

February 12, 2025
Reeve Basom
Center for an Agricultural Economy

My name is Reeve Basom, I live in Glover, and I work in Hardwick as the Place-Based Education Coordinator at the Center for an Agricultural Economy, partnering closely with schools in Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union. I am also a member of the Vermont Farm to School and Early Childhood Network. Thank you all for your time and attention today. The Farm to School and Early Childhood grants and the Local Food Incentive have such significant positive impact across the state, and I urge you to please support level funding for both of these programs at \$500,000 each.

Today I am at Hazen Union School where I co-facilitate a class called a Recipe for Human Connection. I am with some students who you will hear from shortly. This class is currently being supported through funding from the Farm to School Vision Grant and is a class that explores how food helps us connect and build community. Through shared recipes, harvesting, cooking, farm field trips and community meals, the class creates a space for students to grow their collaboration and communication skills, develop shared vision, build relationships and belonging across difference, and offer something meaningful and tangible to the community.

When a beloved community meal that had existed in Hardwick for decades was shuttered during the pandemic, Hazen students were instrumental in bringing it back. Now, each month at the Hardwick Community Lunch, Recipe for Human Connection students prepare a hearty, delicious, free meal featuring local ingredients and serve over 100 people. This intergenerational, challenging, and highly rewarding undertaking brings people together from across the community, engaging students directly in local food systems, social resilience and community food security. You are all invited to come anytime! Third Thursday of the month at noon at the United Church of Hardwick.

The Farm to School and Early Childhood programs provide key support for this class, as well as so many other valuable projects and innovative programs across the state. These programs are helping students and communities flourish. Please support the level funding of both the Farm to School and Early Childhood grants and the Local Food Incentive program. Thank you so much for listening, and we now have two students from Recipe class who would like to share with you.

Ginger Bowley
Hazen Union Student

My name is Ginger Bowley. I'm from Greensboro, VT and I'm in 11th grade at Hazen. Recipe for Human Connection Class has been really important to me. In 7th and 8th grade I didn't talk to anyone. In 9th grade I joined Recipe for Human Connection class and it helped me become more social and build confidence.

I really love the community meal. At the community meal we are all there all day cooking, working together and we have to communicate really well to make it happen. When we serve food, we're socializing with the people who we are serving, so that really helps with communication. There are times when we have little dance parties while we are cooking, so it's a very joyful experience. We also had the opportunity to interview people at the meal and write an article for the Hardwick Gazette. I had never thought of myself as a journalist before and it was fun to get feedback from people and share about our experiences with the community.

Thank you for listening and I hope you continue to fund the Farm to School programs.

Harmony Peets
Hazen Union Student

My name is Harmony Peets. I'm from Hardwick and I'm in 11th grade at Hazen.

Recipe for Human Connection teaches you a lot about communication skills with others and even really with yourself. Food puts you in a better mood, it makes you happy. Working with food gives you life skills but also social skills and personal confidence. You build a good community by cooking food together and by sharing it with people around you. The community lunches are a good time to connect with elders and adults as well as peers who are there with you. You get to know each other better.

All of that stuff has helped me get to where I am today and who I am. I'm very grateful for all of it. I'm a lot better than where I was a couple of years ago - I can actually go through a full day of school and get through it without arguing with somebody. Understanding myself and how to deal with my emotions - this class really helped me with that.

Thank you for your time.