



National Farm to School Network Innovation Awards 2017

In 2017, the National Farm to School Network's Innovation Fund Awards celebrate *beginning farmers and farmer veterans*. With funding support from Farm Credit, two beginning farmers (in their first 10 years of farming) – one of whom is also a farmer veteran – are recognized for their exceptional efforts in selling local produce to schools and engaging kids in learning where their food comes from.

Farmers play a crucial role in the success of farm to school, from growing local food served on school trays to hosting farm field trips to show kids where food comes from. However, farmers are often underrepresented in the farm to school movement. While schools across the country are eager to purchase from local farms, access and connections with farmers remains one of the biggest barriers to implementing farm to school activities. The 2017 Innovation Fund Awards recognize two farmers whose success in connecting with schools can provide a model for other farmers looking to do the same. Throughout 2017, the National Farm to School Network will share their stories, experiences and lessons learned with our members so that others may learn from their success.

Dylan Strike, Strike Farms

Bozeman, Montana

Award: \$3,500

Dylan Strike founded [Strike Farms](#) just outside of Bozeman, Montana in the fall of 2013. Starting with 4 acres in its first growing season, Strike Farms has rapidly scaled up and today grows over 100 varieties of organic vegetables, herbs and flowers on 20 acres with the support of 21 employees. With a goal of normalizing local food access and providing high-quality, sustainable food for the local community, Strike Farms products can be found in Bozeman-area grocery stores, farmers markets, CSA shares, restaurants and schools – for whom Strike Farms has supplied numerous crops for the [Montana Harvest of the Month](#) program. In addition to growing healthy food for school lunch trays, Dylan and his team have welcomed hundreds of local students for farm tours and farm to school summer camps, where kids learn how food makes it from farm to fork and the benefits of local food systems.

Jon Turner, Wild Roots Farm Vermont

Bristol, Vermont

Award: \$3,500

Jon and Cathy Turner founded [Wild Roots Farm Vermont](#) in Bristol, Vermont in 2015. Wild Roots Farm Vermont is a community-based farming project focused on regenerative agricultural practices to develop resilient food systems and healthy soil. Having served three tours with the Marines, one of Jon's hopes for the farm is to create an educational landscape where veterans can learn about growing food while also helping themselves reintegrate after coming home from war. The farm has offered workshops, tours and internship opportunities to hundreds of community members, students, school children and the veteran population with an aim of empowering the next generation of farmers to view the landscape from a whole systems perspective. In addition to providing extensive educational opportunities, Wild Roots Farm Vermont grows and sells organics vegetables, berries, mushrooms and pastured poultry for eggs and meat with the [Vermont Proud, Homegrown by Heroes](#) label. Jon is the founder and former president of the Farmer Veteran Coalition of Vermont and currently sits on boards for NOFA-VT (Northeastern Organic Farmers Association of Vermont) and the Addison County Farm Bureau.

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Innovation Awards 2016

With funding support from Newman's Own Foundation and Farm Credit, the National Farm to School Network presented Innovation Fund Awards in February 2016 to three projects spearheaded by our Core Partners in Georgia, the Great Lakes and the Northeast. The 2016 theme, *Engaging Farmers and Producers in Farm to School*, brought forward projects that used creative approaches to outreach and resource development to bring new farmers and producers into the farm to school movement. Their projects resulted in the creation of shareable information resources for farmers and farm to school practitioners about innovative strategies to engage farmers that can be used across the country.

Pop-Up School Market: Engaging Farmers at Preschools

Georgia Organics

Award: \$5,000

This project piloted [10 pop-up farmers](#) markets at childcare facilities across Georgia as direct marketing opportunities for small/medium family farmers, while engaging parents in farm to school through incentives to purchase, cook and eat healthy farm fresh food at home. Nutrition education and cooking demonstrations were provided at the pop-up markets.

Sea to School in New England

Maine Farm to School, Massachusetts Farm to School, New Hampshire Farm to School

Award: \$5,000

Three Northeast states collaborated to create a [Sea to School resource guide](#) based on New England efforts including: case studies, best practices, recipes and an [educational video](#) appropriate for elementary school classrooms about sustainable fishing and aquaculture in the Gulf of Maine.

Growing Farm to School by Sharing Farmer Stories

University of Wisconsin, Madison - Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems

Award: \$5,000

The six Great Lakes states teamed up to develop a [series of short videos](#) featuring conversations between regional farmers and food service directors who have good working relationships. This series of professionally filmed and edited videos highlights a diverse collection of farmers, production methods, success stories and relationships between farmers and food service directors.

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Innovation Awards 2015

In 2015, the National Farm to School Network presented its first Innovation Fund Awards, thanks to the generous support of the Newman's Own Foundation. NFSN's strategic plan identified "Structuring for Innovation" as an important priority area for the organization. The Innovation Fund was established to increase the number of new initiatives with the potential to make significant contributions to NFSN's mission of increasing access to local food and nutrition education to improve children's health, strengthen family farms and cultivate vibrant communities. The focus of the 2015 Innovation Fund Awards was *Farm to School in Native Communities*.

Growing Farm to School in Native Communities Fact Sheet

Farm to school in Native communities leadership team: Pamela Kingfisher (NFSN South Regional Lead), Alena Paisano (NFSN New Mexico State Lead), Le Adams (NFSN Southwest Regional Lead) and Jim Dyer (NFSN Colorado State Lead)

Award: \$3,000

This resource overviews the benefits and challenges of farm to school in Native communities, and includes: prioritizing a community based and multi-generational approach to farm to school programming, illustrating the priorities of community and tribal leaders; highlighting indigenous knowledge; utilizing case studies to share best practices; addressing the challenges for beginning and building support for farm to school programs; and addressing the challenges of sustaining a comprehensive farm to school program.

Storytellers: Sowing seeds of knowledge for future generations

Farm to school in Native communities leadership team: Pamela Kingfisher (NFSN South Regional Lead), Alena Paisano (NFSN New Mexico State Lead), Le Adams (NFSN Southwest Regional Lead) and Jim Dyer (NFSN Colorado State Lead)

Award: \$3,000

This project provided an innovative and culturally appropriate lens for celebrating the history of, and current successes in farm to school programs in Native communities through case studies from the NFSN Native Communities Cohort convened in 2014-2015.

Farm to School Garden Blitz

Urban Roots, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, Natchez Elementary School, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, Desert Research Institute, Nevada Department of Agriculture, Washoe County School District

Award: \$3,000

To support Nevada's rural and tribal communities, Urban Roots and its partners mobilized teams to visit communities for three to five days to consult with school administrators, teachers, parents, community leaders and students on projects such as STEM and standards-based interdisciplinary curriculum, community building/volunteerism, grant writing, and garden design and maintenance.

Bison Procurement Solutions for South Dakota Tribal Schools

Dakota Rural Action, InterTribal Buffalo Council and tribal schools

Award: \$3,000

Dakota Rural Action (DRA) helped facilitate relationships between local bison producers and tribal schools in South Dakota, helping identify barriers standing in the way of bison procurement by the school system. DRA met with schools and bison producers to discuss what is and is not working well. Once barriers were identified, DRA



assisted in developing solutions to the procurement process, as well as planned learning opportunities such as farm tours to emphasize the educational aspect of farm to school. Emphasis was placed on utilizing bison raised by tribal entities, such as the InterTribal Buffalo Council.

Highlighting Local Food through In-Class Activities and Cafeteria Promotions

Cherokee Central Schools, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP), Cherokee SHAC, FoodCorps

Award: \$3,000

Cherokee Central Schools serves the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in Western North Carolina. Students who live within the Qualla Boundary attend the elementary, middle or high school located on the central campus. This project built upon the procurement work Cherokee Central Schools by connecting the local food in the cafeteria to school gardens, classroom activities and farm field trips. Local food in the cafeteria was highlighted to students and families through product posters and activities.

About National Farm to School Network

The National Farm to School Network is the leading voice for the U.S. farm to school movement, providing information, advocacy and networking for communities working to bring local food sourcing, school gardens and food and agriculture education into school systems and early care and education settings. Farm to school empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities. Learn more about our work and get involved at farmtoschool.org.

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