

# SUCCESS STORIES

UAF Cooperative Extension Service

## Working through the pandemic: Bethel 4-H provides food, youth and family activities

### Issue

As a result of the pandemic, many 4-H families in Bethel have experienced limited access to child care, food resources and youth activities.

### Response

Bethel 4-H has maintained its program during these unprecedented times through sustained relationships with partners and its 4-H families. Working with the Food Bank of Alaska, the Bethel 4-H Program continued its At-Risk Snack program, which provides nutritious meals and snacks to eligible children. It hosted a snack drop-in, three days a week, supplying a week's worth of snacks to families with youth 18 and under. It also partnered with Meyers Farm, a local farm, to purchase a variety of produce to create at-home "Cooking and Nutrition Kits" and engage families in healthy eating practices.

4-H also provided activities, including kits for youth to use outside of schooltime, and clubs and meetings facilitated via Zoom. A youth leader led an art class through the statewide "Open HeArt Series and the program supplied 4-H'ers with supplies to participate in each art session. 4-H offers a club called Camp Invention, where 11 youth engage in fun science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM) activities. 4-H recently partnered with a local high school to start a Study Club for students who may not have access to resources they need to succeed.

### Results

At-Risk Snack outreach includes families outside of 4-H, so more residents have become aware of what 4-H has to offer. Many families are now showing great interest in its clubs. The program has also had interest from teachers in surrounding villages in starting school clubs. Kellie Johnson, the assistant director of the Bethel 4-H program,



Kelsey Fuentes of the Bethel 4-H program prepares bags of produce harvested from the 4-H garden for the At-Risk Snack program.

said, "Although having to engage via Zoom, to simply hold a conversation and see the faces of your peers, while engaging in activities has been truly impactful. Our relationships with our partners have strengthened, due to changes in their organizations and in our program, and we are putting our resources together to meet the needs of our stakeholders."

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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