

Interfaith Food & Farms Partnership Makes a Difference! *Stories of Hope*

Engaging Congregations in Building Local Food Systems

Interfaith Food & Farms Partnership (IFFP), a program of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO), helps congregations to use their assets in innovative ways to create a more vibrant and accessible local food system. Over the past five years, IFFP has leveraged over \$25,000 in direct cash or capital improvements to undertake food and wellness projects, community kitchens, community gardens and more! IFFP has also provided “Community Gardens for Congregations” workshops, referrals and technical assistance. At our 2012 “Earth Care Summit,” we offered three well-attended sessions on food and faith. IFFP works intensively with congregations or groups of congregations to create model plans that have been tested through experience and community input. We also serve as the fiscal sponsor for Cully Neighborhood Farm’s educational project serving many low-income children located on the grounds of a church school.



“We at Joseph United Methodist Church are so grateful to EMO-IFFP for giving us the original grant award for our school/community garden project. We now have 63 partners in our community and have received an additional grant award, refurbished the greenhouse, planted and harvested with students, prepped Magic Garden produce for the school salad bar, donated to the Summer Lunch program and the Willowa County Food Bank, started a Healthy Foods Kiosk at our local convenience store, and served over 300 students and their families a free meal featuring locally grown and raised foods with produce coming directly from our Magic Garden. We had over 5,000 hours of volunteer time our first year! Project expansion for the 2012 season involves planting of fruit trees and donation of an additional three acres of land—part of which will be used for a more typical community garden project. God has truly blessed our community beginning with the support of EMO!”

—Robin Martin

Healthy Food for All

We create farm to congregation partnerships that support small farms while creating better access for people with low incomes. For example, the **Farm Fresh Buying Club**, hosted by Holy Redeemer Church, offers local organic produce at wholesale prices and accepts SNAP (formerly food stamps), WIC (Women Infants and Children) and Senior Coupons. In 2011, we provided fresh food for over 50 members and offered a SNAP match of \$8 for extra food to increase produce purchases while supporting local farms.

Lisa would order produce on a weekly basis. With three children (and both she and her husband only able to find part-time work), Lisa uses as many resources as she can to make ends meet. She was such a strong supporter of the buying club that she provided her local WIC office with buying club information to give to other WIC recipients, increasing access to healthy, local food.*



Healthy Kids, Healthy Eating

For the past six months, IFFP has given dynamic presentations to faith-based schools and high school youth about the importance of eating healthy food and knowing where our food comes from—reaching 300 children and 200 youth. IFFP has also provided its “**Healthy Food Drive**” materials to dozens of schools. Along with other resources at IFFP’s website, faithandwellness.org, our “**Congregational Health Index**” has been popular nationwide as a dynamic tool to help congregations fight the childhood obesity epidemic.

“Dear Mr. Evoy: Thank you for spending your time in our classroom and your presentation about unhealthy food and healthy foods. I learned that high fructose corn syrup is in most foods. I really liked the game Jeopardy we played.” — Student at Cathedral School



Advocating for Policy Change, Local to National

Interfaith Food & Farms Partnership contributes to policy discussions at multiple levels, in coalition with diverse organizations. In the Portland metro area, IFFP submitted comments on the City of Portland's Urban Food Code update and served on the Advisory Group ensuring minimal barriers to farmers markets, food membership distribution sites, community gardens and market gardens for faith-based institutions. At our "2012 Earth Care Summit," IFFP's Food Justice coordinator and the Public Policy advocate for Oregon Food Bank led a roundtable discussion on the 2012 Farm Bill. IFFP is continuing to monitor the 2012 Farm Bill and sends out background information opportunities for action. IFFP works with Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Public Policy director to impact state level policy during the Oregon Legislature.

Working with Social Service Providers



In 2011, a grant from Kaiser Permanente helped IFFP create healthier grain and bean availability at **EMO's Northeast Emergency Food Program (NEFP)**. We provided seeds and gardening information to over 100 people, set up a raised-bed garden and offered a cooking class. We also helped get information about SNAP (formerly food stamps) in seven languages to guests. We also provided our "Healthy Food Drive" materials to 15 agencies and 140 congregations, and we advised several agencies on incorporating healthier food and food self-reliance projects into their service to people with low-incomes.

Deborah, a glowing woman in her mid-60s, has been a client of NEFP for three years. She only takes the healthiest food items, and says it is the reason for her youthful appearance. She is always thrilled to find lentils and other healthy options at NEFP. Deborah has an inoperable tumor in her stomach. With no options, she has turned to natural foods to manage her illness. It turns out, she said, healthy eating is the only thing she has found that makes her feel strong, and she believes it keeps her condition from worsening.*

Nurturing and Equipping Young Food Leaders

More than ever, youth and young adults are passionate about making our food system more sustainable, humane, healthy and equitable. IFFP has provided paid internships and service opportunities through Jesuit Volunteer Corps and AmeriCorps for over 10 years, giving invaluable experience, exposure (such as involvement with the national Community Food Security Coalition and attendance at the first National Black Farmers and Gardeners Conference), and connections for future employment. In 2011, we developed a week-long youth Food Justice mission program curriculum with a church from Oakland, Calif. IFFP continues to use this template to facilitate youth mission trips and service opportunities.

"What an amazing trip it was—much more than I could have imagined. EMO is an impressive organization. Our group loved the experiences you provided. They are inspired to start a community garden at our church and have already talked to our pastor, who also loves the idea. It all worked so well—the variety of places we visited and worked, and the inspiring people we met."

—Youth group leader

Bringing People of Diverse Faiths and Cultures Together

Food and health connect us all. When we share our food and health wisdom, stories and traditions with one another, we more deeply understand other faiths and cultures. IFFP's **Interfaith Wellness Coalition** brings together people of different faiths to learn from each other and to work together to improve wellness in their congregations and communities. Addressing food and health inequities through environmental and policy change are a special concern in this work, which includes partnership with Multnomah County's "It Starts Here: Communities Putting Prevention to Work" initiative and Food Initiative. We also promote connections among health, faith and earth care.



Photo: Interfaith Wellness Coalition shares meal at Muslim Community Center Garden and learns about the fasting and eating traditions of Ramadan.

**Names changed to project privacy.*