

Interfaith Food & Farms Partnership

A Project of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon



Quarterly Update - Winter 2007

“That’s My Farmer” Coupon Project Expands

Third season underway

The popular coupon project linking congregations and small farms in Benton County is beginning its third season. We hope to expand the program to 10 faith communities and ten farms in 2007. Participants will work together to raise awareness about buying locally grown products and making nutritious food accessible to people of all economic circumstances.

How it works

Modeled after a similar concept in Eugene, colorful coupon booklets are made available for sale after services at participating congregations. Coupons can be redeemed anywhere participating farmers sell their products—namely farm stands and markets. Included in the cost of each booklet is a 10 percent donation toward the sponsorship of coupon booklets for low-income families. Some individuals also donate directly to this low-income fund. The free coupons are distributed through several local emergency food and aid agencies. Last year members of eight congregations purchased over \$12,000 worth of coupons and generated \$2,000 in funds to purchase coupons for low-income families.

Why coupons?

The coupon program is designed to raise awareness in the faith community about the importance of supporting local farmers and building justice and equity in the food system. It is designed to build relationships between faith communities and farmers, giving producers and consumers an opportunity to understand each other’s circumstances. The program also facilitates low-income residents’ participation in farmers’ markets and farm stands, and increases consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. Finally, it offers new economic opportunities to small farmers by building the customer base.

Sharing Our Experiences

A tool kit on the coupon program is under production and will be available to other communities and organizations this spring.

Cooking Clubs Take Shape in Corvallis

Let’s cook!

This spring, we are teaming up with South Corvallis Food Bank, Corvallis First United Methodist Church (FUMC), St. Mary’s Catholic Parish and Oregon State University Extension

to launch our first series of cooking classes emphasizing local food. On the first four Mondays in April, we will gather in FUMC's kitchen in downtown Corvallis to learn about cooking with early spring produce and other locally-grown and raised food under the instruction of Janice Gregg of OSU Extension.

Who's invited?

Clients of South Corvallis Food Bank and St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry will be invited to attend. Classes will emphasize healthful ways of preparing foods in monthly boxes, stretching one's food budget and incorporating local produce into the most basic meals. Spanish translation will be available.

Join us!

We encourage you to sign up to help with team teaching, food preparation, child care, clean-up and so on. If you have any extra cooking equipment such as measuring spoons, mixing bowls, or pots and pans, please let us know and we will gladly give them to class participants.

Portland Congregations and Farmers Pair Up for 2007 Growing Season

Planning and planting

On March 1, members of faith communities will gather from 6 to 8 p.m. at Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2838 N. Portland Blvd., Portland, to meet local farmers and share ideas for future collaboration. The gathering will include a meal and a chance to hear introductions from the farmers, some of whom are participants in Mercy Corps' New Agriculture Project for refugees. Congregants and farmers will engage in a fun interactive activity called "Let's Get Growing!" to discuss their favorite vegetables and possible direct marketing arrangements for the months to come. Congregation participants will share what kinds of vegetables and other foods they would like to purchase from farmers using seed packets, pictures and an interpreter.

Building on last year's success

Several Portland congregations piloted the concept of the Sunday farm stand last summer. St. Philip Neri Parish hosted a highly successful flower stand run by Hmong grower Yua Lor. First United Methodist Church and First Congregational welcomed some Meskhetian Turkish growers, recent arrivals from Russia who worked with Mercy Corps to begin farming organically.

Branching Out

We are interested in matching small farmers with congregations throughout the Portland metro area to expand economic opportunities for growers. To get involved, please call Jenny at (503) 221-1054, ext. 214.

Community Food Assessment Unfolds in North and Northeast Portland

Getting started

The north/northeast community food assessment started last March with a training in the Arbor Lodge neighborhood. Over 2006, five dot surveys were conducted by students in a PSU community health class, gathering some initial information on residents' interest in fresh, local food. Also, two Americorps members conducted a youth "photo voice" project at

the Seeds of Harmony garden at New Columbia Housing. We also conducted interviews with leaders of various faith communities to learn about food resources and gauge interest in projects.

Focusing in

In November 2006, two developments helped to spur the assessment forward: hiring a part-time Americorps coordinator, Jocelyn Furbish, and receiving a small grant from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. The overarching goal of the assessment is to empower residents of inner northeast Portland to create a secure and sustainable local food system, with nutritious, culturally appropriate food for all. The assessment will be centered on the Northeast Emergency Food Program (NEFP) at NE 19th and Killingworth and its surrounding neighborhoods. We are focused on creating a community empowerment process in which neighbors will engage in improving food access.

The Leadership Team

Our first task is to develop a team of five or more low-income residents, including bilingual leaders, who will serve as primary decision makers for the assessment. We are also planning a late March meal at Redeemer Lutheran Church to inform NEFP clients about the project and reach additional Leadership Team candidates. Stacey Sowders, a Masters of Public Health student, is assisting with the project.

Next steps & timeline

Our first full Leadership Team meeting will be held in early April, when we will choose survey tools from a range of options. Members will conduct surveys and focus groups in their neighborhoods through the spring and summer. In the fall we'll gather all the data together and host a community forum to publicize the results and engage neighbors. If you're interested in being involved with the assessment or if you know potential Leadership Team candidates, contact Jenny at (503) 221-1054, ext. 214 or Jocelyn at (503) 956-0672.

Educational Resource

Simply in Season is a great resource for cooking locally and seasonally. There is now a companion guide for small group study in congregations. Here is a posting at <http://simplyinseason.blogspot.com> describing this resource from Cathleen Hockman-Wert, Oregon co-author of *Simply in Season*. Looking for an exciting way to introduce others to everything that's good about local food—and helping fellow Christians make a connection between their faith and food choices? *Simply in Season* can be the center of a small group study, thanks to the [new leader's guide](#) by Rachel Miller Moreland. Designed for use by adult or youth Sunday school classes or small groups (and a great choice for intergenerational groups), this terrific new curriculum uses the cookbook as its textbook, offering plans for six core sessions and seven optional ones. Each core session includes discussion questions, activities, a Bible verse and suggestions for readings from the cookbook, ideas for incorporating snacks and local resources, and a handout. [Download your free copy](#). Or order the book version from Herald Press or [Mennonite Central Committee](#).

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