



North Dakota Farm to School Profile

Valley City school lunch - all about the partnerships

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LOCAL NEWS
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By Sue B. Balcom

Sue Milender, Sharon Clancy and Sharon Buhr credit the success of the Valley City School's increased use of fresh fruits and vegetables to partnerships.

Milender, the school system's food service director, has offered students a

salad bar with everything from spinach to kohlrabi since 1994.

To entice the students to try new foods, Milender uses the school's fruits and vegetable grant money to sample new products. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction admin-

(Continued on page 2)



Sue Milender (left) and Sharon Clancy next to the Valley City Elementary School salad bar. The "Fischer-Price" size works well for the smaller students to make their own healthy selections.

INSIDE:

-  Volunteer grows gutter gardens
-  Ample Harvest website valuable to food pantries
-  Funds available for TEFAP infrastructure
-  Farmers Market grants available
-  Tiny Bites

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Coop makes ordering fresh easy

(Continued from page one)

isters the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program and nearly \$800,000 has been allocated to 62 schools for the 2009-2010 school year. The program is geared towards elementary schools with the highest proportion of free and reduced lunch enrollment. Valley City Schools were granted enough money to offer fresh fruits and vegetables twice a week.

Here's where the partnership begins.

Buhr, the director of Mercy Hospital's Young People's Healthy Heart Program, works on educating young people about the importance of a good diet. She has written curriculum to share with the students dovetailing with the fruit and vegetables snacks.

Andrea White, who works for Buhr, visits the school and provides lessons that go from school to home. When the student completes the lesson, they are sometime rewarded with a token. Since there's no budget for these trinkets, the partners contact entities like the Pear Board to send materials in support of its product.

When introducing exotic foods to the children, the lesson may include a video on how to prepare a pomegranate or slice a pineapple.

These take-home lessons engage the students as well as the parents in better choices at the grocery store or when visiting the farmers market.

Locally grown produce creates the third leg in support of this partnership. Clancy, a local farmer market manager, has gathered several producers together and supplies the cooks with a "fresh" sheet each week that includes the available products, cost and how it comes, Milender said. "The moral value is high enough to justify the increased cost. They (the market) has bent over backwards to help us out."

Light processing to make it easier to use the produce in the school kitchen has been done by Clancy and the sheltered workshop called Open Door.

Milender only pays one monthly bill for the fresh produce. Clancy divvies up the money to the suppliers. Between the school and local restaurants, Clancy said farmer market sales increased by \$2,400. To advance the process even more, she would like to create a wash and pack house. There's a building in town, but the group needs financing for a walk-in cooler and some steel tables.

The farmers market cooperative effort was aided



Emma Willey, 11, helps herself to a salad at Washington Elementary School in Valley City.

by a SARE grant that Clancy wrote. Once that is gone, they may have to try another approach.

In the meantime, "I believe in the Farm to School program," Milender said. "The children rarely go by the salad bar without taking something."

Buhr said, "Sue was the best thing that could have happened to the school lunch program."

Local volunteer growing gutter gardens

RSVP volunteer Larry Roth, Bismarck, was working on a project when he came up with an idea for “gutter gardens.”

Roth was working on a horticulture therapeutic project for a local nursing home. He converted shopping carts to work stations that could be rolled into the resident rooms loaded with plants, material and tools for residents who couldn’t, or wouldn’t, leave their rooms. NDSU Horticulturist Tom Kalb was guiding Roth’s work.

“Last year I got a little anxious for spring so I decided to create gutter gardens. I don’t have a clue where the idea came from as I’m not that creative,” Roth said.

The two 10-foot gutters were purchased from Menards. Roth put ends on them, drilled holes for drainage and filled them with a good quality soil mix. He planted two varieties of lettuce and two varieties of radish.

Before Roth began work on the shopping carts for the Baptist Home project, he used them to roll the gutters in and out of the garage when evening temps were too cold for the plants.

The lettuce produced really well. “I neglected to thin the radishes so they didn’t do that well,” Roth said.



Ample Harvest website provides nationwide pantry information

The AmpleHarvest.org Campaign is a nationwide effort to diminish hunger in America by enabling millions of backyard gardeners to easily find a local food pantry eager for their excess garden bounty.

North Dakota’s Hunger Free North Dakota Garden project could benefit from the information and resources provided on this site.

Food pantry directors can enter their information in an online directory. The information includes pantry needs, address, phone and even a photo to make it easier to find. From this list, gardeners will be able to locate pantries that can distribute produce when harvest rolls around.

If you need assistance with the web site, please contact Sue Balcom at suebalcom@nd.gov or call 800-242-7535.



Photos of Larry Roth’s gutter gardening project last spring. The radishes didn’t do so well, the lettuce was awesome.





Most are missing the mark: A mere two percent of school-aged children meet federal dietary guidelines for all five of the major food groups.

Completely missing the mark: Approximately one in six children (16 percent) eats a diet that meets none of the recommendations.

Fruitless efforts: Less than 15 percent of children meet the recommendation for fruit.

Pretty much vegetable-less, too: Less than 20 percent of school children comply with the daily requirement for vegetables.

Waving away the grains: Less than a quarter of children consume the recommended daily serving of grains.

Dairy deficient: Only 30 percent of school children drink the recommended amount of milk each day.

(SOURCE: Foodlinks America)

**There's
still
time!**



Make your pledge to the Hunger Free North Dakota Garden Project by May 24, and receive a sign for your garden... For more information visit www.agdepartment.com under local foods initiative or call Sue Balcom at 800-242-7535 or 328-4763.

Funds Available for TEFAP Infrastructure

Food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens and other emergency feeding organizations (EFOs) can apply for grants of \$50,000 to \$250,000 to improve and expand infrastructure under the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture says up to \$6 million is available for the grants. Up to \$3 million is reserved for rural infrastructure grants with priority consideration for projects serving rural Native American communities. The remainder is available for general infrastructure grants.

According to USDA, the "grants will help EFOs to implement, improve, and expand their infrastructure activities and projects, including developing computerized systems for tracking time-sensitive food products; improving the distribution of perishable foods; rescuing prepared, unserved food; identifying donors, new EFOs, and eligible recipients; and improving facilities and equipment."

Applicants must be active participants in TEFAP since at least Sept. 30, 2009. Matching funds are not required. Grants may not be used to buy buildings, land or food or primarily support salaries and benefits. Awardees must complete funded activities by Sept. 30, 2011.

Application deadlines are May 17, for rural infrastructure grants and June 1, for general infrastructure grants.

For further details on rural infrastructure grants, go to www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/tefap/TEFAP_Rural_InfraGrant.htm. For more information on the general infrastructure grant, go to www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/tefap/TEFAP_General_InfraGrant.htm.

North Dakota Farmers Market and Growers Association offers grants

Education and promotion mini-grants for markets are now available to members of the North Dakota Farmers Market and Growers Association.

A total of \$18,000 is available with an estimated \$500 award to 36 markets based on interest.

Deadline for grant applications is May 10.

For a copy of the application or more information, please call Stacy Baldus, Dakota College Entrepreneurial Center for Horticulture at 701-228-5649 or email Stacy.Baldus@dakotacollege.edu.

Are you a Locavore?

By Carmen Rath-Wald
Logan County Extension Agent

A federal law passed in 2002 and implemented in 2008 requires fresh meat, seafood and produce to carry a “country of origin” label. I can go one better.

I actually know what county and township produced the beef, pork and honey in my freezer and cupboard. Add fruits and vegetables from my garden or a farmer’s market and it’s easy to see that “I am a locavore.”

According to Wikipedia, a locavore is: Local food...or the local food movement...is part of the concept of local purchasing and local economics, a preference to buy locally produced goods and services. Those who prefer to eat locally grown/produced food sometimes call themselves locavores or localvores (make sure it is an “a” after the c, not an “o”, although I must admit being a locovore for certain local foods!)

Locavores support their local economic system, as their neighbors produce, prepare and package the food. Neighbors support neighbors and both benefit. It also seems as though folks who produce local foods are prone to generosity, as in:

The March 14, Jamestown Sun reads in their “Bravos and Buffalo chips” section:

“Bravo to the establishment of the Hunger-Free North Dakota Garden Project. The project’s goal, launched through the North Dakota Department of Agriculture with the help of agencies and organizations, is to “grow and distribute half a million pounds of food” to communities and individuals in need without sources of fresh produce this year.”

Whether gardeners plan to plant an extra row of vegetables to donate, or a classroom works on a project to grow vegetables for a nursing home, the benefits are the same. The giver feels empowered and the hungry get fresh foods.

Not everyone is lucky enough to know the farmer who delivers an animal to the local butcher shop; some have to rely on labeling. The federal country-of-origin labeling law gives retailers discretion in how

they label food. At the meat counter they can simply list all the countries where meat is produced, or they can label each cut.

According to Tim Petry, a North Dakota State University livestock economist, the law won’t necessarily help consumers know where the meat comes from.

“The benefit for consumers is that they could know where it came from,” Petry said. “But since the law allows multi-country labeling, say, ‘A product of U.S., Mexico and Canada’, then a label would not be very informative to them I suspect.”

Petry says it’s unclear if consumers are willing to pay a premium for U.S.-grown meat or produce. If they won’t, then retailers are likely to meet just the basic legal requirements.

Petry expects farmers and ranchers, not consumers, will pay for the labeling law. He expects meat packers to push the cost back to the farm.

The law requires much more record keeping. Farmers will need to sign a legal affidavit for animals they sell. The document will need to follow the animals through feedlots, packing plants and to the supermarket meat case.

“One of the problems is a 600-pound steer leaving Minnesota or North Dakota does not end up as that single steer in a store,” said Petry. “So the dilemma a retailer has is if they sell a steak in New York City they could be asked to trace that all the way back to a North Dakota farm.”

If I had to trace the T-bone steak my son Wyatt had for his birthday, I could travel a mere 12 miles north and east of our house, give or take, depending on which pasture we’re talking about. For products that are not produced locally, I still have the benefit of a local grocery store that provides bananas, seafood perishables and so much more.

For more information about this subject or anything else I can help you with, give me a call (754-2504) or stop in at the NDSU Extension Service in Logan County located on the second floor of the courthouse in Napoleon.

I would be glad to help!

Is your community planning a local foods event?

Send your information to suebalcom@nd.gov

or list your event on our networking site at <http://goinglocalnd.ning.com>

