

Massachusetts State Grange promotes agricultural education through undergraduate Summer Scholars program at UMass Amherst

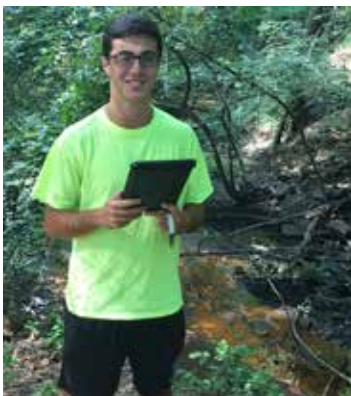
The Massachusetts State Grange is committed to agricultural education. This summer, the Grange found a partner in UMass Amherst's Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment (CAFE). 33 undergraduate "Summer Scholars" were employed in meaningful research and educational capacities by University faculty and UMass Extension professional educators for the summer; eight of these experiences were made possible by the support of the Grange. By providing this support, the Mass. Grange became a key collaborator in an innovative initiative that allowed undergraduate students to gain experience and knowledge through paid internships. Students worked both on and off campus in laboratories of scientists, research farms and in communities with extension outreach professionals.

Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment Director Jody Jellison said "We could not have initiated this new program without generous assistance from the Massachusetts State Grange. They understood our vision and were there to help us carry it forward." Support also came from CAFE's federal partner, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture at USDA as well as another private organization, the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture.

By the end of the program, it had become clear that it was a real success. Students felt supported and guided through their work and mentors said they were very impressed with the high quality of the work they produced. Two faculty members report at least three research papers that will be submitted for publication as a result of student efforts.

Grange-Funded Projects:

- Biological Control of Vegetable Pests
- Forest Preservation
- Plant Breeding for Pollinator Health
- Promoting Breast-feeding in High-Risk Populations
- Preservation of Urban Greenspace
- Community-based Nutrition Education
- Cultivating Youth Interest in Science
- Fighting Honey Bee Infection





CAFE Director Jody Jellison accepts check from Scott Davis, Mass. State Grange, in support of the first Summer Scholars Program.

Generous donation

A \$20,000 contribution from the Massachusetts State Grange was directed specifically towards eight projects that focused on agriculture, youth development and natural resources conservation. Each of these projects received \$2,000 towards student summer salary and an additional \$500 for material and supplies.

“This has been an empowering and enlightening experience for me.”

-Vanessa Ford. Her Summer Scholar experience was funded by the Massachusetts State Grange.

Nutrition Education Outreach for Low-Income Communities



Rebecca Plasse, along with mentor Lisa Sullivan-Werner, and student Jess Holley '19, travelled around the Commonwealth to provide nutrition information and recipes at Farmers' Markets.

From agriculture, youth development, and health... to natural resources conservation and sustainable landscapes

The projects covered a broad range of research and outreach... from attending farmers' markets across the state sharing nutritional information, to teaching young mothers about the benefits of breastfeeding infants. Others worked directly with young farmers, teaching integrated pest management (IPM) techniques such as scouting for pests. Some are continuing their work on their projects and nearly all will use them as stepping stones to future academic and professional endeavors.

Dominic Savoie '19, conducted research at Abbey Brook, a degraded urban watershed in Springfield. Under the mentorship of Richard Harper, extension assistant professor in environmental conservation, he worked with US Forest Service scientists on data collection, mapping, and other tasks related to long-term planning for restoration of this urban ecosystem. While performing this work, he was introduced to aspects of scientific inquiry related to sustainability, environmental services, water quality and micro-climate. Of his summer research, Savoie said, “this experience opened my eyes to the complexities and intricacies of urban watersheds and how they affect their cities' landscapes.” Savoie's project is an example of the indepth work that students in both urban and rural areas of the state completed. From rivers, orchards and farmer's markets to apiaries, vegetable fields, and focus groups in cities, a substantial amount of research and education was achieved across the state through the Summer Scholars Program.

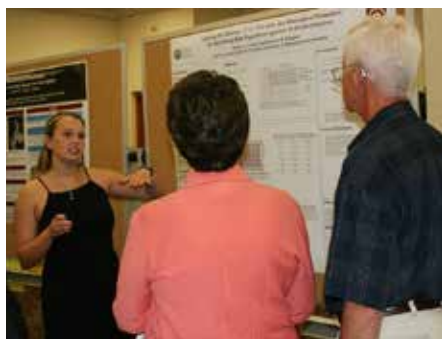


Bob Peterson, Mass. State Grange; Kathleen Peterson, Chair, Executive Committee, Mass. State Grange; CAFE Summer Scholars Thomas Kania '18 and Cindy Le '18; and Mentor, Linda Horn, 4-H Assistant 4-H Program Director. Tom and Cindy presented a poster of their summer project, "4-H STEM in Urban Areas."

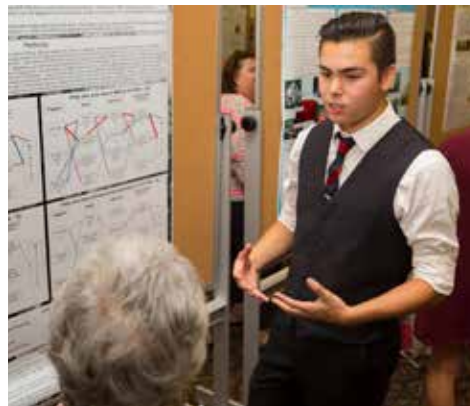
Poster presentations summarized work and provided professional development opportunities



Community Health and Nutrition Extension: Vanessa Ford '17 shared her work in Springfield on the experiences of African American women and their attitudes towards breast-feeding.



Sustainable Solutions to Problems Affecting Honey Bee Health: Parker Choplin '18 shared results of her summer research.



Forest Conservation: Eric Vermilya '19 describes his analysis derived from landowner interviews about decisions that will impact the future use and ownership of their land.

In their own words:

"My summer experience has been a real game changer."

Jeffrey Heithmar '18, who assessed floral sex determination

"My love of field research has been confirmed."

Kallin Lang '17, who studied biodiversity and ecosystem services in urban and suburban New England

"This research has had a large impact on where I see myself going with my medical career."

Paul Travers '16, who spent the summer discovering antifungal agents in the UMass Plant Cell Culture Library

If you would like to read more about the Summer Scholars initiative, go to <http://ag.umass.edu/news-events/highlights/stories-of-six-summer-scholars-o> on the UMass CAFE website.



Alicia Zolondick '17 trains a young farmer to scout for pests as a team member in the UMass Extension Vegetable Program.



Through the State Grange's Agricultural Education Initiative, Granges across Massachusetts promote agriculture within their communities by supporting school gardens, holding agricultural community fairs, sponsoring local farm tours, and hosting workshops and other events focused on gardening and agricultural topics. The Grange in Massachusetts

provides support for agricultural education in many ways, including partnerships with 4H, FFA, Agriculture in the Classroom, Envirothon, the University of Massachusetts Agriculture Learning Center and the CAFE 2016 Summer Scholar program.

www.massgrange.org/

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The Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment at UMass Amherst integrates research and outreach education in agriculture, food systems and the environment. It provides linkages with vibrant business, policy and public interest sectors in the state, including agriculture, the horticultural 'green industries,' environmental decisionmakers and food system interests. UMass Extension, the Massachusetts Agricultural Experiment Station and the Water Resources Research Center are units of the Center.

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