

INTERFAITH FOOD & FARMS PARTNERSHIP 2012 ANNUAL REPORT

ENGAGING CONGREGATIONS IN SUPPORTING AND CREATING LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership (IFFP), a program of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO), assists congregations in using their assets, such as land and kitchens in creative ways that support a more active and sustainable local food system. IFFP supports community gardens, food education projects, community kitchens and other projects that engage faith communities in their food production and preparation. Oregon Faith Roundtable Against Hunger recognized this work with a 2012 “Harvest of Hope Award.”

In March and November, we held garden workshops in Tigard and Gresham to equip congregations and community groups to develop or enhance community gardens. The workshops were attended by 78 people representing at least 36 congregations.

During the 2012 growing season, we supported four congregations with small immigrant farmers who set up produce and flower stands on weekends so congregation members could buy their produce after services. This program encourages faith communities to support local farmers and provide affordable access to healthy food. We refined and tested our toolkit for helping congregation use their kitchens in ways that support community food systems.



*Farmer table at Kairos-Milwaukie
United Church of Christ.*

SUPPORTING LOCAL FARMS AND FOOD ACCESS

The 2012 Farm Fresh Buying Club offered a beautiful selection of produce from local farms weekly from May to November for 40 members. A new reciprocal relationship with another buying club allowed us to offer fruit as well. Farm Fresh put \$5,045 into the hands of local farmers. A unique feature of Farm Fresh is its ability to accept SNAP, WIC and Senior Coupons. Members with food benefits are able to pay wholesale prices for amazing produce that is free of harmful pesticides and fertilizers. Foundations were laid for Farm Fresh to be run almost entirely by members in 2013. Farm Fresh also mentored and collaborated with a new buying club in east Multnomah County.

CULTIVATING A NEW GENERATION

A passion for changing our food system continues to grow among youth and young adults. For over 11 years, IFFP has provided paid internships and opportunities to serve through Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest and AmeriCorps. These positions have provided exceptional experiences such as community organizing, starting community gardens, teaching, cooking, coordinating a buying club and learning from leaders in the food security and sustainable food movements. In 2012, IFFP was blessed with exceptional JV AmeriCorps members with a keen interest in food justice and health. We were also thankful to have the help of De La Salle Catholic High School interns.



*Sean McEvoy, Jesuit Volunteer,
tending a garden.*

PARTNERING WITH SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership has partnered Northeast Emergency Food Pantry (NEFP) in a variety of ways to continue our support of programs to improve access to healthy food for people with low incomes. We distributed materials about SNAP, WIC, healthy eating and stress management over the course of many months. Our Concordia University intern connected at least 72 people directly to SNAP benefits. This has enabled people to use the resources available to them to improve their health and well being. Over 290 packets of seeds with gardening instructions were distributed along with 118 lists of farmers markets accepting SNAP, WIC and senior coupons.

EQUIPPING AND PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITIES FOR CHANGE

In August, IFFP started a community food assessment in the Rockwood neighborhood of Gresham thanks to a Community Food Project grant from the United States Department of Agriculture. This food assessment is a process of collectively examining food-related issues and assets in Rockwood in order to prompt changes and build food security. The process is led by a Neighborhood Assessment Team of eight Rockwood residents.

In the fall, this team conducted 236 surveys. Initial results from the survey show that only 12 percent of those interviewed eat fruits and vegetables daily, over 60 percent receive SNAP (or food stamp) benefits. Almost 60 percent of residents travel over 4.5 miles to get groceries, and over a third cite transportation as a challenge to getting groceries. Not surprisingly, 97 percent would like to see Rockwood have more places to obtain healthy food, with farmers' markets, closer stores, and community gardens being the top choices for new food access points. This project has revealed many concerns that people in the community have about food and has also pointed to a variety of ways Rockwood can increase its access and even production of healthy, fresh food.

We also started the Familias Creciendo En Salud (Families Growing in Health) project with six congregations the Willamette Valley and Newport with support from the Northwest Health Foundation. This project equips congregational leaders to lead their congregation and their local community in making changes to reduce chronic disease and obesity employing *Weight of a Nation* screenings, leadership training, organizing and use of EMO's Congregational Health Index. The aim is to position emerging health leaders to take the next steps to further develop their leadership skills and engage Latino communities to create lasting change.

It was great for me because it helped start new projects in the community and increased my confidence in knowing people in the community.
–Neighborhood Food Assessment Team Member



*Jose Luis Hernandez Avalos,
Neighborhood Assessment Team
Co-coordinator*

OUR YOUTH'S PASSION FOR HEALTH

Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership provided presentations on healthy eating and balanced lifestyle for kids ranging from kindergarten to seventh grade in religious schools. What was most incredible about these presentations was the amount of enthusiasm and knowledge kids have about healthy eating. Many are from families that grow their own vegetables and some even have chickens in their backyards for eggs. The level of excitement and interest shown by these students in making healthier choices to sustain a more balanced life and a more just and sustainable food system is very encouraging.

CELEBRATING FOOD DAY

In addition to supporting congregations in celebrating Food Day and faith-based food awareness days in October, we held our first Food Justice Fundraiser on October 18 featuring Traci McMillan, author of *The American Way of Eating*. The event drew 100 people and brought in around \$5,000. A panel addressed the challenges and opportunities at the intersection of sustainable local food and labor around improving job quality and working conditions in the food service industry. The *Oregonian* ran a story about the main event speaker and mentioned our Rockwood Food Assessment.



"Good food, good jobs" panel.

SHARING MODELS

Organizations and individuals across the country continue to tap our models and guidebooks for inspiration in their local areas. John's Hopkins Center for a Livable Future used part of the Congregational Health Index as a template for their congregational food assessment guide.

THANKS TO OUR MAJOR FUNDERS IN 2012! Presbyterian Hunger Program, Oregon Humanities, Jackson Foundation, Northwest Health Foundation, Catholic Campaign for Human Development, and Oregon-Idaho Conference United Methodist Women.