



Issue # 3 | March 2010

Clinton County Fresh Network introduced

We formally introduced our newest initiative at a community meeting on Wednesday, February 24, at Wilmington College.

The Clinton County Fresh Network—a coalition of growers, local food suppliers and consumers—aims to connect all the actors in our local food economy by offering networking possibilities between them.

Farmers, restaurant owners and local residents—nearly 70 in all—filled a

dining room in Pyle Center to listen to the presentation, which was organized by our Growers Co-Op Coordinator Aileen Ash.



Clinton County Commissioner Randy Riley and WC director of community relations Chris Burns-DiBiasio opened the meeting with an introduction and history of the local food efforts in Clinton County.

“Two years ago, when

unemployment here was around two percent, no one was worried about food,” Riley said. “But when DHL announced they were leaving, that changed everything. Now we have the second highest unemployment rate in the state. When you get to those situations, you have to change the way you live.”

One new initiative that was born of that economic climate, Riley said, was the idea of creating a local network of farmers, food suppliers and consumers that could help bridge the gaps between them all.

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Backyard and Community Plots Filling Up, Still Available

The search for families to participate in our backyard and community garden projects has been successful throughout the winter months, and we continue to receive applications for both projects.

Currently, we’ve re-

ceived around 30 applications for both projects combined and we have at least 52 spots available, at most 72 (depending on the scale of our community garden expansion.)

The deadline for applying for both projects is

March 31st. We are still actively recruiting new families and are encouraging anyone who is interested to apply. If you or someone you know would like to apply, please contact Jennifer Kerschner or

Eric Guindon by calling 382-6661 ext. 487, or by visiting growfoodgrow-hope.com



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NETWORK

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“It’s about creating a strong, local food system where everyone has access to the local food that we produce here in Clinton County,” DiBiasio said.

Ash then addressed the crowd of mostly farmers with the results of an extensive survey sent out to food producers and consumers.

The survey found that a majority of consumers would pay more for food at grocery stores if it was grown locally, she said. The majority of respondents also said they would eat in restaurants more often if they knew the meal was prepared with local ingredients.

“The survey results show that there is a need to better connect our local food producers to the community, thus further sup-

porting the idea of the Fresh Network,” Ash said.

The first steps of the Fresh Network will include developing a Web site directory that will serve as a tool to connect local growers to local food suppliers and consumers, and creating a map that will provide the locations of local growers as well the items they produce.

At the meeting, representatives from Sodexo, the food service provider for WC, Produce One, a Dayton area produce distributor, and Kroger spoke to the crowd about ways in which Clinton County farmers can sell products to their companies.

“We’re listening to our customers, and our customers are telling us that they want to support local products,” said Rob Saffron, a regional representative for Kroger. “Clearly there are



Grow Food, Grow Hope Grower's Co-Op Coordinator Aileen Ash presents findings of a producer and consumer survey to the Clinton County Fresh Network

some gaps in the way of connecting with local growers, and that’s why we’re here.”

When the presentation was finished, several farmers spoke individually with Fresh Network presenters and exchanged information.

“That’s what this network is all about,” said Riley. “It’s about making connections and knowing who can grow what.”

“In the end,” Ash said, “the goal of the Fresh Network is to integrate farming, food processing, distribution and consumption in ways that enhance the economic, environmental, social and nutritional health of Clinton County.”

For more information, contact Aileen Ash at (937) 382-6661 ext. 488.



MENTORS

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One aspect of our community garden that helps ensure its success is our use of garden mentors. For each garden family — most of whom have never gardened before — we pair them with one experienced or enthusiastic gardener who can help them plant, weed and harvest in their beds, as well as answer any questions they may have along the way.

We’ve received some excellent support from local gardening groups like the Clinton County Master Gardeners and the Wilmington Garden Club, but with the growing number of plots at our community garden, we are in constant need of new garden mentors. The mentor’s past experience in gardening isn’t too important when we consider who would be good mentors; rather, a basic understanding of gardening and a willingness to

teach are all we ask of our volunteers.

If you would like to sign-up to become a Grow Food, Grow Hope garden mentor, please contact Jennifer Kerschner at jennifer_kerschner@wilmington.edu or by calling 382-6661 ext. 487



A family poses for a photo at the Grow Food, Grow Hope Community Garden. Applications are still available for community garden plots, as well as backyard garden plots. Additionally, interested community members may sign-up to become garden mentors. For more information, visit growfoodgrowhope.com

'Read and Seed' expands, school gardens underway



A volunteer reads to participants during an October 'Read and Seed.'

Our successful youth literacy and food education campaign keeps getting better. 'Read and Seed'— which started as a monthly program with fewer than ten participants per event— has expanded to several area childcare centers, where we present our food-issues curriculum to more than 50 children twice a month

Mariah Fulton, our Youth Outreach Coordinator, said

she was excited to expand her program into new classrooms.

Fulton has also been coordinating school garden installations for this upcoming spring at area schools.

The first school to partner with Fulton will be Hillsboro Elementary School in neighboring Highland County. Fulton said she has plans underway



for the construction of three raised-bed gardens in one of the school's courtyards.

If you are interested in volunteering or partnering with Fulton in her youth outreach projects, please contact her at mariah_fulton@wilmington.edu or by phone at (937) 382-6661 ext. 487.

Winter Farmers' Market to set up at local business expo

The Clinton County Winter Farmers' Market will be participating in the 2010 Community Business Expo on Friday, March 5, and Saturday, March 6. Held at Roberts' Arena— 4095 St. Rte. 730— the Community Business Expo will feature 46 local businesses, restaurants, and community organizations. The Winter Farmers' Market will be in attendance

offering the same great fresh baked goods, local meats, and assorted homemade, homegrown products that you have come to love at our normal markets. Additionally, Sycamore Tree General Store will be holding soil block demonstrations and providing gardening tips for those individuals wanting to get a jump-start on spring planting. There will be no pre-orders

for this particular Market.

The Community Business Expo is free to the public, and will be open from 12:00 – 5:00 pm on Friday, and 10:00 am – 4:00 pm on Saturday. The Expo is sponsored by the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce. For more information, please contact Dessie at 382-6661 x 488 or dessie@buylocalcc.com.



Shoppers at the Winter Farmers' Market browse through the products offered by local vendors. The market will be setting up shop at the 2010 Community Business Expo on Friday, March 5 and Saturday, March 6

GFGH receives 20 Summer Associates for 2010 growing season

We're excited to announce that this May, when the growing season is in full-bloom, we will be offering 20 paid Summer Associate positions who will help in all aspects of our project. Summer Associates will be working in our community garden, in backyard and school gar-

dens around the community, at the Clinton County Farmers' Market and in other capacities within Grow Food, Grow Hope.

The positions are funded through AmeriCorps* and last for 10 weeks, from May 24 through July 23, 2010. This is the perfect opportunity for college students

returning home for the summer, for high school seniors about to leave for school, or for anyone looking for an interesting and meaningful job this Summer. There are no restrictions for who may apply; we encourage anyone interested to submit an application.

If you think this opportunity would interest a friend, family member or someone you know, please spread the word!

For full details on applying, visit our Web site where the pay and benefits information is listed, or call 382-6661 ext. 488.

Want more information? Visit us online at www.growfoodgrowshope.com



Grow Food, Grow Hope Garden Initiative

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The **Grow Food, Grow Hope Garden Initiative** is a community food project dedicated to increasing access to fresh and nutritious food for the neediest members of our community. By increasing food security, we aim to eliminate the effects of poverty.

To that end, we facilitate a community garden for low-income families, we grow bulk vegetables for area food banks, we organize and fund backyard garden installations around our community, we teach children how to garden and we promote local farmers' markets and local businesses.

By growing a little food, we can sow a lot of hope.

Come grow with us.

