



Farmer Outreach & Development

- The **Buy Fresh, Buy Local Campaign** is nearly complete with new members and a new directory for 2012.
- **Winter Market.** FFI/NIFF is partnering with the Wineshiek Farmers Market to have 4-5 winter markets this year. NIFF is interested in the opportunity to offer this marketing venue to any NE IA producer and would like to be involved in the recruitment of those vendors. We would also like to explore opportunities to offer coupons or other incentives to those low-income households in the region to attend the markets.
- **Sales & Purchases.** In the process of collecting the sales and purchase data of local food by farmers and institutions in 2011. We are piloting the process for the other regional food system working groups in the state. A school food survey is also being conducted.
- **Mini-Grants.** The producer mini-grant applications are due June 1 to county development offices.
- **Database.** Working on a production planning database for farmers so they can plan out the land needed to meet their buyers demands.
- **Consultation.** Nick is working with several producers and meat processors in the region on business planning and process improvement.

Food Hub Planning

Twenty food stakeholders from the region met twice to layout a strategic plan for the development of a community-based food hub. A food hub is an organizational system that provides access to larger markets for producers and processors of food products.

Food Hub Accomplishments

- Developed a common food hub vision.
- Developed a strategic plan.
- Set priorities and project schedule for food hub development.

Johnice continues to work with Sharing Spaces Kitchen on processing projects for this summer.

Food Safety Projects

- Teresa and Johnice Cross have been doing farm visits to help farmers prepare for USDA GAP audits on May 17. Five greenhouse operations will be audited at that time. Another 8 farms will be audited in June-July.
- Working with Angela Shaw on a statewide on-farm food safety blog. The blog went live in April. <http://blogs.extension.iastate.edu/iowagap>

- Submitted a grant application for \$18,750 to IDALS Specialty Crop Block Grant for a GAP Cost-share program. (Winn. Co.)
- LC Staff are developing a food safety plan for the Luther College Gardens. The plan will be implemented this summer, with the goal of becoming GAP certified sometime in the near future.

NE IA Business Network—UE

- Bill Menner, USDA Rural Development Iowa visited NE IA in March.
- Submitted a grant proposal to USDA Rural Community Development Initiative grant to build the capacity of local community foundations, leaders, youth and entrepreneurs to tell the transfer of wealth menus.
- Working on a regional proposal with ISUEO and Luther College for the USDA Farm to School Program.
- Held meeting with all regional economic development groups and regional workforce groups on April 27 in Preston, MN where local foods was a prime subject.
- NIBN are hosting workshops in all six-counties, writing RBEG grant funds to continue business mentoring and counseling activities such as business planning, and more.

Luther College Update

- Transitioning some cropland to organic.
- Investigating a moveable high tunnel for salad green production because spinach and mixed greens are two products that we haven't been able to source locally, due to cost.
- Two sustainable foods interns hired to work part-time this summer on projects related to Luther and the larger community.
- On March 1, 20 people from LC and GROWN Locally signed a letter of understanding on over 20 produce items, totaling near \$90,000 for the 2012 growing season.
- www.luther.edu/headlines/?story_id=377384
- Luther College is in the process of developing food purchasing guidelines to help guide sustainable food purchases in the coming years.
- Dining Services General Manager at Luther College announced that he and his staff will work to achieve 35% local purchases by May 2013.
- Luther College Wellness and Sustainability Offices are collaborating to offer a 50% reimbursement to all faculty and staff who subscribe to a local CSA. There are 30 subscriptions.
- A mechanism has been developed where local producers can post paid and unpaid job opportunities and

internships for Luther students and others interested in diving into the local food system.

- As part of a Rural Communities Development Initiative (RCDI) grant surveys of buyers and producers are being conducted.

Farm to School Update School Lunch Makeover

For almost 70 years, the National School Lunch Program has been serving meals to our nation's children, with the original concept of ending malnutrition and childhood hunger. As a result of the passing of the Healthy-Hunger Free Act of 2012, schools have been charged to create meals that contain more whole grains, vegetables, and fruits, and less fat and sodium and set sensible calorie limits based on the age of children. Six schools have been working on a regional, cycle menu to meet these new requirements in the fall: Allamakee, Decorah, Howard-Winn, Postville, S. Winn, Turkey Valley. These schools have also been identified to be part of a comprehensive Farm to School Project application to the USDA.

Home Grown School Lunch Week has been set for October 15-19, 2012.

Nutrition Education

- The USDA funding for the BASICS nutrition education has changed the eligibility requirements for those funds (>60% free and reduced lunch). For SY2012-13, only Oelwein and Postville grades K-3 will be eligible for the program. Teresa assisted those schools with their application for \$12,700.
- There will be summer nutrition programs at Crestwood (June 4-29, M-F) and Postville (July 23-Aug 10, M-F).

State and Regional Leadership

- Nick and Teresa were section leaders for the Preliminary report for the Iowa Local Food and Farm Plan. They facilitated discussions at the Iowa Food Summit on April 3. Final report is due in June.
- Participated in meetings with Kwik Trip, LLC to talk about healthy, local food options at their stores.
- Teresa is on the planning committee for a state-wide training for ISUEO staff in September on regional food systems.
- The local foods proposal to the ISUEO Vice President's strategic initiatives grant was approved to create a Iowa Food System Working Group (IFSWG). Teresa will be on the steering committee which is charged with professional development directly and indirectly to all Extension units and regions through a committee approach.
- State Senator Merlin Bartz visited New Hampton FFA on March 9 to learn more about our work with FFI and how we are connecting ISUE, UE, USDA RD and schools.

- Johnice had a couple of opportunities to visit with Kathleen Merrigan, US Deputy Secretary of Agriculture. The first was in Viroqua at a White House Roundtable Discussion. Johnice gave her a copy of the FFI Year 2 report and talked to her about a GAP program for smaller producers and a GAP program for food hubs to add value to that work. The second opportunity was at the Food Hub Conference in Chicago, where Johnice participated with her on a national media call announcing the new Food Hub Resource Guide.
- Nick was published in the Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development. The article is entitled, "Strategies for Accessing Volume Markets in the Beef Industry: A Review of Three Case Studies."
- Nick is currently developing a meat plant management publication based on his work with plants as a graduate student and also based on his current work in Northeast Iowa.

Technical Assistance Received

- Feb. 13-14: Nick and Kate Scott visited Good Natured Family Farms in Kansas City.
- March 19-21: Nick went to N. Carolina to learn about alternative meat cut processing.
- April 19-21. Nick, Teresa and Johnice participated in the National Food Hub Conference in Chicago.
- Nick received a grant from the Leopold Center to develop Small Meat plant productivity curriculum. \$25,000
- GROWN Locally received a grant from the Leopold Center to create a producer mentoring program to help farmers scale-up for wholesale production.

Past Events

- Feb. 4: NIFF Expo. Over 70 people attended. Still a great way to meet new farmers.
- Feb. 10: GAP Workshop in Iowa City
- Mar. 3: KDEC Home and Garden Show. KDEC Home and Garden Show. NIFF paid for the booth (radio advertising) for CSA growers and Driftless Gardens to market their products to consumers.
- Mar. 13: GAP Workshop in Calmar. 20 attended.
- April 24: Money, Money Everywhere at NICC Dairy Center, over 30 bankers, business owners and producers attended.

Upcoming Trainings

- May 22: Hosting a meeting for lenders in Fayette to talk about financing alternative farming operations.
- June 9: Small Farm Equipment Field day, Kymar Acres, Waukon.
- June 23: Breakfast on the Farm, Calmar
- July 15: Saving Labor on the Market Farm, Rock Spring Farm, Decorah
- July 23: Producing local food workshop targeted to military veterans. Partnering with NCAT.
- Pasturewalk schedule has been released.