

ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES of OREGON

Interfaith Food & Farms Partnership



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CSA Farmer Profile: Heather Burns, Little Frog Farm *By Heather Burns*

I'm not sure exactly when I started wanting to try my hand at farming, but it may have begun as early as second grade, pulling carrots and cucumbers from my mother's garden. As the teenage daughter of missionaries living in Europe and West Africa, I enjoyed shopping for vegetables, fruit and flowers at the open markets that were part of everyday life. As an adult, I've planted a garden at every place I've lived, experimenting through the seasons, and devouring gardening books on the side. After earning a permaculture design certificate, I helped students at the University of Portland design and create an organic garden. Serving as a mentor and advisor for this garden, as well as being a garden mentor for the local nonprofit, Growing Gardens, taught me much about growing both food and community.

In addition to getting my hands dirty, I'm also busy as an adjunct professor and doctoral student focusing on sustainability education. One of my primary interests is teaching about community food systems. Creating healthy, local, inclusive food systems is a great place to start regenerating and sustaining our local communities.

This spring, I leased an acre of organic farmland on Sauvie Island and started Little Frog Farm, a community supported agriculture (CSA) project. In collaboration with the Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership, I found CSA members within two local congregations, Redeemer Lutheran Church and St. Andrew Catholic Church. Members, who have paid for their shares in advance, support my farming venture and will receive fresh local veggies for approximately four and a half months. Although the cool temperatures this spring has meant that we are off to a slow start, we're looking forward to lots of farm fresh veggies very soon. Thanks to generous community support, Little Frog Farm will be able to offer weekly shares for two low-income families this (2008) season. I'm feeling very blessed to be able to spend my summer in the farm field, supported by a wonderful community of folks who are committed to local and sustainable agriculture.

The Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership (IFFP) strives to increase access to fresh, local food for all—especially people with low incomes—and encourages congregations to support small, new and immigrant farmers through innovative market relationships. In the process, we are developing and sharing models for congregations across Oregon and beyond. For more information about IFFP, go to www.emoregon.org/food_and_farms.php.

In 2007, IFFP began exploring possibilities for establishing a pilot Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program based in a congregation to provide marketing opportunities for new and immigrant farmers while creating avenues to affordable fresh produce for people with low-incomes. We were delighted to be able to connect long-time collaborators, Redeemer Lutheran and St. Andrew Catholic Parish in northeast Portland with Heather Burns, former IFFP summer staff, in the new venture of farming.