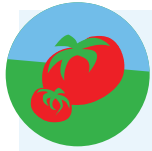


# RURAL DEVELOPMENTS

Research news and notes from the Center for Rural Studies, University of Vermont • Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 2008



## Health & Nutrition

The theme for this issue of *Rural Developments* is Health and Nutrition. CRS research related to the topic indicates that:

- Nutritional labeling and consumer education about food away from home is associated with better food choices;
- Different groups of people need different types of information about making healthy food choices; and
- The incorporation of fresh and local foods into school curricula and the cafeteria can help students make positive changes in their eating behavior.

## Making good food choices

*The role of food labeling and targeted education efforts*

JANE KOLODINSKY  
CO-DIRECTOR

For the past 20 years, obesity levels in the United States have risen at what the U.S. Centers for Disease Control call an “epidemic rate.” Although there is consensus that this trend must be reversed, how to do so is not clear. Debate continues on whether more informed consumers will make healthier decisions, and whether the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) should regulate restaurant food labeling and whether labels will result in consumers making better decisions.

Two recent studies make great strides in answering these questions.

One study investigating the role of nutrition labels and education in improving nutritional quality when eating away from home found that labeling plus education is associated with a decrease in the percent of calories consumed from fat, with the largest changes in eating behavior occurring after short-term follow-up with labels.

A second study on the social marketing and segmentation of overweight Americans found five clear, recognizable groups that can be targeted through outreach efforts in order to more successfully communicate the most relevant and important information. See Pages 2 and 3 to learn more.



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Students at Edmunds Elementary School in Burlington help with taste tests of potential cafeteria offerings made with local foods as part of the Burlington School Food Project. CRS conducted an evaluation of the BSFP from 2004-2006. See Page 4 for the key findings.



## About CRS

The Center for Rural Studies (CRS) is a non-profit, fee-for-service research organization that addresses social, economic and resource-based problems of rural people and communities. Based in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Vermont, CRS provides consulting and research services in Vermont, the United States and abroad. The research is divided into five main areas:

- Agriculture
- Human Services and Education
- Program Evaluation
- Rural Community and Economic Development
- Vermont Community Data

CRS has a wide variety of clients – small businesses, academics, UVM Extension and other UVM offices, community organizers, health and social service organizations, planners, town governments and state and federal agencies.

CRS works routinely with the U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau through the State Data Center Program. Its data resources include more than 40 social and economic indicators for every town in Vermont and the Vermont Community Data Bank.

The Center for Rural Studies is fully supported by fees for our services, grants and generous contributions. Visit us online at <http://crs.uvm.edu> for more information about our consulting and research services.

### RURAL DEVELOPMENTS Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 2008

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If you would like to receive CRS updates electronically, subscribe to our listserve at <http://crs.uvm.edu/listserv>

Newsletter Editor: Jessica Hyman



## Heath & Nutrition

# Eating well away from home

### *The role of nutrition labels and education in improving nutrition*

JANE KOLODINSKY  
CO-DIRECTOR

College students enrolled in university dining plans are exposed daily to a food environment characterized by foods high in energy, fats and added sugars, and low in nutrient density. Their decisions about what to eat are currently made in an environment where no nutrition labeling is required.

To fill the gap in current literature regarding whether or not increased nutrition knowledge of dietary guidance actually translates into positive behavior, a cross-sectional study investigated self-reported eating patterns of 200 University of Vermont students. An Internet-based survey was used to identify how closely respondents followed the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005*, and whether their eating patterns were related to their knowledge of dietary guidance.

It was observed that, for fruit, dairy, protein and whole grains, increased knowledge is related to increased likelihood of meeting dietary guidelines. Moreover, when asked about individual food choices, nutrition knowledge was related to making more healthful choices in every case.

Ultimately, increased knowledge of dietary guidance appears to be positively related to more healthful eating patterns. This suggests that guidelines such as the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005*, in conjunction with effective public-awareness campaigns, may be a useful mechanism for promoting change in what foods consumers choose to eat.

This cross-sectional study\* was

\*Published as: Kolodinsky, J., Harvey-Berino, J.R., Berlin, L., Johnson, R.K., Reynolds, T.W. Knowledge of Current Dietary Guidelines and Food Choice by College Students: Better Eaters Have Higher Knowledge of Dietary Guidance, *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 2007; 107: 1409-1413.

part of a larger study on student food choice.

For the larger study, a baseline measurement plus three interventions with measurement were conducted among students in control and experimental groups to assess food purchased. All measurements and interventions were conducted at a single dining hall over a three-month period.

In the first intervention, subjects in the experimental group selected their food in the presence of nutrition labels. Prior to the second intervention, subjects in the experimental group participated in a nutrition workshop, and then selected food in the presence of nutrition labels. For the third intervention, subjects in the experimental group again selected food in the presence of nutrition labels.

At each intervention, all food and beverage items purchased were recorded and the number of calories, grams of fat, saturated fat, protein and carbohydrate and milligrams of sodium purchased were calculated.

This study found that nutrition labels and education helped subjects make better choices in the dining hall. However, first year college students already have established eating habits which are difficult to change, as seen by the contribution of baseline intakes of the measured macronutrients and sodium.

This research supports the recommendation of the Keystone Forum on Away from Home Foods which calls for nutritional labeling, using an easy to use, standard format, in food away from home locations.

# Spreading the message

## *Social marketing and segmentation of overweight Americans*

JANE KOLODINSKY  
CO-DIRECTOR

It is not news that unhealthy eating behaviors and sedentary lifestyles have contributed to our current obesity epidemic. However, the 60 percent of Americans who are overweight do not form a homogeneous group – attitudes, demographic characteristics and lifestyle choices vary greatly. Segmentation theory tells us that a “one size fits all” approach to marketing social change may not meet the needs of all people. A social marketing campaign using market segmentation may be just what is needed to help move Americans toward more healthy weights.

CRS administered a national telephone survey to collect extensive data about U.S. consumers’ food knowledge and choices, overweight status, activity levels and health indicators, as well as demographic and environmental variables. A cluster analysis revealed five clear, recognizable market segments. Three of the five clusters were characterized as overweight, comprising almost three-quarters of the sample (*Highest Risk*, *At Risk* and *Right Behavior, Wrong Results*). The remaining two clusters (*Getting Best Results* and *Doing OK*) were characterized as not overweight.

These segments do more than allow health researchers and activists to more directly target their message. They also suggest strategies for communicating information to each of the groups. For instance, The *Highest Risk* group watches the most television, while the *At Risk* group logs more computer time. Thus, each respective medium may be the best way to communicate information for that specific group. The *Highest Risk* group may benefit from messages that remind them of “mindful eating,” food choice, and activity as a part of a healthy lifestyle, as it appears they don’t pay much attention to the foods they eat, and they exercise

the least. They may also benefit from basic information about calories, as over two-thirds believe they eat about the right number of calories, yet 90 percent of this group is overweight.

The *At Risk* group would benefit from messages that inform them where to find nutrition information about restaurant foods and reminders of the importance of nutrition information labels since they eat almost half their diet away from home. Those in the *Right Behavior, Wrong Results* group report a basic understanding of food knowledge and they read food labels. However, over 60 percent are overweight. Looking for information does not necessarily translate into using information. Information about easy steps they can take to use nutrition information available may work for this group. Messages that inform consumers about how to use nutrition labels to make healthy choices would be appropriate for this group. The *Getting Best Results* and *Doing OK* groups eat the majority of their meals “made from scratch.” These groups are of a healthy weight and perhaps just need to have their healthy food behaviors reinforced. However, the *Doing OK* group also contains the highest percentage of smokers. They may benefit from other health messages as well.

As with some other studies, although demographic differences are significant, there is little we can say definitively about the relationship between demographics and the identified segments. It appears that lifestyles have more to do with the identified segments than demographics.

Overall, this study has shown that, rather than approaching all consumers with a generalized campaign about healthy eating behaviors and fitness, market segmentation allows social marketing campaigns to reach each specific audience through the most efficient medium.

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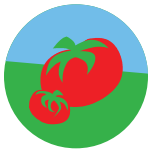
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# Burlington School Food Project

*Integrating food, farm and nutrition education into school classrooms and cafeterias*

BY MICHELE CRANWELL SCHMIDT  
EVALUATION COORDINATOR

The Burlington School Food Project (BSFP) is a citywide collaborative formed to address the integration of local foods into school meals and food insecurity among school-aged children in Burlington, Vt. Through various activities, the BSFP has aimed to develop in students and their families' awareness and understanding of food, farm and nutrition (FFN) issues, such as the benefits of eating local nutritious foods, increase a sense of place, and build appreciation for agriculture and local farmers. The BSFP is a three-year USDA "Community Food Project" funded project. CRS conducted an evaluation of the BSFP from 2004-2006. This article highlights some of the key findings of this evaluation.

## *Food, farm and nutrition education*

Teachers in areas such as science, mathematics, family and consumer sciences and technology and design education developed units with specific activities that focused on FFN. For instance, students in the Family and Consumer Sciences class expanded their "semester buffet" to be a community-wide dinner, which served more than 200 people a meal made by students and adults using local products. Many students have had experience with cooking in the classroom. Twenty-six percent of fourth and seventh grade Burlington students surveyed reported having cooked in a school classroom and 20 percent prepared a meal in their school's kitchen. Teachers interviewed also commented that their FFN instruction has led to more hands on activities for students through field trips to locations



Edmund's Middle School students make Caesar Salad samples to serve during lunch-time student taste tests.

such as the Intervale Center, Shelburne Farms and a maple sugar house. Many schools also cultivated school gardens.

## *Using fresh and local produce in school cafeterias*

The integration fresh and local produce into school cafeterias was another major aspect of this project. Figure 1 shows that the dollar value of local produce purchased by the Burlington School District (BSD) directly from farms increased from \$0 in 2003 to \$4,636 in 2006. In addition, the dollar amount spent on buying local produce through distributors increased from \$547 in 2003 to \$2,176 in 2006, a 298 percent increase. Overall, the number of local farms from which BSD purchased produce increased from three to five over the course of the grant. Types of produce purchased include:

kale, chard, carrots, raspberries, cherry tomatoes, basil, zucchini, strawberries, green leaf, red leaf, romaine and mesclun lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes and peppers.

Students demonstrated an awareness of local foods being served in their cafeteria as 32 percent of fourth and seventh graders surveyed were aware that some of the cafeteria offerings came from a local source.

Many factors led to the successful integration of food from local farms into the BSD cafeterias. These factors include: relationship development between farmers and the BSD, use of the high school cafeteria to lightly process raw foods, availability and willingness of BSD to purchase fresh, local and/or organic produce that are of high quality

Continued on next page

and student and volunteer involvement in the farm to school process. To purchase produce, the BSD contracted with and paid farmers up front for produce and the farmers planted the vegetables specifically designated for the schools.

### Student taste tests

Student-run taste tests of potential cafeteria offerings made with local foods evolved out of a need for the BSD to understand what foods students would eat if it was offered by the cafeteria. Taste tests became a key activity to increasing student awareness and consumption of healthy foods, integrating fresh and local foods into the school cafeteria menu and building relationships among stakeholders. Products for taste tests were chosen based on a) what was currently local, b) could potentially be purchased locally or c) availability of a nutritious commodity product.

The taste tests successfully involved students in making changes in their school lunch menu and educated and empowered them regarding the food they eat. By helping to prepare foods in the school kitchen, students also gained self-confidence and skills in food preparation, recipe development, healthy eating and nutrition, and mathematics. BSD Food Service staff embraced their new role as student educators on healthy foods and meal preparation

.....  
**69% of Burlington's children in grades 8 to 12 do not meet minimum USDA dietary guidelines.**  
 .....

**27% of Burlington's children in grades 8 to 12 are overweight or at risk for being overweight for their age and height.**  
 .....

**40% of Burlington's children in grades 8 to 12 spend three or more hours daily watching TV, playing video games, or playing with computers.**  
 .....

and indicated that their relationships with teachers and students has greatly improved since the start of BSFP. Food Service staff felt respected for their work and enjoyed having students help prepare food in the kitchen.

School Food Committees involved local businesses, chefs, and other community volunteers who helped to develop recipes and prepare and serve the food with students. All BSFP partners commented on the importance of BSFP volunteers coming from within the school and larger community, as

they enable the project to be sustainable after the funding is gone. As a result of the taste tests, several foods were slowly integrated into the school cafeteria menu. Examples include:

- Raw vegetables and whole wheat bread were added to the sandwich and salad bars in the cafeteria.
- Prepared items served on the monthly menu include minestrone soup, cinnamon applesauce, yogurt parfaits with granola, chicken Caesar salad and pesto pasta.
- Samosas and calzones are produced off site by a local business and served on occasion during lunch.

### Change in student eating behaviors

Because of the three year integration of fresh and local foods into school curricula and the cafeteria, students surveyed reported many positive changes in their eating behaviors. For instance, 60 percent reported eating fruit more often compared to the previous year, 59 percent reported eating foods that were new to them, and 57 percent reported eating healthy snacks more often. Students reported that their primary sources of information on food and healthy eating include their classroom instruction (49%) and the school cafeteria/kitchen (16%). Other main sources include parents, a health professional and television.

### Key components of a successful farm to school model

The "Three C's" model of community, classroom and cafeteria empowers and integrates all stakeholders to successfully develop a farm to school model.

- Community should include farmers, parents, volunteers and organizations
- Cafeteria should include Food Service staff and directors, teachers, school administrators, students, volunteers and the business community
- Classroom should include students, teachers, volunteers, Food Service staff, and the business community

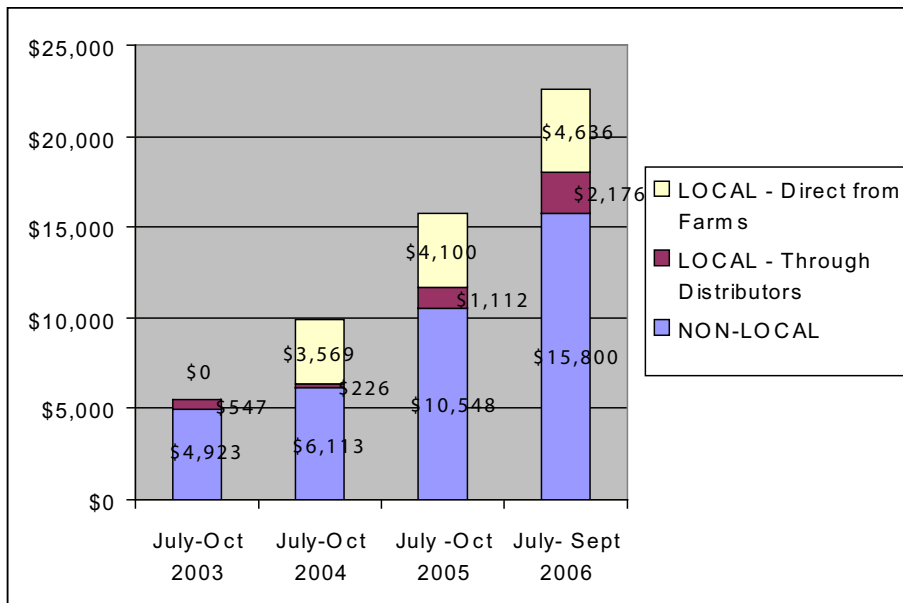


Figure 1. Fresh produce purchased by BSD, 2003-2006



## Staff Profile



### GEORGIA JEFFERS FINANCIAL MANAGER

Georgia plays a critical role at CRS. She is responsible for managing all the center's finances, including grant funding and contracts.

She started part-time at UVM Extension in 1976, moved to the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in 1980 and to the Center for Rural Studies in the late 1980s. After retiring in the late 1990s, she returned to work part-time at CRS.

As her roles changed and responsibilities increased, Georgia expanded her knowledge base and has become an invaluable resource to staff, faculty and students at CRS and the department of Community Development and Applied Economics.

"Georgia is a rock – our rock, resilient, holds our place in the turbulent daily flow around us, withstands the stormy weather, reflects back on a sunny day, keeps on smiling and cheers us with her presence," said CRS Co-Director Fred Schmidt.

Georgia says she has always enjoyed working at the university. "I like working with the students," she said. "It keeps me young."

Georgia lives with her husband, Jeff, in Shelburne. She has three children and two grandchildren and enjoys gardening, skiing and traveling.



## News Flash

### Cranwell Schmidt receives Nancy Nye fellowship

CRS Evaluation Coordinator Michele Cranwell Schmidt received the 2008 Nancy Nye Fellowship in Rural Community Development. This fellowship is supported by the national rural program of Local Initiatives Support Corporation (Rural LISC) and the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire. It honors the work of

Nancy Nye, who devoted her career to working for social and economic justice, focusing her keen intellect, enormous energy and wisdom on helping poor and disenfranchised people and struggling communities help themselves.

This fellowship will add to grant funds to support Michele's evaluation of the LACE project (see Page 7).

### Conversations on the Future of Vermont

CRS is implementing phone and online surveys for the Council on the Future of Vermont (CFV) as part of the council's public dialogue on Vermont values, challenges, opportunities, priorities and visions for the future.

CFV, a project of the Vermont Council on Rural Development, is collecting input through public forums,

listening sessions and an interactive web site. This dialogue is meant for all Vermonters – to get involved, go to <http://www.futureofvermont.org>, where you'll find CRS's online survey.

For more information, contact Sarah Waring at the Vermont Council on Rural Development, (802) 223-6098, [CFV@sover.net](mailto:CFV@sover.net).

### CRS, WAgN workshop featured at conference

An e-commerce workshop curriculum developed by CRS in conjunction with the UVM Extension Women's Agricultural Network (WAgN) was featured at the 2008 National Women in Agriculture Educators Conference in Oklahoma City in April.

The "Adding the Internet to Your Farm Business Recipe" workshops are designed to accommodate women's learning styles and preferences, and to address potential risks small farm busi-

nesses face as they enter the e-commerce arena. The workshops emphasize integrating e-commerce with overall business and marketing planning and encourage participants to think critically about what features are appropriate for their businesses.

CRS Senior Outreach Professional Will "Chip" Sawyer led the workshops. CRS Graduate Research Assistant Jessica Hyman presented at the conference with Beth Holtzman of WAgN.

### CRS helps Refugee Resettlement Program

This winter, CRS held a drive to benefit the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program. CRS and College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) staff and students donated enough new household items – such as towels, toiletries and cleaning supplies – for four full Welcome Kits. The kits help incoming refugee families set up their new homes.

VRRP is expecting families originally from Burundi, Somalia, the Congo and Iraq in the coming year.

For more information about the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, go to <http://www.vrrp.org>. To volunteer or make a donation, contact Deirdre Smith at 338-4633 or [volunteer@uscrvt.org](mailto:volunteer@uscrvt.org)



# Local Agricultural Community Exchange: *A private sector community revitalization project*

BY MICHELE CRANWELL SCHMIDT  
EVALUATION COORDINATOR

The Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont is conducting an evaluation of LACE (Local Agricultural Community Exchange), a private sector community revitalization project that is central to the rejuvenation of downtown Barre City, Vermont.

LACE opened its doors in June 2007 with a Farm Fresh Market, Café, and an artisan vendor space to provide a direct connection between the community and farmers and artists. Located on Barre City's downtown main street, LACE filled a vacant storefront with a much needed grocery store that features local produce and products and is accessible to those with limited transportation, such as low-income, senior and disabled persons who are concentrated in this downtown area. The concept of LACE is the result of the research, planning, and action of Barre resident, Ariel Zevon, who had been seeking local alternatives to chain supermarkets to feed her young family healthy, nutritious whole foods.

The Center for Rural Studies is working with Central Vermont Community Action Council, Inc. (CVCAC), a community action agency, and LACE staff, with funds secured from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to expand and improve LACE infrastructure, offerings and resources for vendors. This project will create spaces within LACE where local vendors can showcase and sell their products. LACE's kitchen area will also be expanded to enable home-based producers to expand production and increase sales. CVCAC will provide additional support to local businesses that use space at



Jackson Browne, a musician who has held several benefit concerts to support LACE, Ariel Zevon, director of LACE, and Sen. Patrick Leahy at LACE's grand opening in June 2007. Visit LACE at 159 N. Main Street in Barre, or online at <http://lacevt.org>.

LACE through training and counseling in sales techniques, marketing, pricing, production, business operations, and business plan development as needed. Classes will also be available in ServSafe certification for those using the kitchen facility. Additionally, farmers and other producers serving the market and cafe will be able to access resource partners who can consult on production and planning at their farms and work on site with them to make recommendations for improving their operations. All of these strategies will result in increased employment through business expansions as well as new business start-ups.

The overall goal of this evaluation is to document the impact of LACE as a catalyst to revitalize Barre City and impact various stakeholders, including LACE employees, vendors, market users, and downtown businesses. Both a process and outcome evaluation is

planned, including surveys, interviews and focus groups with stakeholders.

The process evaluation will document LACE operations to determine best practices and lessons learned for potential replication of this model in other communities. The outcome evaluation will focus on the impact LACE has on stakeholders, using indicators such as job creation and skills gained by employees of LACE; expansion of production, product sales, and income of vendors; helpfulness of assistance received by vendors; increased access to fresh and local foods and improved food security of area residents; and changes in customer base and sales of other local businesses.

For updates on the evaluation of the LACE grant, visit CRS's evaluation home page at <http://crs.uvm.edu/evaluation/> or contact Michele Cranwell Schmidt at [mschmidt@uvm.edu](mailto:mschmidt@uvm.edu).



## Sustainable Development in Small Island States: St. Lucia

Two CRS staff members led a January 2008 service trip to St. Lucia as part of the “Sustainable Development in Small Island States: St. Lucia” course in the department of Community Development and Applied Economics. CRS Research Project Specialist Charles Kerchner taught the problem-based learning course with the assistance of Project Specialist Thomas Desisto.

Students met weekly during the Fall semester to go over critical background information about the island, and do preparatory work for field projects. The course culminated in a two-week field component in St. Lucia, working with local partners on several initiatives: The installation of a wind turbine, integrated watershed management, HIV/AIDS prevention and education, information technology and wetland construction.



St. Lucia course participants were (back row, from left) Kimberly Murtha, Mark Kolonoski, Remy Maylott, Monica O’Melia, Amanda Richardson, Megan Laliberte, Lydia Murtha, Amory Ledyard, Lizzy Mazer, Kali Brgant, Jessica Stanley, April Orleans, Joy Sylvester, Charles Kerchner and (front row, from left) Chris Wardell, Benjamin Rumsey, Joshua Smith and Thomas Desisto.

## Peace Corps in Vermont: *UVM ranks in top 25 for volunteers*

BY AMANDA RICHARDSON  
PEACE CORPS RECRUITER

Vermonters who commit to 27 months of volunteer service with the Peace Corps are not a new breed. In 2007, Vermont once again reigned as the top Peace Corps volunteer-producing state per capita, with one out of every 9,000 Vermont residents over age 18 serving.

This year, the University of Vermont ranked on Peace Corps’ top 25 list of medium-sized schools producing Peace Corps Volunteers. With 25 alumni currently serving, UVM is now ranked No. 15. Since Peace Corps’ inception, 714 UVM alumni have joined the ranks.

Peace Corps Volunteers who graduated from UVM are currently serving in Cameroon, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, The Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Jamaica, Morocco, Niger, Suriname and Ukraine. These volunteers are working on projects related to health, HIV/AIDS, environment, education, forestry, agriculture, protected areas management, agricultural economics, animal husbandry, business advising, English teaching and youth development.

Twenty-one percent of the current 8,079 volunteers in the field are health workers. There is a growing awareness that at the base of many health problems lies not only a lack of resources and facilities, but a lack of information.

Peace Corps Health Education Volunteers work with the community to encourage people to adopt behaviors that promote health, prevent illness, treat disease, and facilitate rehabilitation. They may train regional health workers in preventative care or prepare village health workers and community residents to provide for their own health needs. They may advise the community on how to improve their delivery systems, health interventions, and resources. Peace Corps Health Extension Volunteers work in the sub-fields of HIV/AIDS Prevention Education, Maternal/Child Health, Nutrition, Water Sanitation, and Nurse Training. Projects vary and are uniquely defined at the local level.

Peace Corps is a U.S. government-funded volunteer program that sends U.S. citizens overseas to work in fields of international development.

For more information, e-mail [peace.corps@uvm.edu](mailto:peace.corps@uvm.edu).