

# Transforming Community Learning into Community Driven Action

Seema Mahato, Yuchun Zhou, Ph.D., Krisanna Machtmes, Ph.D.



*They came, now we're a Team*

**Program Objective** – Imparting Food

Dehydration Knowledge



**Context & Competencies of Intended**

**Users of Program** – Need for Cooking skills

*Result of Team effort.....*

Food dehydration and cooking skills

workshops planned & conducted at two locations.

*If we build, will they come?*

Food dehydration workshops  
planned

*What they said .....*

- Need for education, supporting structures
- Expanding knowledge – the context, people resources

*What more do we now know...*

- Food dehydration tips, recipes, sharing surplus produce
- Expanded community networks



Slicing tomatoes for drying



Dried bell peppers



Carrots & tomatoes drying in a food dehydrator

*“I think that education process is going to be vital to maintaining the food system and growing it”*

*“if there were a push to do that with education and the equipment made available, I think more people might dehydrate food”*



Green beans drying on screens



Jars of dried apple chips in the pantry

*“Maybe they **haven't been introduced** to the square foot gardening or container gardening. That can be some of their trials: **maybe not only laziness**, but also **financial**, and maybe just **education-wise** also”*

Translation: facilitating conversion of learning into action through situational responsiveness<sup>1</sup>

- Authentic experience**
- Developing networks
  - Expanding knowledge – the context, people
  - Resources - availability
  - Building Trust

*“The idea that people have excess, bring in their surplus, share, **coordinated effort, coordinated time, a place that becomes an event!**”*

*“...seeing the different products and the variety of things that can be dehydrated and used that I would have **never thought possible**”*



Loading the food dehydrator



Food dehydrator ready

*“education piece about dehydration—and that would come through these workshops—is important but, I think **not only in the preserving food aspect but...where that food comes from**, so...people might be finding out in these workshops that, **Oh, it's really easy to grow this!**”*

*“It was **fun to create some recipes**, like that cauliflower thing”*



Pasta inverno – recipe using dried yellow squash



Hamburger casserole – recipe using dried broccoli, potatoes and onions

*Dried cauliflower, broccoli, sweet potatoes, potato slices and shreds.*



## Key Takeaways

- **P**eople – program connection
- **L**ocal expertise + research methods
- **A** connecting idea - long term projects –
- **C**ommunity champions – drive implementation
- **E**ngagement & Alignment – with resources, practices, cultures

## Community Driven Action

Food Preservation by Dehydration  
**Social well-being**

*community centers for teaching dehydration, “**people are more neighborly** ...to bring them together...a **community focus**”*

Food Waste Reduction  
**Ecological health**

Food Security Enhanced  
**Economic prosperity**

*“To provide food for themselves”  
“...make them feel I think **not so dependent on welfare** or what they get, but be able to **decide what they're going to eat** instead of just being given junk”*



Preparing to bake cup cakes using dried apple chips



Squash art that surfaced from organic conversations



Bell pepper from the garden

## “Organic Interactions Make Strong Communities”

## Community Driven Action

- Trust : “you’d have to go out and get the community all fired up” - a participant’s comment to the researcher
- New ideas, resources
- Expanded networks
- Unexpected opportunities – patterns that were unobservable surfaced
- Hope

## References

1. Patton, M. Q. (2012). *Essentials of utilization-focused evaluation*. Sage Publications.
2. Saldana, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.

Contact: Seema Mahato, sm618312@ohio.edu