

Fruit Valley Farm to Heart Initiative

Highlights from the inaugural
2020 CSA season



Fruit Valley Farm to Heart is a community supported agriculture (CSA) program partnership between the Fruit Valley Elementary Family Community Resource Center (FCRC) and April Joy Farm. The CSA initiative was designed with four **key components** intended to foster **mutual benefits** for the Fruit Valley community, farm and FCRC.



25-Week CSA Share

Weekly assortment of self-selected seasonal farm-fresh produce



Local Pick-Up

School-based pick up staffed by April Joy farmers & FCRC manager; free home delivery when requested



Additions & Education

Recipe resources, farm tours, pantry staples, and supportive materials offered in English and Spanish



Maximize Impact with Collaborators

Partnered with Iliamna Fish Co, Hummingbird Wholesale, Cook with What you Have, and Animal Welfare Approved



Fruit Valley Students & Families

Access and connection to fresh, locally grown produce for greater food security



April Joy Farm

Viable, community-based CSA model and school partnership



Fruit Valley FCRC

Viable farm partnership integrating local produce into schools

2020 CSA SEASON BY THE NUMBERS

31

Fruit Valley students from 19 families participated

25

Weeks during the 2020 season families received CSA shares

6,375

Pounds of produce distributed from April Joy Farm harvests and donations

102

Unique varieties of fruits, herbs, and vegetables offered in CSA

274

Dozen April Joy Farm fresh eggs distributed

100%

Families* extremely satisfied with the CSA program overall, including the produce options

100%

Donated funds devoted to food purchasing; in-kind support for overhead

*10 of 19 families completed the end-of-season feedback form

The impact of the 2020 season

The primary goal of the Farm to Heart Initiative is to demonstrate that when farms partner directly with school-based community resource centers, both the farmers and communities mutually benefit in ways that are more efficient and effective than existing food donation and distribution models. Thanks to generous donations from the April Joy CSA community and Fruit Valley supporters, this unique model has allowed for the farm to sell excess produce at fair market value – supporting the health and well being of the farm, reducing waste, and providing families much needed nutrient dense, organic produce. For Fruit Valley FCRC, the Initiative was an invaluable resource to offer in a year of unprecedented needs. The produce itself supplemented family pantries while the weekly pick-up provided a safe, outdoor source of social connection during a time of isolation.



Photo: CSA produce and pantry items unpacked at a participants home.

"We love being part of the Farm to Heart Initiative because it is a personal way to connect with, contribute to, and support our community. It provides wonderful food, grown with care and love by a local, organic farm to those in our community who might not otherwise have access to this resource. We know that all of our contribution is going directly to providing food to those who need it."

-Farm to Heart Initiative Donor

Looking ahead to the 2021 season

Much as the COVID-19 pandemic has affected every other aspect of our lives, the Farm to Heart Initiative adapted to the reality of school closures, social distancing, and increased food insecurity in our community as the 2020 season kicked off. The program team made food distribution a top priority and decided for health and safety reasons to eliminate many of the additional program components such as farm tours, taste tests at pick up, and most evaluation activities. It was our goal that during this tumultuous time, the Farm to Heart Initiative delivered farm-fresh, local produce into the hands of families safely and with minimal barriers. We learned a lot and look forward to expanding our outreach in 2021.



Photo: Socially-distanced weekly CSA pickup at Fruit Valley Elementary School.

"I cannot express our family's appreciation for you. Thank you for helping us keep food on the table. Also for helping me eat so healthy during pregnancy."

-Program Participant



APRIL JOY FARM



To learn more, please contact Staci.Boehlke@vansd.org or April@apriljoyfarm.com

Photo: program participant holding a pepper!

