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Agricultural Sciences, Class of 2016

CALS NYS Internship Program 2015
Hudson Valley Farm Hub & the Greater Hudson Valley Community

About me

I grew up in Queens, New York City. I’m interested in how food can be used as a tool to strengthen diverse communities and local economies. The CALS NYS Internship allowed me to gain work experience with an organization that has a similar view of food as an instrument of community transformation.

My Learning Goals

- improve my ability to work efficiently on a team with good humor and lightheartedness,
- improve my Spanish by spending time with Spanish-speaking farmworker families,
- strengthen my data collection, organization, and analysis skills,
- become proficient in tractor use.

My Internship Experience

- worked with two crop planning programs - Farm Produce Manager and Ag Squared, which involved collecting production data from the vegetable garden, and establishing a procedure for continued data collection.
- engaged in general farm tasks related to the 50 acre organically-grown vegetable garden.
- benefitted from some of the educational workshops put on by the Farm Hub, an example of which is the Cornell Cooperative Extension Small Grains Field Day.

Hudson Valley Farm Hub

Initiated in 2013, the Hudson Valley Farm Hub is the land-based site of the Local Economies Project, which seeks to create a more resilient and equitable food system in the Hudson Valley. The Farm Hub is working to become a regional center for farmer training, research, and demonstration of innovative farm technologies and practices.

Community Engagement: Review of Service Providers

Given the significant change in the ethnic composition of the region, specifically of those working in the agricultural sector, I was interested in discovering how the region was responding to these changes. The integration of new immigrant populations can contribute to the vitality and sustained development of the broader community and economy.

I interviewed representatives of the following service providers to explore the services currently being offered to recent Latino immigrants and to identify unmet needs.

- Hudson River Healthcare
- Agribusiness Child Development Center
- Worker Justice Center
- Rural and Migrant Ministries
- Mid-Hudson Migrant Outreach Program
- Somos La Llave Del Futuro, Inc
- Catholic Charities

Some of the obstacles to accessing services are lack of transportation, lack of knowledge, and fear, which in many cases was related to legal status and perceived bias from other community members.

Community Project Concept

Next year’s intern could choose to partner with one or several of these organizations to help facilitate a food-centered project that promotes the integration of new immigrants into the larger community. Focusing on food, which is a central gathering place for all peoples, is a way to both 1) encourage the integration and empowerment of the Latino farmworker community within the regional community and 2) provide the nutritional and culinary knowledge to foster healthy eating practices among farmworkers. This food-centered project would be developed based on the resources offered by partner organizations, but could include Central American cooking classes that incorporate local produce and are open to the public and/or the creation of a healthy Latino recipe book for distribution at farmers’ markets, community centers, and in local publications. This project aims to address bias within the community. By being given the opportunity to share food with the regional community, immigrants and immigrant farmworkers can be empowered to make a place for themselves in their new home and contribute to the social capital to the region, all while learning how to improve their own nutrition.

Hudson Valley Community Profile

The Hudson Valley Farm Hub reaches out to professionals involved in the food production system throughout 9 counties of the Hudson Valley. This region, with its favorable growing conditions and proximity to the bustling market of NYC, has supported a thriving agricultural community.

In the last twenty years this region has undergone a notable demographic shift. The number of Asian, Black, and Latino residents grew significantly compared to the number of White residents. This shift was particularly intensified within the farmworker community, which experienced a transition from being a predominantly African American group to being largely Hispanic or Latino.

Change in Total Population in the Hudson Valley, by Race/Ethnicity, 1990 to 2010

- Black or African American
- Asian
- Hispanic or Latino
- White alone
- Other

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