



Growing Forward Farm Agricultural Literacy Project

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01. Community Need:

It's evident from data and community needs assessments that San Juan County faces multiple challenges related to food literacy, obesity rates, lack of physical activity among youth, and the need for agricultural career opportunities. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach integrating education, community engagement, and economic development initiatives. In 2021, 72.3% of San Juan County adults were overweight or obese, and youth obesity rates stood at 42%, according to the San Juan County Partnership data. The study also reported that nearly 14% of students reported no physical activity throughout their day. The need for outdoor recreation opportunities that connect healthy food options is paramount to the health of the San Juan County community.

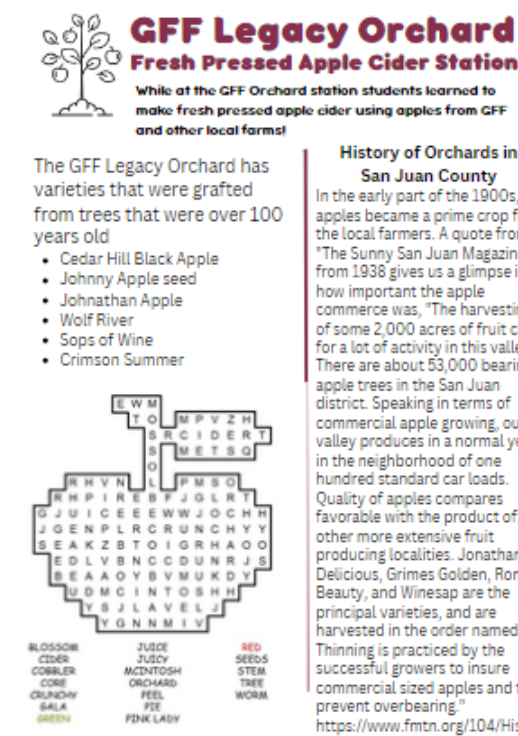
San Juan County also needs agricultural career opportunities for youth. According to an NMSU Arrowhead report, the region's farm employment rate is listed as the fifth highest among industries and has significant potential for growth. Introducing youth community members to the agricultural industry and potential career opportunities can assist the region in filling employment gaps in the future.

In addition to career exploration and agricultural literacy, the advancement of Agri-Tourism operations across the region can connect the outdoor recreation and agricultural industries to create substantial economic development opportunities. The largest agri-tourism operation in San Juan County closed in 2020. Since that time, six smaller operations have opened, and the need to revitalize the support for farm tours has grown. Creating systems and opportunities for farm visits that are connected to NM educational benchmarks makes school tours more accessible not only to the Growing Forward Farm project and Cooperative Extension but to new and expanding agri-tourism ventures.

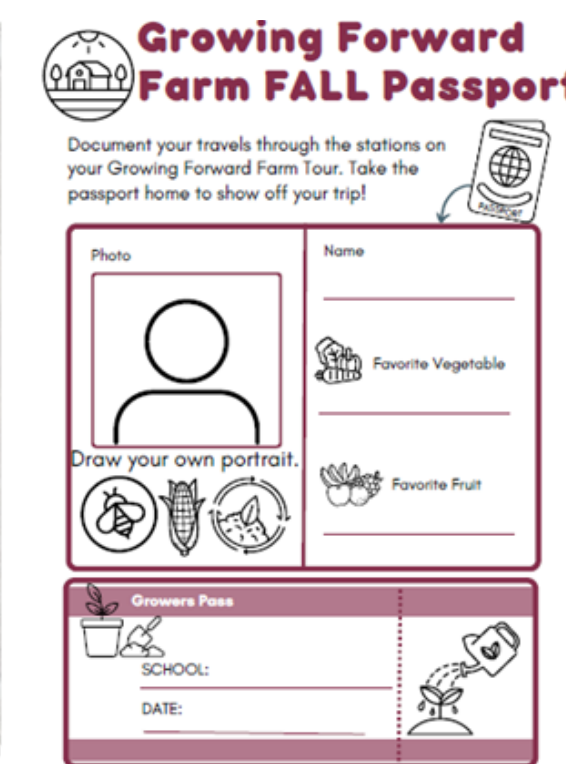
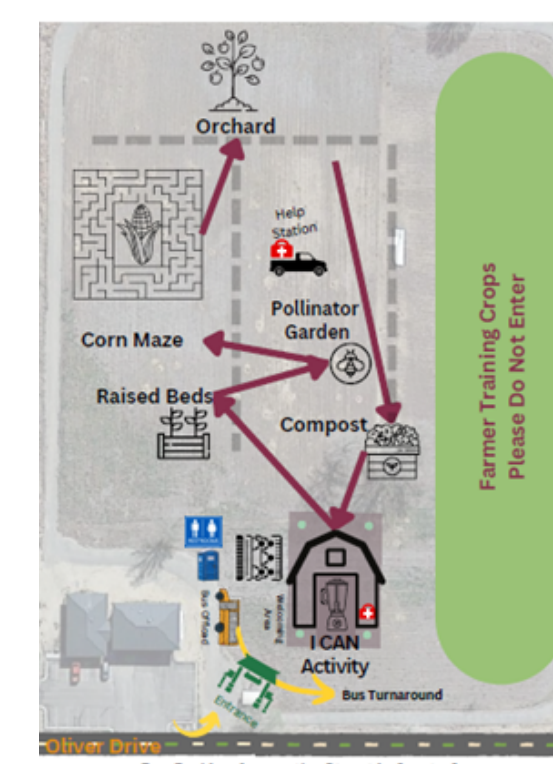
02. Objectives

The goals of the Growing Forward Farm Agricultural Literacy project are to:

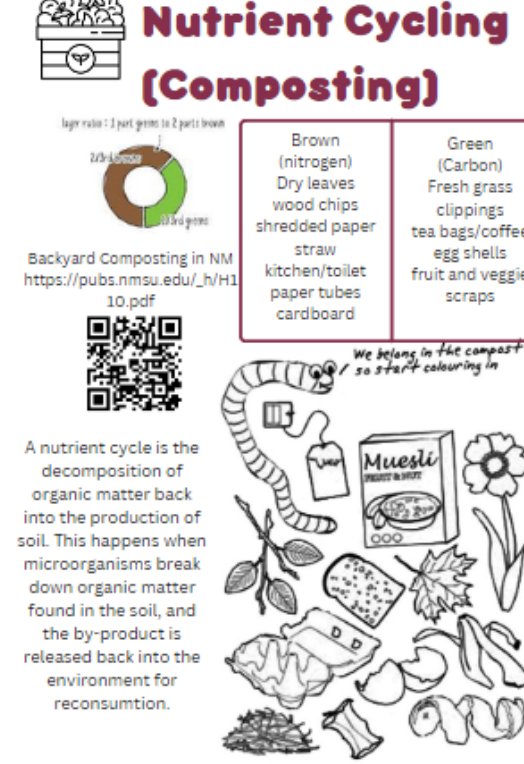
- Connect consumers to localized agricultural production through educational opportunities.
- Create connections between youth and potential agricultural career professionals in the Four Corners Region.
- Create a demonstration area at the Growing Forward Farm to teach, develop, and expand agritourism opportunities.
- Increase and encourage opportunities for healthy living.



I. Passport Orchard Station Information



II. Passport Cover



III. Composting Information

I- IV. Excerpts from the 2023 Fall Growing Forward Farm Passport. All students receive a passport during their safety orientation and welcome to the farm. The passport includes an informative page for each station as well as information about NMSU Cooperative Extension and the 4-H program.

04. Educational Activities

Educational tours were hosted in April around Earth Day and again during September and October for the fourth-grade students in San Juan County. Students participated in a 2-3 hour tour, learning about where their food comes from, agricultural careers, nutrition, and outdoor recreation.

Participants in the Growing Forward Farm tour will have the opportunity to experience a working farm operation, learn about ways to recreate outdoors, and explore six farm activities.

- Healthy Living: students will learn about nutrition while making a fun smoothie recipe on the 4-H smoothie bike with our Nutrition Educator and 4-H Agent.
- Raised Bed Gardening: Learn about gardening in San Juan County and how growing in raised beds is a great way to get healthy fruits and vegetables for your family.
- Historical Orchard activity: Tour a newly planted legacy orchard, learn about the long history of fruit trees in San Juan County, and make fresh-pressed apple cider.
- Nutrient Cycling and Composting: students will engage in composting activities and learn that living things have diverse structures and are interdependent on plant functions.
- Healthy Soils and Pollinator Station: Students will learn about the five principles of healthy soil and how we interact with our natural environment.
- Blue Corn Maze: a free play area with educational signs about the importance of corn in our society, regional cultures, and food system.



Growing Forward Farm Story:

Growing Forward Farm began as a fallow field, overwhelmed with noxious weeds, prairie dogs and bare soil. The program staff have worked diligently to bring the land back to life to create an outdoor educational facility for the community of San Juan County.

Growing Forward Farm is an educational demonstration farm centered around developing beginning farmer skills and teaching children ag science. We host a small farm business incubator, workshops to grow skills, and our farm science field trips!

Key Partners:

- San Juan County Administration
- San Juan Soil and Water Conservation District
- Farmington Municipal Schools
- San Juan County Partnership, Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities
- New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division

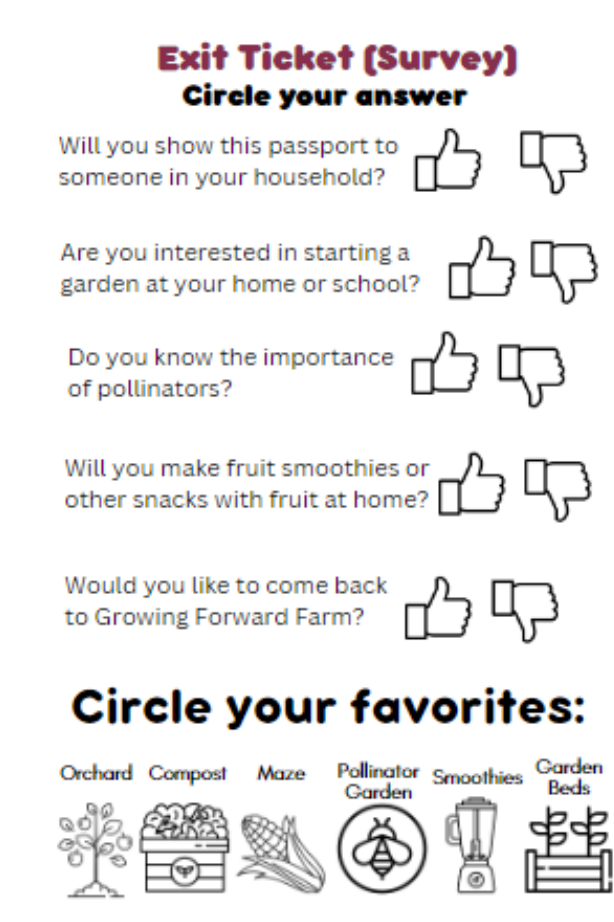
Funding Programs and Grants

- New Mexico Outdoor Equity Grant: \$19,800 provided funds for school bus transportation
- New Mexico Department of Agriculture Healthy Soils Program \$23,408 for creating demonstration areas
- New Mexico Department of Agriculture, Speciality Crop Block Grant \$113,721 for staffing at Growing Forward Farm



05. Analysis

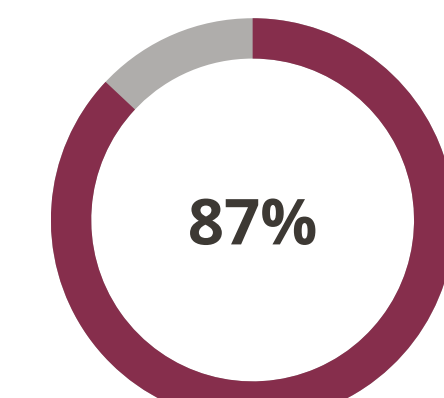
- Students that participated in the 2023 Growing Forward Farm tours were given a short survey to complete.
- Participating teachers were provided with an in-depth survey regarding the tour experience.
- Participating parents and volunteers were provided with an in-depth survey regarding the tour experience.



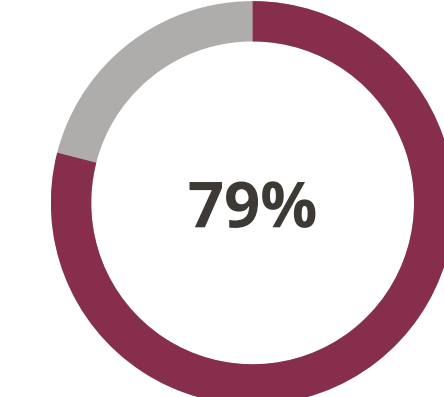
IV. Student Survey

Student Survey responses

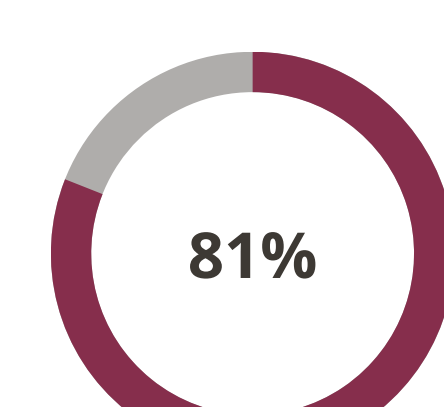
Students that would share their GFF passport information with a household member



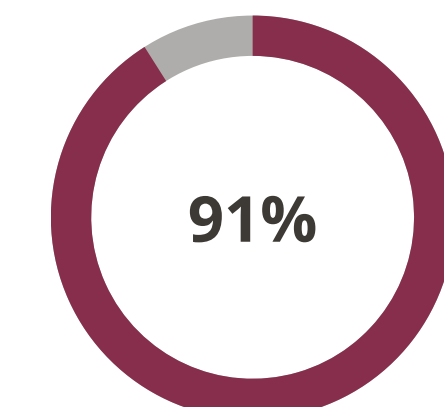
Student likelihood to start a garden at home



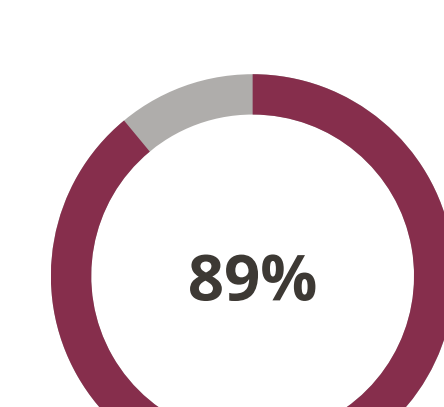
Student understanding of the importance of pollinators



Students that would repeat a recipe learned during tour



Students that would like to return to Growing Forward Farm

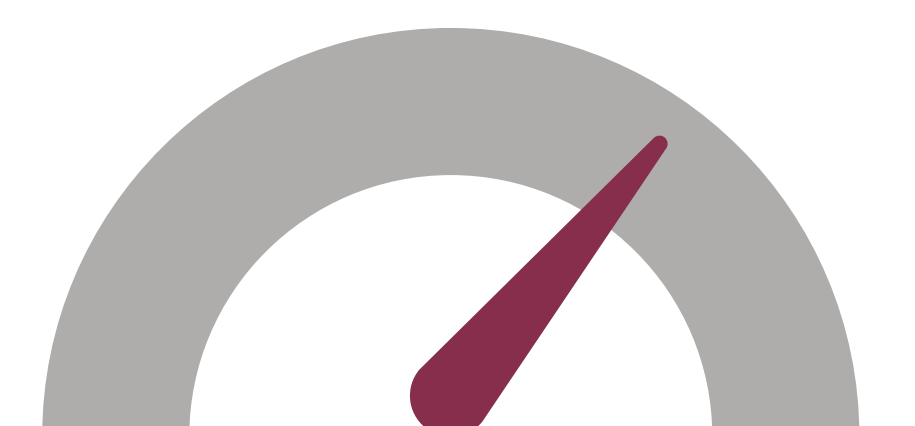
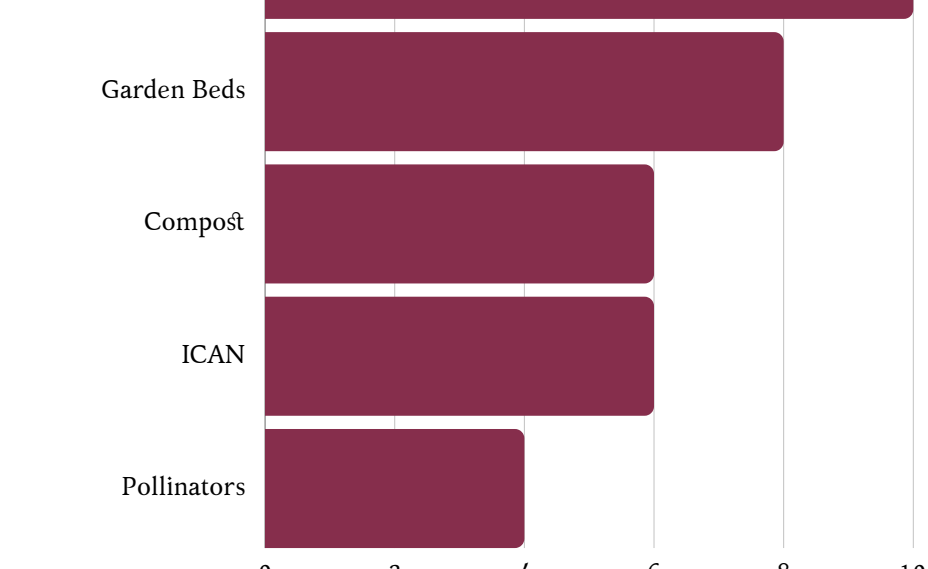


06. Growing Forward Farm Youth Tour Impacts

The spring fourth-grade tours hosted 565 students at Growing Forward Farm, and the fall fourth-grade school tours hosted 658 students from eight schools across San Juan County. Students, participating parents, and teachers were surveyed about their experiences during the tour activities.

Parent/Volunteer Survey

Most engaging station



This field trip inspires me to make healthier life choices such as being more physical active and eating more fruits and vegetables: 70% agreed

Teacher Survey results

The information provided in the stations was interesting and aligned with some of my grade level standards: 98% agreed

The stations were well organized and provided hands on learning experience 100% agreed:

I can use the experiences from today to enrich my lessons when I return to the classroom: 92% agreed

I feel this field trip will inspire my students to make healthier life choices such as being more physically active and eating more fruits and vegetables: 100% agreed

The tours resulted in widespread enthusiasm for farm tours and agricultural information. 4-H enrollment has increased significantly, nearly 20% for early enrollment. Many of the participants learned about 4-H during their visit. The tours have allowed the Extension staff concrete experience in providing agri-tourism opportunities, which will benefit other regional educational programs for farmers.

Follow our journey:
NMSU Growing Forward Farm

