

District Resource Management Grant Report
2008

“Where does my food come from?”

Situation:

With rising food and oil prices and a faltering economy, consumers are looking for ways to make their food dollar stretch further and support their own local economy. One way this concern can be addressed is by keeping food dollars local. Purchasing local foods can be affordable as they are not affected by shipping/transportation costs and so often local foods can be purchased from a neighbors' vegetable stand. After conducting classes with various WNEP audiences, it was obvious that participants did not have a sound understanding of what foods grow well in our county nor where to purchase local foods or even what foods they could grow themselves.

Response:

WNEP collaborated with UW-Extension coworkers to identify local area growers who would be tour hosts. WNEP collaborated with existing community partners: Community Programs, Healthy Families, Sunshine House and JAK's Place to identify interested families. Three local area grower tours were conducted; each tour was repeated once for a total of six trips. Transportation and a family friendly environment were provided to encourage entire family participation. Initially, a cherry orchard tour was to be included, as Door County is well known for cherries, however the 2008 yield was so poor, many orchards did not even harvest their crop so the focus of the local area grower tours was on strawberries, vegetables and apples.

Results:

Ninety-seven participants were introduced to a local area grower and teaching contacts were made during the tours. Participants were able to be physically active, spend quality time with their family and other families, learn about how local foods are grown, harvested and preserved and then receive fresh foods to prepare or preserve at home. The program included a multi-faceted approach to healthful foods including: learning about a growers farms history, how foods are grown and harvested, how to cook or preserve local foods with a focus on cooking together as a family, as well as the “why, where and how” to purchase locally grown foods. Upon completing a tour, families would know the answer to, “Who is your farmer?”

Upon completing one of the tours focusing on vegetables, families where invited to participate in a spaghetti sauce making class in which “second” quality tomatoes were used to demonstrate the idea that a nutritionally high valued food can be prepared with a cost effective, second quality product.

Evidence:

Following each tour, a tour specific evaluation was completed addressing pre and post knowledge about food purchasing and food processing practices. Upon completion of the strawberry tour families were asked, “After today, do you know what to do with extra seasonal produce?” Twenty-two out of 22 (100%) participants responded that, “Yes, I now know how to and will store or process seasonal produce.” Some comments about the strawberry tour and lesson:

- “I had never picked berries before – its hard work but I look forward to eating them from the freezer when berries are done with their season.”
- “I learned when to plant the strawberry plants, that there is a 4 year crop maximum for the plants and that they are planted now already for next year.”
- “Smaller berries = sweeter berries.”
- “I learned how to pick strawberries. I learned the white ones and the green ones aren’t very good yet. I learned they red ones are the best!”