



The Sarah B. Livesey 2025 Summer Youth Internship Program

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Program Overview

- Sponsored by **The Sarah B. Livesey Foundation**
- **12 high school interns** participated
- **10-week program**, 15 hours per week
- Hands-on learning in:
 - **Cooking**
 - **Gardening**
 - **Nutrition education**
 - **Community health**
- Insights drawn from **intern reflection surveys**
- Focus on:
 - **Skill development**
 - **Personal growth**
 - **Community awareness**



Skill Development

Interns consistently reported growth in the following areas:

- **Cooking & Gardening**
- **Nutrition & Health Equity Awareness**
- **Leadership, Teamwork, & Confidence**
- **Public Speaking & Communication**
- **Creativity & Problem Solving**



“I came into this internship hoping to improve my cooking skills-- and with Joe’s help, I did just that.” / “I was super shy at first, but now I feel confident talking to others I’ve never met before.”

Shifts in Perspective:

Interns gained new awareness of **food insecurity in Connecticut, community nutrition systems**, and the **connection between personal health and community wellness**.

“I had no idea how many towns near me were food insecure.”

“I’ve committed to eating less processed food and being more mindful of sugar intake.”



Meaningful Experiences:

Interns highlighted the following as the **most meaningful parts** of their experience:

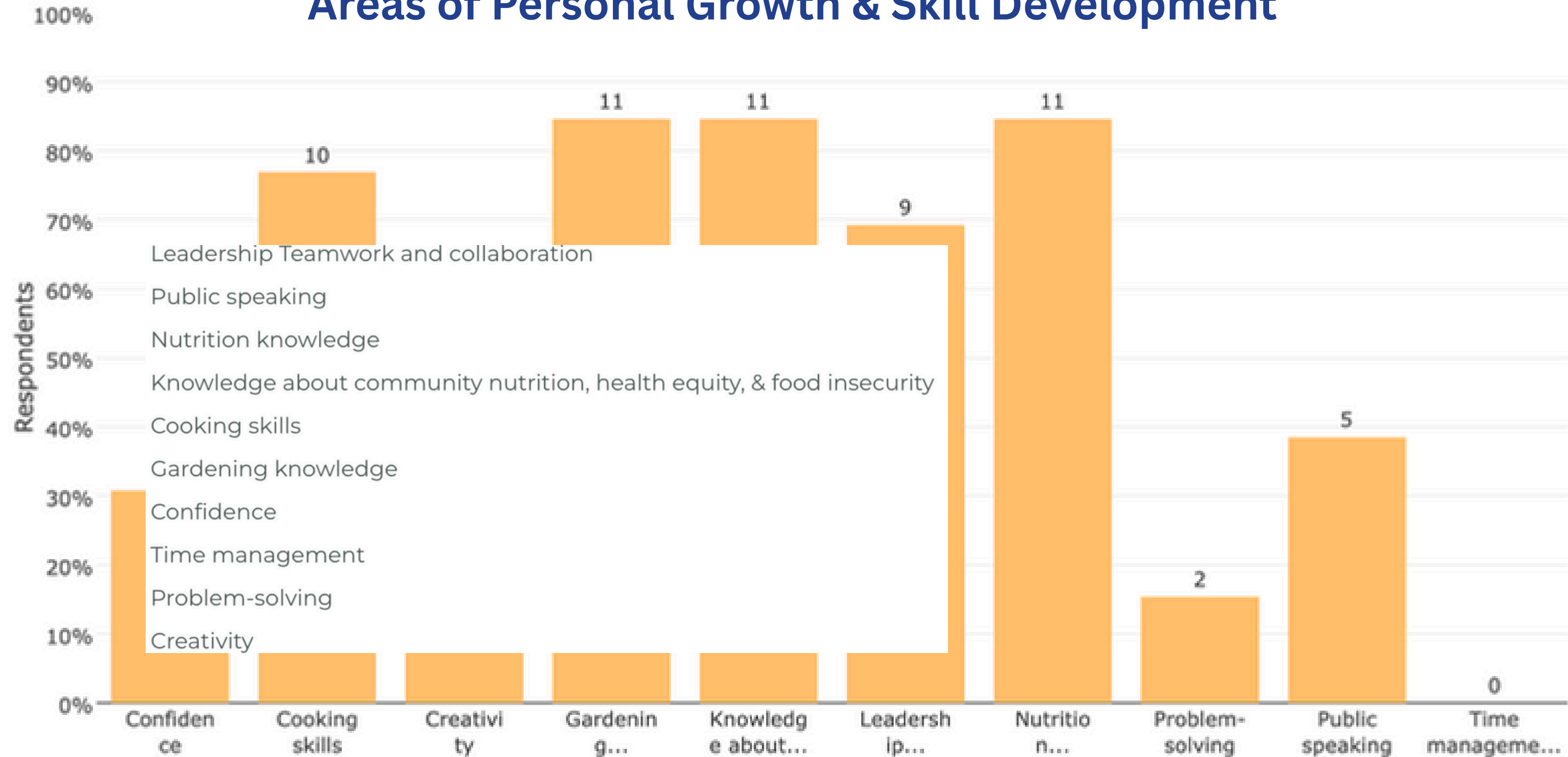
- **Kitchen sessions** with Chef Joe
- **Gardening** with Andy and caring for the chickens
- **Field trips** to Hands on Hartford, Grocery on Broad, and Holcomb Farm
- **One-on-One mentorship and peer collaboration**

“Helping at the HOH pantry was an experience I’ll never forget.”

“I loved growing my own plants and cooking with Joe.”



Areas of Personal Growth & Skill Development



Connections & Relationships



Would you recommend this internship to a friend?
11 out of 12 interns said YES!



Program Feedback

Positive Themes:

- **Supportive mentors & staff**
- **Diverse, hands-on learning experiences**
- Strong sense of **community & belonging**

Constructive Suggestions:

- **More time in the kitchen** and project work
- **Some lessons felt too simplified** or geared toward younger audiences
- **Final presentation** project felt **rushed**

“I would’ve liked a more rigorous curriculum.” / “The final project was good, but it felt rushed and hard to manage during the school year.”





Intern Recommendations & Advice:

11 out of 12 interns would **recommend** the internship to a friend. They cited the **opportunity to gain life skills, build friendships, make a real impact, and earn a stipend while learning.**

“Go in with an open mind and have fun!”

“Don’t be afraid to ask questions-- that’s how you learn.”

“Enjoy the time-- it goes by quickly.”

Which skill are you most proud of improving and why?

- “I'm most proud of improving my nutrition knowledge because I often found myself eating anything without acknowledging the ingredients, so this improvement has made me more mindful.”
- “My cooking skills and gardening skills. I feel as if I learned many new skills and am ready to independently use them in my life.”
- “Nutrition and gardening because I knew little to nothing about gardening and I learned several useful nutrition pieces for my health.”
- “I am most proud of my new knowledge in gardening, as it has inspired me to consider having my own garden at home and talking about it with my family. I now feel like I could start and manage one my own, which I think I will do sometime in my life.”

What part of your work this summer felt the most meaningful to you and why?

- “The most meaningful part of my work this summer was going on the field trips to the food pantries and seeing the impacts of food insecurity.”
- “I felt like my work in the kitchen has been the most meaningful, as the assistance and cooking we provided seemed to tremendously help the other shifts, and make sure the clients got the food they needed.”
- “The gardening is really meaningful to me as I learned a whole new skill that I can use myself.”

Which skill are you most proud of improving and why?

“I would say my public speaking. Its such a safe and non nerve-wracking environment to work on that skill. I have done other programs that included public speaking and it was very hard for me and I did not enjoy it. The mentors and group we had this summer made it easy for me to work on public speaking without judgement.”

Conclusion

- The 2025 Summer Youth Internship Program was a **season of growth, learning, and connections**
- Interns gained **valuable skills, personal confidence, and leadership experience**
- They developed a deeper **awareness of community needs and the power of service**
- Positive reflections and thoughtful feedback will **guide and strengthen future programs**
- At its heart, Healing Meals is a **nurturing, transformative space—cultivating compassionate leaders, inspiring changemakers, and planting seeds of kindness** that ripple far beyond the program





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