

# Exploring Aquaponics 2018



## SEANET Student Interns Explore Careers in Aquaponics and Aquaculture

The University of Maine Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies, the Center for Cooperative Aquaculture Research, and Hancock County Cooperative Extension 4-H Youth Development Program recently partnered on a six-week summer internship experience for high school students with disabilities.

The project, Exploring Aquaponics 2018, was funded through Maine EPSCoR/SEANET and provided enrolled students with hands-on learning opportunities and career exploration in aquaponics and aquaculture. Janet May, Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies' coordinator of transition and adult initiatives, served as the project coordinator.



Carla Scocchi (2nd from left) assisting student interns with water collection and analysis.

Aquaponics is a system of aquaculture in which the waste produced by farmed fish or

other aquatic animals supplies nutrients for plants grown hydroponically (without soil) which in turn purify the water.



Carla Scocchi and a student intern testing a water sample.

Carla Scocchi, a 4-H youth development professional with a background in experiential science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education, served as a co-educator on the project. "One of the primary goals was to introduce the students to employment opportunities in aquaculture and marine science," she said. Scocchi helped to connect the project partners and successfully adapted some 4-H tools, such as a project record/reflection sheet, to meet the needs of the six-week internship experience.

The students met once a week at the UMaine Center for Cooperative Aquaculture Research (CCAR) on Taunton Bay in Franklin, ME. Each



Student interns, Mrs. Forest and Bobby Harrington at the Aquaculture Research Center in Orono.

weekly session ran approximately 3 hours and involved team as well as individual science activities. Co-educator Melissa Malmstedt, education and outreach coordinator at CCAR, noted the intensity of the students' engagement; particularly in their interactions with the fish in the hatcheries. "Every student had one great day in the project; sometimes more," she said. Becky Higgins, Sumner Memorial High School special education teacher and student mentor agreed. "This

internship experience provided one student with an opportunity to show her leadership skills. The student wouldn't have done this in another situation," she said.

The Center for Cooperative Aquaculture Research also serves as an aquaculture business incubator, a resource where new and established companies can utilize its facilities and engage in research and development. As part of their internship, the students learned about the growing aquaculture industry in Maine and the employment opportunities in related fields. "With additional work and training," said Malmstedt, "[these] students could be employed in this area." Special education teacher Jacqueline Thurber, who coordinated transportation for the students agreed with Malmstedt: "Every one of the students benefited from this exposure to careers in aquaculture. There are other ways to have jobs other than lobstering."



SEANET student intern looking into fish tank at the Center for Cooperative Aquaculture Research.

"This project was a great opportunity for multiple University of Maine programs to work together and create career exploration options for Maine youth."

~ Janet May,  
project coordinator,  
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All photographs courtesy of the University of Maine Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies.

Exploring Aquaponics 2018 was supported with funding from the National Science Foundation Award IIA-1355457 to Maine EPSCoR at the University of Maine.