

The Library as a Sustainability Hub:

Using Partnerships to Build a Sustainability Infrastructure on Campus

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Introduction

Binghamton University librarians built partnerships to work towards creating more sustainability-related engagement opportunities & establishing a physical space to showcase sustainability information & research. The resulting Campus Sustainability Hub fosters collaboration, bolsters engagement, & provides active support for all sustainability-related education, research, initiatives & programming taking place within their campus community.

Both librarians have primary job responsibilities tied to working with the biology & health sciences disciplines on campus so were able to easily engage on topics including health & wellness, mental health, & food insecurity through their sustainability work.

Health Benefits

As part of the process of building the Sustainability Hub, we applied for, & received a small internal campus grant focused on sustainability & health. Below are some highlights of the literature review from that grant.

- Exacerbated by the pandemic, food security, food justice, & mental health are more pressing concerns in Broome County than ever before (Anderson 2020; Czeisler 2020; Feed American 2021; Foodbank of the Southern Tier 2021; Sher 2020)
- Seed libraries enhance community-building by bringing people together for events around seed-planting & seed-saving workshops, & a common interest in gardening, cooking, & canning (Conner 2014)
- Gardening, the exercise associated with its labor, & just being outdoors has been shown to alleviate stress & enhance mental well being (Ingalls 2017:82)

References can be found at: bit.ly/SusHubReferences



Partnerships

Partners include a variety of campus & community individuals & groups.

Having a wide range of partners (everyone said yes!) broadens the types of ideas we come up with & allows us to reach a more diverse group of people.

Building & Strengthening these partnerships requires communication & collaboration.

The Partners

- Volunteers Improving Neighborhood Environments
- Multicultural Resource Center
- LGBTQ+ Center
- ZeroHour
- Food Pantry
- Faculty members
- Graduate students
- Student groups (Bee Club, oSTEM, NYPIRG, etc.)
- Communities Responding to Extreme Weather
- The Network for a Sustainable Tomorrow
- Broome County Public Library
- A local farmer & environmental educator

Engagement

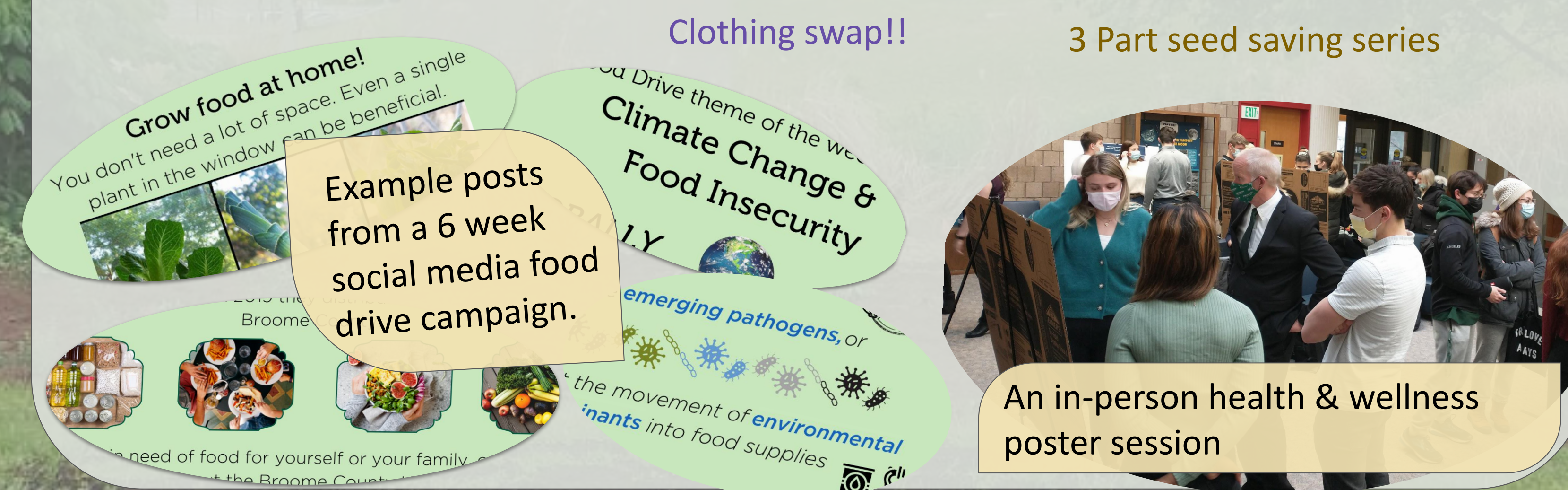
Engagement is one of the primary goals of the Sustainability Hub. Through engagement, we help others increase their sustainability knowledge and make connections. We are also able to show all the various ways sustainability interacts with our lives, including our health.

Engagement takes many forms including events, online & physical resources, & direct interaction with individuals.

Some events are highlighted below. More can be seen at: bit.ly/3p2uGDB

Fire + Flood: Queer Resilience in the Era of Climate Change screening & discussion

Migration and displacement in a changing climate Presentation by IPCC author



Seed Library

Seed Libraries act as a way to prepare and respond to climate change while also actively engaging the local community. Benefits include:

- Promoting biodiversity & preserving genetic diversity
- Providing community members with seeds to grow healthy food to supplement their diet at a low cost, and/or seeds to grow for the joy of growing and improved mental health
- Encouraging, and providing support for, a sense of community
- Supporting local seed-savers, gardeners, & farmers



Other Resources



A Terracycle box is available in the library foyer for **mask recycling**. It has been a huge success and additional boxes have been ordered.



Non-traditional lending items are available for the campus community to borrow, including **air quality testers**.



As a **CREW Climate Resilience Hub** we provide information on how to prepare for, and react to, climate related emergencies



A **sustainability book collection** is easily accessible in the Hub. Subjects cover a range of topics related to sustainability, including health.

Next Steps

Now that the Sustainability Hub is official, we have plans to add to it, expand its reach, and analyze its impacts. Goals for 2022 include:

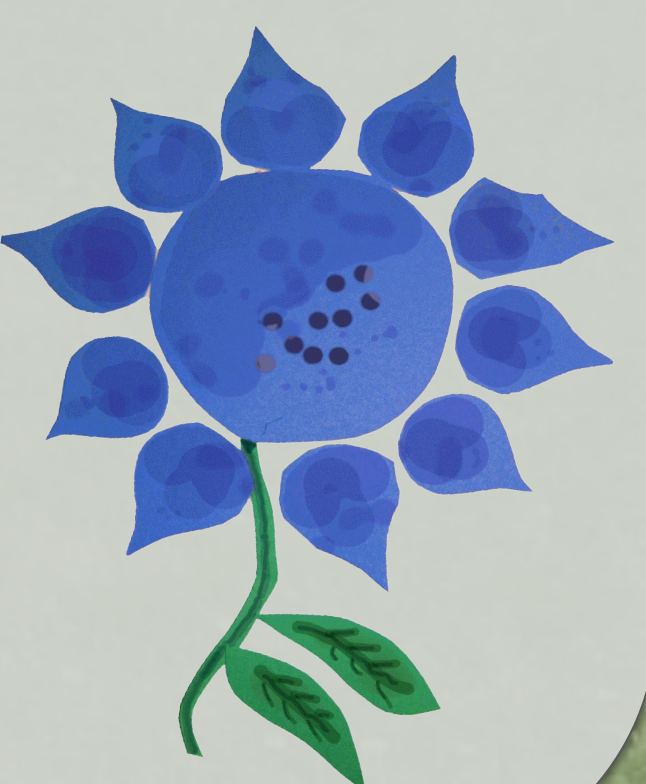
- Add non-traditional lending items including more citizen science kits (currently have one), cooking tools, and seed-saving kits
- Additional in-person and virtual events with established partners
- Create new partnerships
- Create dedicated spaces for related student groups
- Work more closely with student groups
- Create and implement assessments for the Seed Library and the Hub as a whole

Lessons Learned

- ★ There is strength in partnerships. Working with partners can be overwhelming but it has great rewards!
- ★ A sense of community is a powerful thing.
- ★ There is a lot of interest and lots of people doing things. Also can be an overwhelming challenge if not fostered.
- ★ Money is not *essential* but really really helpful.
- ★ Success breeds success
- ★ Burnout is real.

Recommendations

- Learn campuses strengths and weaknesses
- Just start, and start small
- Look for Grants/Awards
- Promote the work you do
- Get a group together (official or unofficial)!
- Network / communicate
- Compromise



More Information

Sustainability Hub website: <https://bit.ly/sushub>

Institutional Repository sustainability section: <https://bit.ly/susIR>

CREW Climate Resilience Hubs: <https://bit.ly/crewhub>

Both at Binghamton University in Binghamton, New York:

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