

Veggie Volunteer Program

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The Veggie Volunteer Program is an amazing community based effort that provides nutritious fresh produce to low income persons from a local farm, Sherman Farm.

The Veggie Volunteer Program (VVP) was developed after a visit to the Sherman Farm in East Conway in the fall of 2002. The Shermans operate a year-round farm stand, harvesting fresh vegetables from their 50 acres. There is always some produce that is extra or possibly a bit beyond prime that would go to waste unless otherwise picked. The Shermans

agreed to donate this surplus nutritious fresh produce to food pantries, senior centers and other organizations that serve low income audience, if a collection and distribution service was developed.

The Cooperative Extension was able to develop a collection and distribution service coordinated by the Carroll County Master Gardeners. Extension Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who extend the outreach capabilities of UNH Cooperative Extension. Master Gardeners help by serving as volunteer educators in their communities and coordinating and participating in programs such as the VVP. The Master Gardeners organize volunteers, serve as liaison between farm and volunteers, organize picking crews and the distribution process of the Veggie Volunteer Program.

The Veggie Volunteer Program has been a huge success over the last 10 years and is continuing strongly. Participation by loyal volunteers has been crucial in the program's success; volunteers include everybody from youth groups to individuals. The experience is rewarding because volunteers get to serve their community, learn about agriculture with a hands-on approach, meet new people and have fun outdoors.

The produce collected each day is recorded and approximate retail value is calculated. The food is then delivered to the recipient organizations and food pantries who calculate the number of people receiving fresh produce. Since the program's inception in 2002, 94,103 pounds of vegetables totaling a value of approximately \$115,000.00 have been delivered. In 2010 the produce provided more than 11,500 meals and was valued at more than \$23,000.

The VVP is a winning situation for everyone involved; the Sherman Farm, Master Gardeners, Volunteers and of course the recipients of the fresh produce. If you are interested in participating in the VVP program as a volunteer or are interested in becoming a master gardener please contact:

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Also check out our website, <http://extension.unh.edu/Counties/Carroll/AgVVP.htm>, for information on the VVP or the large collection of gardening related fact sheets.

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