Food insecurity is a major problem that rears its head in vulnerable groups of people throughout the state, country and the world. Not only does this affect the amount of food a person or family is able to get, but it also affects the quality and type of food they can get as well. That's where veggie vouchers come in. This is how it works:

“Participating host sites distribute them among vulnerable populations they work with; farmers market vendors agree to accept them, staff go to farmers markets on a regular basis to collect redeemed vouchers, and farmers market vendors are paid. As a result a population that normally does not go to farmers markets is exposed to it and begins to purchase more vegetables.” - Jodie Huegerich

The Veggie Voucher program started all the way back in 2016 with the goal of increasing the consumption of fruits and vegetables for at-risk groups dealing with food insecurity. This program is based in the CEEE building on UNI campus in collaboration with UNI-CEEE, Mercy One, and the City of Waterloo.

Laikyn Barrett has been a key part in making this whole project run smoothly for the community. Barrett started working with the CEEE as their Americorp member which she also used as her Public Health internship in May of 2022. Barrett was a key point person responsible for keeping in touch and informing our host sites and vendors of the farmers markets of upcoming events and answering any questions they may have during the season. She also attended many farmers markets in the Cedar Valley for educational outreach and community engagement.

The veggie voucher program is a program that just keeps giving. Along with the good that they do with the at risk population groups around our community, students at UNI are getting valuable life lessons and experiences. “Partnership with the community provides real world learning opportunities as well as meaningful engagement and relationship building that will build students well-being, achievement and connection.” says Laykin.

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