

Binghamton Farm Share

Bringing good, fresh food from local farms to a location near you!

Annual Report - 2015

The goal of Binghamton Farm Share is to bring access to affordable, healthy produce into food-deserts in our community while supporting local farmers through a modified CSA program.

Impact

Binghamton Farm Share has grown significantly over the past three years of operation—having gone from 35 members in its first year of inception to 110 members in 2015. The program grew by 54% from last year and served nearly 300 people¹, of which about 125 were children. A total of 76 families took part in the 50% share discount program over the course of the season. Thanks to member education and the implementation of the Share Bank, member retention rose to 70% this year, up from 60% in 2014.² We sold over \$45,000 in shares from local farms through Binghamton Farm Share, connecting rural farmers to urban residents who might not otherwise have access to locally grown food.



A single share from the VINES Urban Farm, which costs \$18 per week or \$9 with a discount.

Partner Farms

Binghamton Farm Share continued to partner with four local farms this season: Binghamton Urban Farm, Early Morning Farm, North Windsor Berries and Shared Roots Farm. Most saw an increase in their share members. Binghamton Urban Farm, a VINES program, sold out of shares this year before the start of the season demonstrating community support for urban agriculture and the Summer Youth Program, which employs local teens on the site as part of a training program. The advantage of having diverse farms with different sized shares helped us to be able to serve a wide range of members with varying needs. Each farm boasts a distinct feature that differentiates them from the others. For example, North Windsor Berries included a fruit every week and Shared Roots Farm offered members the ability to pick up every other week.

Distribution

A worksite distribution location was added for the first time this season. Lourdes Hospital signed on as both a donor and a distribution site where their employees could pick up healthy produce throughout the growing season. Partnering with the hospital helped us reach members of the community that were not aware of Binghamton Farm Share previously. As well, it brought awareness to doctors and other health professionals who can refer patients to the program.

It makes buying my produce more convenient. I also like being inspired to cook new things because the share gives me things I might not buy in the store.

- Binghamton Farm Share Member

¹ The average household size for our participants is 2.6 people.

² Members who are unable to finance their share a particular week can draw from the 'share bank' to cover the cost of that week's produce up to two times. They can pay the share bank back at a later time if they wish. This allows less financially stable members to remain in the program without impacting the income stream of farmers.

Our downtown Binghamton location changed this year from the Downtown Farmers Market to the United Presbyterian Church. The VINES offices are now located in the church which made it extremely convenient to distribute from this location. Having ample parking and a close proximity to the bus station, Vet Center and downtown businesses, the church was a great location that attracted a broad range of people. Because the United Presbyterian Church itself does much outreach in the community, marketing shares to in-need populations was intrinsic to being there.



A happy member picking up her Early Morning Farm Basic Share at Roosevelt Elementary.

The pickup site was just terrific – nice people; opportunity to chat with other FarmSharers and a very friendly feeling with everyone I spoke with.
 - Binghamton Farm Share Member

Roosevelt Elementary allowed us to move our distribution time on Fridays to dismissal this year. This proved to be a positive change as we saw the amount of members picking up their shares at this distribution location increase. We also had more members of the immediate community and parents of students attending the school participate in Binghamton Farm Share.

We continued to distribute at both the Lee Barta Community Center on the North Side, Carlisle Apartments Community Center on the East Side and Tabernacle United Methodist Church this year. All locations were extremely generous in allowing BFS to utilize the space free of charge.

Member Education

Binghamton Farm Share understands that access to healthy food isn't enough, members also need to know how to prepare the food that they receive. We continued to provide members with nutrition and cooking education throughout the growing season. Recipes were distributed each week that utilized produce found in the share as well as newsletters from partner farms. Through our partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County, regular sampling and nutrition education was provided at our distribution sites on a rotating basis. Members were also invited to participate in cooking and preserving classes offered by the Healthy Lifestyles Coalition and VINES.

I learned how to prepare eggplant which my very picky 7-year-old loved (both as a side dish and in brownies) and I learned how to incorporate different veggies into dishes that don't typically contain them, like dessert.
 - Binghamton Farm Share Member

Technical Training for Farmers



On farm packaging training at Early Morning Farm in Genoa with all our partner farms.

This year Binghamton Farm Share was able to secure funding through Northeast Sustainable Agriculture and Education (a wing of the USDA) that allowed us to provide technical trainings for our partner farms. Two trainings have been held covering topics that were identified as areas of need by both farmers and Farm Share members in surveys from the 2014 season. The first training covered marketing strategies and was held in conjunction with the start of season meeting. Later in the season, a training on the washing and packaging of shares was hosted by one of the partner farms, Early Morning Farm, where they package over 1,500 shares each week. In providing technical assistance to our partner farms we are striving to help them meet

We have found the NESARE trainings really helpful for networking and brainstorming.
 - Stephanie Roberts, Shared Roots Farm

Morning Farm, where they package over 1,500 shares each week. In providing technical assistance to our partner farms we are striving to help them meet

the growing demand for shares, develop stronger marketing skills, improve quality control and address other challenges that the farmers themselves have identified while giving them a sense of both community and camaraderie with the other farms and fostering further investment in the program.

Volunteers

Binghamton Farm Share strives to create community around food and it starts with volunteers. A group of volunteers, many local to the neighborhoods served, staff the distribution sites, keeping the overhead costs low. Volunteers are both very enthusiastic about the program and very knowledgeable about the preparation of different vegetables. They do a fantastic job of creating community at each individual distribution site. End of season surveys always cite both the friendliness and knowledge of the distribution site staff as well as how members felt they had made new connections with like-minded people in their community.



Two Farm Share member volunteers at our distribution site at the Carlisle Community Center.

Future

Only growth is predicted for the foreseeable future as 2016 brings expansion to a rural location, an additional farm and an additional pick up day. BFS plans to continue to connect farms and consumers, expanding access to fresh, affordable food and helping keep money to local food economy for years to come.

Sometimes [volunteering at distribution] was the only time during the week I would leave my house... It was scary not to be able to leave my house and having something to do each week truly helped me... Volunteering for BFS is special because it saved me and stopped a downward spiral I was headed towards. I loved the volunteer work I did for BFS.

- Binghamton Farm Share Volunteer

