



Casey Campbell | Gazette-Times
Intaba Liff-Anderson, owner and chef at FireWorks, will teach a class sponsored by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon geared to help low-income residents of Benton County learn to cook meals that meet their nutritional needs at a reasonable cost.

Chef fires up class for cooking on a tight budget

By Carol Reeves Gazette-Times reporter

Related EMO project is food-buying group

A comprehensive program, sponsored by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, to assist low-income Benton County residents with their nutritional needs begins Monday with the start of a six-week cooking class taught by local chef Intaba Liff-Anderson.

The proprietor-chef of the FireWorks Restaurant in south Corvallis, Liff-Anderson will offer cooking classes — from chopping to garnishing — to teach participants how to prepare locally grown foods. The class is each Monday from noon to 2:30 p.m. through May 5 in the community center at First United Methodist Church, 1165 N.W. Monroe Ave.

Registration is \$6 and includes a copy of “Simply in Season,” a cookbook co-authored by Cathleen Hockman-Wert of Corvallis. Interested persons can call 757-1988, ext. 107, to sign up. Class sizes are limited, so early enrollment is encouraged.

In another EMO project, 22 families from the Hispanic congregation at St. Mary’s Catholic Church are participating in a local food-buying club in partnership with Sunbow Farms.

“Our goal is to grow high-quality, nutritious food for those who need it the most at prices they can afford,” said James Sneed, one of the farm managers at the local organic farm located south of Corvallis on Bellfountain Road. The farm plans to plant fields of peppers, tomatoes, cilantro, zucchini and many other vegetables as requested by the club’s members during the planning stages of the project, he added.

Participating families will place orders for the produce a week in advance. The farm will harvest the food and deliver it by truck to the parking lot at St. Mary’s once a week, where club members will then distribute the food according to each person’s order.

Liv Gifford, the EMO’s Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership project coordinator in Corvallis, explained the pilot program was designed to minimize labor costs. The fruit and vegetables won’t be sorted or washed before they arrive at the church, but not having to provide the “display-ready” produce — like what consumers find on display at farmer’s markets — reduces the cost of produce to purchasing families, she said. Besides, consumers are

encouraged to wash all produce at home anyway.

Gifford reported the agency also was seeking a local faith group to start a community gardening project for low-income residents.

“Growing food for your family is a powerful step toward self-sufficiency,” Gifford said. “All of our programs aim to empower participants to cultivate positive change in their lives.”

A fourth element of the program will be to encourage food-related microenterprise — small kitchen-based businesses created and run by low-income people.

The “That’s My Farmer” coupon program involving more than 10 congregations and 12 local farms will continue for a fourth year. In 2007, more than \$14,000 in Farmers Market coupons were sold, with about \$2,000 in coupons given away to low-income families as a result.

All of the EMO projects are designed to promote links between faith communities and small farmers while emphasizing community self-reliance and comprehensive responses to local food, farm and nutrition issues, according to Gifford. A U.S.D.A. Community Food Projects grant is providing partial funding for the program..

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