

Notes: Community Check-In: Coronavirus

Friday, March 20, 2020 from 3-4:00 EST.

Our Network is composed of bright, thoughtful individuals, and we know we can reorient ourselves and our programming better through learning together. Share how your farm is responding to coronavirus, what resources are most helpful at this time, your questions and plans, and your ideas for creative pathways forward.

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Welcome!

- My name is Vera Simon-Nobes and I've been the coordinator of the Network for the last 6ish years. Our Network is about supporting you all, farm-based educators, so we're interested in what we can do at this time, and are grateful to be together with you to share and hear questions today that can drive some future organizing for our Network.
- We recognize what a challenging time this, and that many of us are sitting with immense uncertainty in our lives.
- Our purpose today:
 - ❖ First, be together
 - ❖ Second, to hear from a few people who are addressing this situation on their farms
 - ❖ Third, give a chance to break into small groups and hear from one another.
 - ❖ Provide ideas of how FBEN could be of support right now.
- Remember:
 - Be kind, be understanding, and participate to the level that you're comfortable with. However you show up is right for this call.

- Format for Today:
 - There will not be time for large group discussion - but we do WANT YOUR QUESTIONS:
 - This meeting is being recorded
 - Keep the chatbox active with your questions as they arise.
 - We're hoping to start an online forum on our website, on Facebook and look for patterns in them for future conversations. Will Poll you later
 - Technical difficulties may happen! This is new to me to facilitate in this way. Thanks for your patience!
- Follow Up:
 - I will send out contact info for all participants after the call (name, email). If you do NOT want your email included, email me by 5:00 today and I will remove your info.

Let's Get Started

As an antidote to the anxiety we're all feeling, I want to open this by asking you all to share something that brought you joy today. Type into the chat box something that has brought you joy:

- Abbey Palmer: Planting seeds@
- Janice McPhillips: My rhubarb plant is coming up!
- Sara Gordon: The ospreys have arrived
- Carissa Brewton: Just finished a home workout and my basil seeds are germinating!
- Jese Pyles: Birds!
- Ashley Davenport: Chickadees!
- Kaley Brammer: The sunshine :-)
- Jocelyn Tidwell: seedlings popping up in the greenhouse!
- Katrina Goldowsky-Dill: blooming crocuses
- Andrea Barnhart: creating beds w/ compost
- Macayla Cote: Trying new recipes @ home!
- Jack W: Pets!
- Davi Cohen: Hello from Brooklyn, NY. It's my partner's 46th birthday today! <3
- Cat: Grooming our English Angora, Willow
- Chelsea deRochemont: morning walk!
- Jamie Lombardo: chickens!
- Hope Kelley: Catching up with an old friend via telephone!
- meredithrivlin: I finished an audiobook!
- Jeannette McGinn: I walked my dog this morning with my daughter!
- Erica Letson: yoga at home!
- Sarah Danly: We intended to not breed the sheep this year but they had other plans and we had a surprise lamb yesterday!
- Tori Chasse: Pets!
- Kim Read: Crocuses are blooming!
- Silvia Moroni: Skype meeting with my family
- Loralynn Hickey: playing with our cow!
- Alden Hollow: Baked my very first Sourdough!!
- George Conklin: Meet-a-cow video
- Beth Kennett: spending time iwth grandkids!
- Liz Kenton: Reading about dolphins in the canals and baby boars in the plazas
- Lisa Chase: hiking with my daughters
- Jorge Yagual: big waves by the lake

- Tiffany Brewer: Spinach donations to Ferg-Flor school district.
- Abbey Palmer: Snow buntings are in Michigan
- Susan Marchand: My dog, he loves we are all home!!
- Tracy McCarthy: Spending time with my daughter making an outdoor obstacle course
- Brianne Studer: Time with my dog
- Katie Langlois: homemade chili!
- Melanie Douty-Snipes: I helped a PTO parent fill boxes at a school garden with mushroom soil!
- Landere Naisbitt: boiling sap!
- Guy Maguire: Harvested first garden veggies of the year: sunchoke tubers!
- Woody Woodroof: Sent 54 pounds of fresh kale (harvested yesterday) to food bank

Hearing Each Other's Experiences

Thank you to the folks who answered my request for them to share today! These individuals aren't experts - they have as many questions as you do, so will focus on sharing their experience, as of today, from their respective sites.

Abbey Palmer- [Michigan State University Extension](#), Chatham, MI

- 1200 student visitors per year. 20 days of programming per year.
- Major Adaptation: We're closed. We've postponed our spring tours, opened additional dates. Giving myself permission to not know, and tell people, "I don't know!"
- Seed library inventory has gone online. Seed orders can be packed and picked up curbside! Not accepting returns of seeds, but yes, still distributing them at this time.
- Michigan schools are closed through April 6. Interested in speaking with teacher friends at this time about whether Abbey could be incorporated into their plans
- Resources: University of Florida Extension has great one-pagers - Food safety, food banks, [farmers' markets](#), [community gardens](#).
- National young Farmers Coalition - [covid-19 response](#)
- National Young Farmers Coalition [survey](#) (Economic side as well as the emotional side)
- Other favorite resource was that I was looking forward to this community check-in!
- Some friends are having "happy hour": one hour per week to get together and zoom. A time to chat, get together to work together / be together...
- Communicating a lot right now at the farm through signage on doors and gates of the farm. In emails, as well, trying to be encouraging to people

George Conklin - [Shelburne Farms](#), Shelburne, VT

Shelburne Farms - We're an education organization, but also a dairy, cheesemaking operation, inn, restaurant, market garden, children's farmyard, store, and maple sugaring. We're definitely feeling the impact, though our farming operations are continuing at this time.

- Our biggest adaptation - not hiring seasonal staff! Just got the word that we won't be hiring the staff we had interviewed and offered positions to for the Children's Farmyard

- Another adaptation - protecting the vital activities at the Farm, to make sure we can come out of this at the other end. We've closed visitation to any of the farm production areas to keep those farmers safe.
- Innovative Resources:
 - There's a flood of videos around connecting people to the farm virtually. Trying to be as inviting and engaging.
 - The resources have been overwhelming - so it's time to look at what others are doing, and help us whittle down the ideas of what we as Shelburne Farms can do really WELL, and be intentional about that, rather than throw out programming that others are already doing well.
- Walking trails have remained open. Being open is important - being a place of joy and relaxation is critical right now. We're using signage to tell people where they can't go, and will need to be adding more
- We've made offers to our seasonal farmyard educators two weeks ago, so we will be in touch with them today, keeping kindness and warmth at the forefront of our communications as with them as we tell them this hard news.

Jocelyn Tidwell - [New Haven Land Trust](#), New Haven, CT

- Urban site - manages 50 community garden spaces and nature preserve
- In CT, we're down to no gatherings over 10 people. Grocery stores and pharmacies are still open.
- We're triaging since we're on the leading edge of these closures.
- We're recognizing the benefit we have of all this open space, and want to offer that to manage people's physical conditions and emotional conditions that will be supported outdoor time
- Our main priority is making sure that the spaces that we have have equitable access! All people need access to it.
- Whatever we're offering, we're limiting the maximum number of people on the properties to 5 people ($\frac{1}{3}$ of an acre). We can keep people in different quadrants of the gardens.. For the community gardens and urban farms - we're asking how is it possible to do community gardening? We are seeing a pathway forward to help people continue to be the space.
 - If you're the first person to arrive, opening all the doors then sanitizing, then using gardening gloves, and spraying down any tools you touch. Also maintaining social distancing while you're in the garden.
 - One thing we've thought of is to create videos for solo work. Possibly using Facebook live and putting them on shared drive at work.
 - We have a lot of high school staff, people who are paid 3-5 hours per week. If we shut that down families will really strain. And we want to find ways for folks to continue to...

Melanie Douty Snipes - [Snipes Farm](#), Morrisville, PA

- Melanie is the Director of Education, Melanie and Jonathan Snipes - Director of the organization
- We have three seasons of field trips, gardens, CSA and farmers market, summer camp, events.
- Bizarre - summed up in a word...

- Adaptations: we've been part of a farm market every two weeks in the winter. In May it becomes every week. Our Farm Market will be open and outside starting in May. Vendors will be using gloves, food will all be pre-packaged. Other standards expected to be shared.
- All our spring educational programming so far is cancelled or suspended. We had received three grants to fund that. But hoping to provide a lot of that programming in the fall, hoping funders will extend funding
- How we're communicating with the public: summer camp is our biggest concern. The ACA has been fantastic. [The CEO put out a poignant letter.](#) Camp community is a resilient one. Kids come to camp unwell/with communicable disease every year, we see disease. The letter they provided was really inspiring.
- Registrations for Camp came to a screeching halt in early March
- Still planning to interview camp counselors at this time.
- Bleaching everything... trying to be as absolutely safe as we can
- There are a number of loans available right now, maybe they will turn to be grants. Important to look to your county economic development corporation.
- Overall, yes, we're worried about payroll and keeping people employed.
- An inspiration that could come: I hope our roles as food producers and farm-based educators can be so much clearer through this. People may begin seeing local food as the best source of food. This could be an opportunity for small farms.
- CSA registrations are continuing to come in.

Jesse Pyles / Jamie Lombardo - [Smokey House Center](#), Danby, VT

- Jamie - leads all community farm activities!
- Jesse - Director of Smokey House, a 5,000 acre protected landscape and community farm
- Community Farm Project - to grow food with and for the community is our pillar activity
- Considering the ways to be more controlled in the environment and how we can go out into the community - volunteer groups and through the schools and provision of the food will need to change.
- Adaptations: Because we have relied so heavily on the school groups, we're discussing how we can get this food grown in the same capacity. Do we have the opportunity to staff up, or are there other practices we might need to think about. Using more plastic, for example.
- Innovation - Farmers in our very rural community are embracing new market channels. Farm stands, under utilized farm stands are getting heavy use, which is exciting to see

Questions

What do you use to record videos, how do you edit them, and what platform are you posting on?

- Our nature preschool director is using Tik Tok
- Facebook live and putting them on a shared drive at work

Will you actually make the hires for camp staff? And are you currently getting camp registrations?

Are your spring education programs run by paid staff and if so, how are you handling that?

Camp directors: have you made the call to cancel camp or are still hopeful camp will run?

In this time of crisis - how do we push for change? How could we work together to open new doors with farm-based education?

How are you handling refunds?

How are you handling CSA distributions?

Where can we access financial assistance?

- Local and county economic development corporations
- [No Kid Hungry Emergency Grants](#)
- [New England Grassroots Environmental Fund Seed Grants](#)
- *In VT the Agency of Commerce needs everyone to document and send the economic impact numbers to them so they can determine the need

Resources to Share

- [PASA-Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Ag](#)
- [NOFA New Jersey](#)
- [American Camp Association Response](#)
- University of Florida Extension One-pagers - Food safety, food banks, [farmers' markets](#), [community gardens](#).
- National young Farmers Coalition - [covid-19 response](#)
- National Young Farmers Coalition [survey](#) (Economic side as well as the emotional side)
- [Teaching with Compassion and Focus Amid Disruption - list of resources](#)
- [Considerations for Veg and Berry Growers](#)
- [VT Department of Health Neighborly Suggestions for Helping During COVID-19](#)

In Closing, share one word that captures where you are at this time:

hope
Pause
Solidarity
stircrazy
opportunity
Engaged!
Hope
solidarity
community
opportunity
Grace
community
grateful
embrace
spring
Aware
breathe
Uncertainty
Together
Health
kindness
unity
resilient
Faith
spring
resilience
Patience
Love
community
opportunity
Opportunity

Next Steps for Future Virtual Calls:

Focused call on Virtual Visitor Engagement / Education

Focused call on Summer Camp

Focused call specifically for orgs in urban context to share ideas would be nice