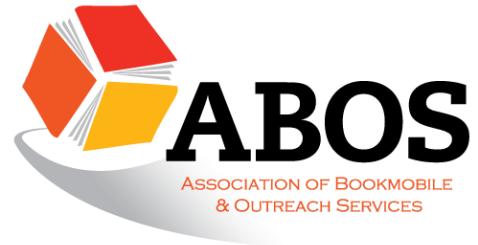


Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services

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Press Release – For Immediate Release

The Southern Adirondack (NY) Library System is the recipient of the 2020 ABOS Innovation in Outreach Programming Award. The Innovation in Outreach Programming Award, sponsored by the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services and the United States Census Bureau, recognizes a library's achievement in planning and implementing an innovative or creative outreach program, which has had a measurable impact on its community.

The Southern Adirondack Library System (SALS) serves 34 libraries in Hamilton, Saratoga, Warren, and Washington counties. SALS recognized food insecurity as an obstacle to providing adult literacy services. Many member libraries are in geographically disadvantaged areas, where adult literacy needs are overshadowed by the struggle to find work and transportation to services and goods.

To address the challenges of food waste, food scarcity, and food access, SALS partnered with the Glens Falls Hospital (GFH), and Comfort Food Community food pantry (CFC) to launch the Farm-2-Library initiative in the summer of 2017. The program reduces food waste by gleaning produce from local farms, and combats food scarcity and access issues in rural food deserts by distributing the produce through small, rural libraries. The majority of communities served by this project exceed the average poverty rate in the United States of 12.3%, as determined by the United States Census Bureau. Libraries were selected where more than 60% of the households found the price of fresh produce to be a barrier to consumption, and 42% of the households, defined as having 2-4 people in a home, have an annual income between \$16,000 and \$32,000.

The program received funding from the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program of New York State to provide small refrigerators to each of the participating libraries. Basic recipes were provided as well as cooking classes.

CFC recruits, organizes, and coordinates volunteers to glean from local farms and then delivers produce to the libraries. The libraries distribute the produce to community members and promote the program. Each library provides a visual guide to the produce including vegetable names, preparation, and storage tips. There are no limits on the amount, or who can take produce.

From July-October 2018, 2,500 pounds of fresh produce were distributed through libraries, fostering renewed interest in libraries from previously reluctant patrons or nonusers. Between July-November 2019, more than 3,000 pounds of fresh produce were shared.

As a result of this program, 62% of participants tried a new fruit or vegetable, and 100% reported improved access to fresh produce. Libraries saw new people use the library and attend programs. The demand for produce exceeded expectations, and deliveries were increased from once to twice a week.

The Innovation in Outreach Programming Award will be presented at the Awards Ceremony to be held on Wednesday, October 14, during the 2020 Virtual Conference of the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services. The ceremony starts at 9:30 a.m. CST.