

# Souderton Area High School creates food safety campaign

## USDA, local businesses mentor Souderton students, create campaign

*Creating an advertising campaign for the USDA, students in Souderton Area High School's Design, Marketing, and Communications (DMC) Club from Souderton, Pennsylvania are working with mentors from local businesses and the USDA to promote food safety.*

Raising awareness about the potential dangers of Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia-coli* (STEC) in beef and giving students a mentorship opportunity, representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA NIFA) funded STEC Coordinated Agriculture Project (STEC CAP) are asking the DMC Club to create a food safety advertising campaign.

According to Assistant Principal Kyle Longacre, the DMC Club formed last year and worked with the Keystone Opportunity Center.

This year, the students will be creating a campaign highlighting STEC's "potential for human health issues," said Longacre.

The process officially began in January during an informational meeting where the DMC Club met with USDA representatives and local business mentors.

USDA microbiologist John Luchansky presented information about STEC for students to use in their campaigns.

Students also used the meeting as an opportunity to ask questions and brainstorm ideas.

Luchansky approached Longacre with this idea after learning of Souderton's career pathway program.

According to Longacre, Luchansky's kids went through Souderton and that is how he heard about the high school's mentorship program.

Luchansky's three daughters, Sarah, Samantha, and Stephanie, graduated in 2009, 2012, and 2014, respectively, while son Stephen is currently a sophomore at the high school.

The pathways mentorship ties in with the STEC CAP grant, which also offers student internships and externships.

According to [stecbeefsafety.org](http://stecbeefsafety.org), the goals of the USDA-sponsored STEC CAP are to help reduce health risks in beef from STEC while offering students real world experiences.

STEC CAP Grant Director Rodney Moxley said the goal of the program "is to reduce the public health risk and numbers of cases of STEC infections in the population due to beef."

Students will be creating an advertising campaign to help spread this message.

According to STEC CAP project manager Jill Hochstein, the main goal of the campaign is to "reduce deaths caused by *E. coli*," specifically in undercooked and/or improperly handled beef.

USDA representatives are looking forward to working on this project with students.

Luchansky is looking forward to seeing the students get "excited about food safety."

The student's campaign ideas have the potential to be presented at the 2016 STEC CAP Conference.

"I'm hoping that there's at least one or a few ideas that students can maybe take [to the conference in] Nebraska," said advisor Michael Olenick. "That would be fantastic."

USDA representatives will teach the students about the message they want sent to the public.

According to USDA food microbiologist Anna Porto-Fett, the representatives will help to educate students on the "food safety aspect" of the project.

Mentors from local advertising businesses will also help the students create their campaigns.

New Idea Group president Dale New said the mentors will “guide” the students and give them background on how advertising agencies work.

“[The mentors] help guide [the students] along the entire marketing process,” said Allebach Communications CEO Jamie Allebach. Students will present their ideas to the mentors.

“[Mentors will provide] feedback on creative ideas,” said Allebach Communications vice president of account services Christa Ward.

According to advisor Stuart Marjoram, students will be able to communicate with the mentors through the whole process to get help with their ideas.

“The mentors will guide them along, and [the students will] pitch their ideas to the USDA,” said Olenick.

The mentors are enthusiastic about working with students on the project.

“I am excited to see what great ideas the students come up with,” said One Mile Creative editorial director Virginia Woodbury.

Hochstein believes that the DMC members will introduce new perspectives.

“My favorite part [of being involved with the project] is that I can learn from [the students,]” said Hochstein.

New agrees.

“I’m excited to see [the students’] ideas,” said New. “I’m excited to see their perspective on solving [the project] from a creative standpoint and also from a social media standpoint.”

This campaign has the potential to go from concept to reality.

“It’s quite possible that the STEC grant may fund a large ad campaign based off of the ideas generated by our students,” said Longacre.

Students can also use their involvement in the DMC Club as a mentorship for the Pathways 360 program.

“[The students are] working with adult mentors,” said Longacre. “It should be an excellent learning experience for them.”

Junior Russell Plumb joined the club this year to gain experience working on a marketing campaign.

“[I am looking forward to] interactions between the client and the businesses,” said Plumb.

According to Porto-Fett, the students will learn “how to develop a message” and get the “importance” of the issue across to the general public.

The project will also provide club members real world experience and exposure to different careers.

“It’s about kids finding careers that they’re interested in and following along that career pathway,” said Marjoram. “What this does is it exposes students to several different types of careers.”

According to adviser Brian Ruth, there are “so many takeaways” for students, including things like portfolio materials and exposure. Mentors are hoping that this project will help show students possible careers in the marketing or food safety fields.

According to Luchansky, the program is a good way to get the “next generation of food safety professionals engaged.”

The project could also open up career options in advertising and communications fields.

Allebach thinks this will give students the opportunity to “learn what the process” of an advertising agency is.

This can help students realize whether they like this field of work or not.

“Hopefully they’ll get a taste of whether they like the kind of work [creating a campaign] is,” said New. “Hopefully we’re opening some eyes that there are some really good and exciting and fun and rewarding careers in advertising and art.”

The USDA mentors are anticipating seeing the students’ final campaigns in May.

“I’m really, really interested, excited, and curious about the product [the students are] going to come up with,” said Luchansky.

Moxley agrees. “I would hope to see some very creative effective messages that would reach targeted audiences,” said Moxley.

Students are also anticipating the outcome. “[I’m looking forward to] working with the client to produce [a campaign,]” said Plumb.