

Interfaith Food & Farms Partnership

A Project of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon



Early Winter 2007

Welcome to the quarterly newsletter of the Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership (IFFP), a project of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns. We are especially pleased this issue to welcome new staff and volunteers. Please forward this newsletter to others you think may have an interest.

Contents

PORTLAND AREA UPDATES

- Everyone Eats! N/NE Food Assessment Completed
- Plans for 2008
- Farm Stands Strengthen Local Farmers

CORVALLIS AREA UPDATES

- Farmers' Market Coupon Program Moves Toward Sustainability
- October cooking club
- Second Community Food Projects Grant Comes to Corvallis
- Staffing Updates

NEWS

- Farm Bill Update

RESOURCES

- Farm-to-Congregation Tool Kits Available On-Line
- Book: The Wisdom of Small Farms and Local Foods, John Carroll
- DVD: The Organic Opportunity: Small Farms & Economic Development
- Kids Re-Generation
- Recipe: Dilly Mashed Potatoes
- A Farmer's Prayer

EVENTS

- January 5, Basic pruning of fruit trees and grapes
- January 18-19, Oregon Tilth's 33rd Annual Conference
- January 21-23, Soils and Sustainability
- February 16, OSU Extension Small Farm Direct Marketing Conference

OPPORTUNITIES

- Volunteer Chefs, Portland
- Cooking Class Resources, Portland
- Community Kitchen Coordinator, Corvallis
- Congregational Partners and Supporters

PORTLAND AREA UPDATES

N/NE Community Food Assessment

This October, IFFP completed its "Everyone Eats" north and northeast Portland Community Food Assessment. The assessment featured a variety of community involvement efforts and an in-depth survey conducted in four languages. The survey was developed by a leadership team comprised of six diverse, low-income residents who interviewed over 200 low-income people in north and northeast Portland. It identified barriers to food access in low-income communities and what difficulties low-income residents face in accessing foods. **With 71% of respondents indicating that they have a hard time stretching their food budget to the end of the month, 30% are not satisfied with the foods and stores to which they do have access.** Respondents were also asked about their knowledge about locally grown food and where it can be obtained. Respondents were also asked to rate their interest in potential IFFP projects, including a free cooking and nutrition class using local, seasonal produce, subsidized Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares for low-income families, and farmers' market coupons. IFFP's 2008 plans include all three projects as a result of the assessment. The goal of our projects is to help create sustainable access to healthy food for the residents of north and northeast Portland.

Four focus groups – two in English, one in Spanish, one in Russian – were conducted as part of the assessment. These gave residents an opportunity to expand upon the topics in the survey and talk with each other about how food access impacts their lives. These "Community Food Conversations" helped make it more clear to us that even though low-income residents might not go hungry, it is incredibly difficult for them to maintain healthy diets on limited means. We presented the results of the assessment and heard feedback from those who will benefit from our upcoming projects at a Community Forum on Oct. 11 at St. Andrew's Catholic Church in northeast Portland. Residents and local organizations are looking forward to working together to implement these programs! Copies of the "Everyone Eats" Report and Executive Summary are on the IFFP Web page at www.emoregon.org/food_farms.php.

The food assessment's success is due, in large part, to the hard work and dedication of Jocelyn Furbush, the coordinator of the assessment, and Sabrina Kosok, our L.I.N.K.S. AmeriCorps volunteers to whom we owe a big THANK YOU! Sabrina was so helpful in her work both with the "Everyone Eats!" assessment and the smaller assessment in Rockwood. Her ability to communicate with the Hispanic population as well as her commitment to advocating for Portland's low-income residents were essential to the assessment's progress. Jocelyn's strong commitment to fresh, local food is apparent in her dedication to making the assessment as comprehensive and accurate as possible. She put in countless hours to form and guide the Leadership Team, craft the surveys, survey north and northeast neighborhoods, organize events, and write our final report. She was an invaluable part of IFFP's work this year! Both of these great volunteers will be missed!

Plans for 2008

IFFP's plans for the Portland area fall right out the "Everyone Eats!" Food Assessment and last year's farm-to-congregation projects. In addition to maintaining our three existing farm stands, plans for the upcoming year include an improved low-income coupon program at one of our farm stands, a series of cooking and nutrition classes at several social service locations, and a new congregation-based CSA with subsidized shares for low-income families. We are also in discussion with other organizations about new avenues for getting produce to people with low-incomes. IFFP's Jesuit Volunteer Cristina Stella is in the process of planning the cooking and nutrition classes which will be for guests of Alder House, a low-income housing facility in downtown Portland, and Julia West House, a program serving the homeless sponsored by First Presbyterian Church. Cristina is also working to establish classes at three other north and northeast Portland locations. The classes are funded in part by a grant to increase access to fresh, local produce among Portland's low-income population. We are looking for volunteer chefs and kitchen helpers (see position description at http://www.emoregon.org/environmental_ministries_volunteer.php). Additional donations of kitchen equipment, pantry items, and reusable bags are also being sought. Please contact cstella@emoregon.org if you can help!

Our Portland area work would not be possible without our very talented, compassionate and delightful to work with Jesuit Volunteer, Cristina Stella. Cristina comes to us from New Jersey. She recently graduated from Villanova University with a degree in philosophy and political science where she headed up several initiatives on hunger and homelessness. She was an invaluable resource in completing the "Everyone Eats" Food Assessment and closed out the farm stand project for the harvest season. After serving with EMO, she plans to go to law school to support her goal of assisting refugees and immigrants. We have also been helped this fall by INEC intern, Gretchen Doering, who has helped with preparing for cooking classes.

Farm Stands

IFFP assisted six farm families by initiating five farm stands at faith communities. We recruited congregations, arranged logistics, assisted with marketing and supported all parties throughout the season. Farmer benefits included no rental fees, a steady, noncompetitive marketing opportunity, convenience, customer feedback and new cross-cultural friendships. Our farmers sold up to \$605 per week, and one farm sold \$4,141 over 11 Sundays. We also helped connect several Hmong growers with Mercy Corps Northwest's New Agriculture Project, which helps farmers transition to organic farming. Also, because of new connections, one farmer began providing produce to a retreat center; there were further opportunities for farm stands at local faith-related festivals, such as Muddy Boot. We celebrated the season with a Fall Harvest Celebration, at which two of our Hmong farmers shared their experiences as refugees and articulated the ways that IFFP has helped them both as farmers and as immigrants who want to share their stories. More opportunities for our farmers to share with us and our congregations are being planned for the upcoming season. We look forward to continuing the success of these stands in 2008!

CORVALLIS AREA UPDATES

Farmers' Market Coupon Program Moves Toward Sustainability. The "That's My Farmer" coupon program started in 2004 as a partnership between St. Mary's Catholic Church and two local farms. Now greatly expanded to ten congregations and

ten farms, sales for the year totaled \$13,523; \$1820 in coupons were donated to low-income families. In addition to selling coupons, participating congregations organized activities: farm stands, discussions, presentations, and local food samplings. Weekly seminars at Calvin Presbyterian Church were a highlight: Where better to conduct a series of garden lectures than smack-dab in the middle of the verdant, one-acre Calvin Community Garden? Speakers addressed topics on successive Wednesday evenings, as follows:

- Tyler Jones, garden director, farmer, and member of Calvin Presbyterian, spoke on the importance of buying local food.
- Maureen Beezhold, coordinator of the Corvallis chapter of the Northwest Earth Institute, spoke on living sustainably.
- Gary Hough, director of Logos House Christian Study Center, provided a biblical perspective on earthkeeping.
- Marc Andresen, the pastor of Calvin Presbyterian, addressed the topic of living in community.

Organizers said the purpose of the lectures was to reach out to the community, and to provide useful information about living more sustainably and why this approach is biblically correct. The talks were attended by 15 to 30 people.

We are pleased to welcome L.I.N.K.S. AmeriCorps member Anna Cates, who will coordinate the coupon program in 2008. Anna, who will also coordinate the CSA at Gathering Together Farms in Philomath, was drawn to "That's My Farmer" because she would "like to improve access to local food for low-income people who haven't been able to afford or even think about local food before, and educate as to why a sustainable local food system is a good thing." Anna's position is funded by local congregations and funds from unredeemed coupons, supervised by EMO, and hosted by St. Mary's Catholic Church. Welcome, Anna!

Cooking Club in High Demand. Our second cooking club for low-income people, held at the Community Center of Corvallis First United Methodist Church in October, drew more interest than we could accommodate. Sixteen participants gathered each Monday morning for hands-on cooking lessons emphasizing locally grown food taught by OSU Extension instructor Janice Gregg. Farmers Elizabeth Kerl (Denison Farms) and Kimberly Bolster (Deep Roots) brought generous donations of fresh produce, introduced themselves, and answered questions about their farms. Highlights of the October series included apple crisp, stuffed delicata squash, and sweet corn fritters. A special thanks to our talented volunteers, South Corvallis Food Bank, and First United Methodist Church for making the classes possible. Read the Gazette-Times article at

http://www.gazettetimes.com/articles/2007/11/10/news/religion/2rel01_food.txt

Second Community Food Projects Grant Comes to Corvallis. We are delighted to announce that IFFP has received a three-year, \$253,269 grant from the United States Department of Agriculture's Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program for continued work in Benton County. With this substantial award we will link assets commonly found in faith communities – land, kitchens and volunteers – to develop opportunities among low-income people to cook, garden, and purchase local foods and develop food-related micro-enterprises.. St. Mary's, First United Methodist, and Calvin Presbyterian are our major faith community partners. Other partners include South Corvallis Food Bank, Ten Rivers Food Web, local farmers, the Health Department, and OSU Extension, to name a few. At the end of this three-year project, we will produce a handbook on using existing faith community resources to overcome poverty and hunger in ways that empower low-income people. Stay tuned

for opportunities to volunteer in our community garden, kitchen, and mini produce market/buying club! Read the Gazette-Times article at http://www.gazettetimes.com/articles/2007/11/10/news/religion/2rel01_food.txt

Staffing Updates. We are pleased that the new grant will enable our valued staff, Liv Gifford to continue working with us for the next three years as project coordinator. She will be working for us part time in addition to being a mom to Lyle. Jenny Holmes will continue to serve as project director. In addition, we are searching for a Community Kitchen Coordinator and contracting with Tyler Jones to serve as Garden Coordinator. Tyler spent a year working as an intern at Polyface Farm in Virginia under farmer, author, and speaker Joel Salatin. He came back to Corvallis and started Afton Field Farm, a family-run, grass-based livestock farm. He direct-markets all of his products to local individuals, restaurants, buying clubs, and farmers' markets. He is also very active in Calvin Presbyterian Church, as a deacon and youth leader, and last year started the Calvin Community Garden. Welcome, Tyler!

NEWS

The Farm Bill Passes in Senate (From Community Food Security Coalition)

After weeks of stalling over partisan disputes, the Senate took the Farm Bill to the floor in earnest last week and passed their bill on Friday with a vote of 79–14. The Senate Bill includes some real improvements in the provisions that support food security and local agriculture. This Farm Bill has had incredible public input and major media attention. As a result, many of your legislators voted the way that you, their constituents, asked them to because they knew you were paying attention. YOU made a difference in this bill, and that is a huge success.

A Few Successes Include:

Community Food Projects: The Senate's bill would increase CFP funding to \$10 million in mandatory annual funding, doubling the program's previous \$5 million. When the House-Senate conference committee meets to compromise the two bills, it's important that the Senate's funding hold up against the House version, which does not give CFP mandatory funds.

Geographic Preference Language: Both the House and Senate bills include language clarifications that enable and encourage schools to look for local food first when they order meals through the USDA.

The Food Stamp Program and TEFAP (Emergency Feeding Programs): The Senate bill increases both Food Stamp and TEFAP funding and makes the monthly benefit adjustable to inflation. It also lifts a former cap on the child care deduction, and raises food stamp household asset limits.

A Large Disappointment

Dorgan-Grassley Amendment Fails

On Thursday, the entire Senate voted on the Dorgan-Grassley payment limitations amendment, which would have placed a \$250K hard limit on the payments that farms are eligible to receive in a year while closing many of the existing loopholes. Under usual procedural rules, an amendment must gain a majority of votes to pass. However, because senate leadership was faced with the threat of a filibuster from own of their own, Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-AR), it was agreed to that reform amendments would need a 'supermajority' of 60 votes in order to pass. So, while Dorgan-Grassley did get a majority of support, it came just short of what was needed to pass (56 yes - 43 no). There were also some senators who vote for the

same reform in the past, but voted against it this time. [Senators Wyden and Smith both voted for the Dorgan-Grassley Amendment.]

Looking Forward

Now that both the House and Senate have passed a Farm Bill, the 2 bills must come together by way of a conference committee. The committee will have legislators from both sides of the aisle and both houses of Congress. Between now and the beginning of 2008, we expect that staff in the House and Senate will be working to combine the 2 Farm bills and come up with a compromise. **During this time, CFSC will be checking in with legislators to remind them of our priorities and encourages you to do the same!**

RESOURCES

Farm-to-Congregation Tool Kits Available Online

Draft versions of our two farm-to-congregation toolkits are now available online at www.emoregon.org/food_farms.php. Your comments on how we might improve these resources are welcome. The final versions will incorporate the insights from our 2006-07 project evaluation. Please e-mail comments to Cristina Stella at cstella@emoregon.org with comments

"That's My Farmer," A Handbook to Starting a Grassroots Farmers' Market Coupon Program includes practical tips gleaned from years of experience with the "That's My Farmer" coupon program. It focuses on how to create successful partnerships that link congregations, farmers and low-income populations while building community food security in the broadest sense – keeping agricultural lands in production, supporting small farmers, and increasing access to high quality local food for all. The tool kit has concrete advice and valuable resources that congregations can adapt to fit their own needs.

Farm to Congregation, A Handbook on Starting a Congregational Farm Stand documents our experience with five different farm stand models at faith communities. It outlines the typical tasks and responsibilities for the congregation and farmer, provides a recommended timeline and details how to integrate a farm stand with the life of a local congregation and its surrounding community.

The Wisdom of Small Farms and Local Foods, John Carroll, University of New Hampshire Press, 2007. Provides a vision of where our public land grant universities might go, in research, in teaching, in outreach, inspired by the farmers who know best from their own experience, and providing vision and hope for many who want to play a role in increasing their own food security. http://www.ncrlc.com/1-pfd-files/Promotional_Final-July15.pdf

The Organic Opportunity: Small Farms & Economic Development. This 24-minute film tells the story of Woodbury County, Iowa's innovative economic development campaign centered on the development of local, organic agriculture. This film is designed to be used with Chambers of Commerce, economic development organizations, elected officials, farmers and consumers -- anyone interested in discovering the positive impact a local food system grounded in organic agricultural practices can play in a community's economic, environmental and physical health. Available for loan for \$7.00 postage and handling from INEC or for sale at LocalHarvest.org or <http://www.localharvest.org/store/item.jsp?id=9394>

Kids Re-Generation

The Rodale Institute has a great website called Kids Re-Generation (www.kidsregen.org), which offers a kid-friendly program called Take Your Health into Your Own Hands: 10 Steps to a Healthier You and a Healthier Planet. Visit the action steps section of the educators page. The site encourages kids to be active participants in healthy food choices by helping them understand what questions to ask and factors to consider.

Recipe

From *Simply In Season*: **Dilly Mashed Potatoes**

The ultimate in cream winter comfort food with a sunny color. Serves 6.

5 large potatoes (chopped)

4 large carrots (thinly sliced)

Boil together until soft. Drain, mash, and set aside.

2 tablespoons butter

¼ cup green onions (thinly sliced)

1 ½ tablespoons fresh dill (chopped, or 1 tsp dried)

Melt butter in frypan and lightly sauté onions and dill. Add to potatoes.

½ cup plain yogurt or sour cream

½ tsp salt

¼ tsp pepper

Stir into potatoes. Mix well and transfer to a greased 2 ½ quart casserole dish.

½ cup cheddar cheese (shredded; optional)

Sprinkle on top. Bake uncovered at 350F for 30 minutes. May be frozen before baking. If baking frozen, bake 1 hour covered, then 20 minutes uncovered.

-Catherine Klassen, Landmark, Manitoba

A Farmer's Prayer

National Catholic Rural Life has many resources for services, and reflection, on food and faith at their Spirituality Corner at www.ncrlc.com/Spirituality-Corner.html. Look for resources from other faiths in upcoming issues of this newsletter. Below is an excerpt from a Thanksgiving prayer.

LORD, I am grateful that I am a farmer. I am glad to live close to the earth that You have made. I am happy to spend so much of my time in the open air, under the bright sun, the symbol of Your own justice and light. I am grateful for the rain and for the freshness that it brings--the rain, a symbol of Your rich and undying blessings.

I am happy to cooperate with You in Your work of continuous creation, by growing the food that is needed to sustain life. By Your almighty power You make grow seeds I plant. You fill the earth with minerals, You send the rain and the sun, the wind and the snow--and the dry, hard seeds I plant are raised to soft, green life. I thank You again for calling me to a farmer's life. I beg of You never to let me forget its great advantages of closeness to You, absolute trust and confidence in You, and the fullness and richness of my life, close to the earth that You have made and have so marvelously blessed. Lord, I am grateful that I am a farmer. Amen.

EVENTS

Now is the time to sign up for your 2008 CSA subscription! New to CSAs? Visit LocalHarvest.org to find a farm near you.

January 5, Basic pruning of fruit trees and grapes, 1:00 - 3:00. Tryon Life Community Farm. 11640 SW Boones Ferry Road, Portland. Bernard Bach will be walking through the basic ideas of pruning to keep trees in their optimum health. Please bring tools you like to use. <http://tryonfarm.org/share/node/527>

January 18-19, Oregon Tilth's 33rd Annual Conference, Salem Conference Center in Salem. "Organic Integrity: Principles, Practices, and Opportunities." This year's conference will offer a rich variety of topics relevant to anyone involved with food systems, organic agriculture and livestock, sustainability, advocacy, and many other issues. It is also a wonderful opportunity for consumers and the general public to learn about sustainable agriculture and organic food production. Enjoy an organic wine tasting, gourmet meals prepared with local, organic ingredients, and the company of others involved in sustainable and organic agriculture. <http://www.tilth.org/events/conference/index.html>.

January 21-23, Soil & Sustainability. Neal Kinsey Introduces the Albrecht Methods of Sustainability. An intensive 3-day workshop to help in applying the principles and methods developed by Prof. William Albrecht as tested and proven worldwide. Based on many years of practical experience working with growers, this course offers valuable information concerning how to improve and manage your farm's soil fertility - from the basics of using and interpreting a soil test to learning how to identify the effects of depleted or excessive nutrients in your soil. <http://www.tilth.org/events/kinsey.html>

February 16, Oregon State University Small Farm Direct Marketing Conference. The conference addresses emerging alternative agricultural marketing options, innovative production practices and systems, food policy and community food security in addition to offering educational outreach and providing networking opportunities to the diverse contributors to the state wide food system. The keynote speaker is farmer and longtime leader in national and international sustainable agriculture, Fred Kirschenmann. He has served on several national and international boards, including the USDA's National Organic Standards Board. He served as director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University from 2000 to 2005. His family farm has been featured in national publications including National Geographic, the Smithsonian, Audubon, Business Week, the LA Times and Gourmet magazine. IFFP will be represented on a panel at the event. More information can be found at <http://calendar.oregonstate.edu/event/15728/> .

Opportunities

If you are interested in helping with any of our projects, please let us know! We are currently looking for volunteer chefs and kitchen helpers for our Portland Cooking Classes (position description at http://www.emoregon.org/environmental_ministries_volunteer.php). We are also

seeking donations of kitchen equipment (a set of nested measuring cups, a microwave safe bowl, an insulated portable cup, and a spoon, knife, and fork), pantry items, and reusable bags for 24 to 30 students. Contact cstella@emoregon.org if you'd like more information.

Our Corvallis Site is looking for a part-time Community Kitchen Coordinator and applications will be accepted through January 4, 2008. The position description can be found at <http://www.emoregon.org/employment.php>

We would like to know if your congregation, especially in north or northeast Portland, is interested in being a partner or supporter for farm stands, cooking classes or would like to be involved in community based efforts to bring more fresh local produce to low-income people. We will be providing more details as projects develop, but we would like to know if your congregation has a particular passion around local food and increasing access to it for all so that we can connect you. E-mail cstella@emoregon.org.