILRIGHTSCOMPLAINTS@usda.gov](mailto:FNSCIVILRIGHTSCOMPLAINTS@usda.gov).

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