

Forging New Routes from Farm to School

"These are agriculture Skittles. Taste the rainbow!" Mount Horeb seventh-grader Gus Quade called to classmates as he peddled colorful samples of fresh-from-his-teacher's-farm bell peppers during a "tasting" in the middle school cafeteria one recent lunch hour. "I hate vegetables. But I love these," Quade said. "I like the purple ones the best because they're not sweet or bitter. They're balanced. And they're not from a factory. They're from Mr. Lucey's farm."

"People like New Hampshire the way it is: a rural state. But if we don't support our local businesses, it's not going to stay that way," said Nathan Duclos, UNH Farm to School Director. "If we can replace even 10 percent of [school cafeteria food] with local food, it would make a big difference."

With an estimated 1,117 farm to school programs active in 34 states, and lots more in the planning stages, Duclos and Quade represent a growing movement of community based food systems connecting children to their food's roots. Allow us to introduce ourselves and better acquaint you with the National Farm to School Program's latest venture to strengthen the movement.

The National Farm to School Network received a three-year, \$2.4 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to establish a viable and sustainable mechanism to coordinate, promote, and expand the farm to school movement at the state, regional, and national levels. Officially launched in May of 2007, the Network is coordinated by the Center for Food & Justice, a division of the Urban & Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College (www.uepi.oxy.edu) and the Community Food Security Coalition (www.foodsecurity.org).

Specific goals include:

Policy: To support state and national policy efforts for developing regulations and legislation that addresses policy barriers and develops new opportunities for farm to school programs.

Media and Marketing: To increase visibility and momentum about farm to school programs as a strategy to strengthen family farms and local economies, and reduce childhood obesity through a coordinated marketing and media campaign at the state, regional and national levels.

Information Services: To update and revise existing informational resources on farm to school to reflect the growth and complexity of programs, regional differences and develop new resources to meet any gaps.

Networking: To develop networking systems among existing farm to school programs to share information and lessons learned to avoid "reinventing the wheel."

Training and Technical Assistance: To provide training and technical assistance to school administrators, food service, parents, farmers and community members, and others interested at the state, regional and national levels.

NEW FARM TO SCHOOL PORTAL ON THE MENU

The National Farm to School Network launched its new and improved website, www.farmtoschool.org, on October 15, 2007. This timely release coincides with National School Lunch Week, October 15-19.

Farmtoschool.org is *the* portal for farm to school information in the U.S, including extensive content with easy access for submitting information about programs, upcoming events, news and funding opportunities, and online discussion forums to dialog on issues facing farm to school programs.

The new Farm to School portal showcases innovative farmers, teachers, food service directors, parents, and others that are bringing local fresh food to kids. It's a user-generated tool to promote future events, discuss timely topics on the forum pages, and share lessons learned across the nation.

An exciting new feature includes a state profile for each of the 34 states with active farm to school programs. For example, click on California, and you can search for policies, farmers, funding opportunities, and involved groups specific to the state. Highlighting key news and events across the nation and also particular to your region, the new website vastly improves the ability to stay up-to-date and involved in grassroots efforts.

MEET THE NATIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK'S CORE TEAM

And who better to lead the farm to school efforts than the groups on the ground successfully serving up farm to school programs in their state or region. Referred to as the Regional Lead Agencies (RLA), the chosen organizations are the hub for farm to school activities within their set of states. Contact information for the Network's Core Team consisting of the RLA in eight regions and national staff is given below:

Region: **West** (Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, Nevada, California, Alaska, Hawaii)

Contact: **Michelle Markesteyn Ratcliffe**

Organization: **Ecotrust**

721 NW, Ninth Ave. Ste. 200, Portland, OR 97209
(503)476-6080

Region: **Southwest** (Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico)

Contact: **Le Adams**

Organization: **Farm to Table / Southwest Marketing Network**

3900 Paseo del Sol, Santa Fe, NM 87507
(505)473-1004

Region: **Midwest** (North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Iowa, Missouri)

Contact: **Anita Poole**

Organization: **Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture Inc.**

P.O. Box 588, Poteau, OK 74953
(918)647-9123

Region: **Northeast** (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts)

Contact: **Dana Hudson**

Organization: **Vermont Food Education Every Day (VT FEED)**

1611 Harbor Road, Shelburne, VT 05482
(802)985-8686

Contact: **Amy Winston**

Organization: **Coastal Enterprises Inc.**

LCEDO Farms P.O. Box 268, 35 Water St. Wiscasset, ME 04578
(207)882-7564

Region: **Mid-Atlantic** (Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, District of Columbia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey)

Contact: **Tegan Hagy**

Organization: **The Food Trust**

One Penn Center 1617 John F. Kennedy Blvd. suite 900 Philadelphia, PA 19103
(215)-575-0444

Region: **South** (Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama)

Contact: **Glyen Holmes**

Organization: **New North Florida Cooperative Association, Inc.**

3806 Union Road Marianna, FL 32446
(850)352-2400

Region: **Great Lakes** (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio)

Contact: **Doug Wubben**

Organization: The Board of Regent of the University of Wisconsin, **Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems**

21 N. Park St. Ste. 6401 Madison, WI 53715

(608)263-6064

Region: **Southeast** (Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida)

Contact: **Emily Jackson**

Organization: **Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project**

729 Haywood Rd. Ste. 3 Asheville, NC 28806

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