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S. Hrg. 111–245

BENEFITS OF FARM–TO–SCHOOL PROJECTS: HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

FIELD HEARING

[BEFORE THE]

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

MAY 15, 2009

Printed for the use of the
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry



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BENEFITS OF FARM–TO–SCHOOL PROJECTS: HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

Friday, May 15, 2009

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND FORESTRY,
Atlanta, GA

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 1 p.m., in Auditorium A, Global Communication Center, Roybal Campus, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Hon. Tom Harkin, chairman of the Committee, presiding. Present: Senators Harkin and Chambliss.

Chairman HARKIN. Good afternoon and welcome everyone to the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry for a hearing on nutrition. In cases like this, I always like to turn it over to the home state senator to sort of kick things off and run things and in this case, I am turning it over to my good friend Saxby Chambliss, former chairman of the Agriculture Committee. As I said earlier, we have passed the gavel back and forth a couple of times and so I will kind of turn it over to Senator Chambliss at this time for opening statements and sort of conducting the hearing.

STATEMENT OF HON. SAXBY CHAMBLISS, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF GEORGIA

Senator CHAMBLISS. Well thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I really appreciate you coming to Georgia. We on the Ag Committee are a very bipartisan group. Agriculture is an American issue and we have always had a great working relationship, and Tom, I appreciate from a personal standpoint you giving up a Friday, and a special Friday for him because he has a daughter who is graduating from law school today and he has to get back late this afternoon to make sure that they give her that certificate that he has been paying for. Chairman Harkin. That's right.

[Laughter.]

Senator CHAMBLISS. But seriously, Tom, you have been a great friend to agriculture and you have been a great friend to me. I went to Iowa during our Farm Bill debate and discussion to host a hearing out there and I really appreciate you taking time to come to Georgia today to let me show off Georgia agriculture and Georgia people to you, as well as other folks who are here today.

I want to say a special welcome to a number of students that I see out there. We are very pleased that you would take the time to come and listen, to see how your Federal Government operates.

I think it is very important for young folks to have a real understanding about what the Federal Government is, how the Federal Government operates on a day-to-day basis, outside of reading about it in a textbook.

So I commend your teachers for suggesting you come today, because I know you would not be here. You would rather be in school taking a test or something this afternoon.

[Laughter.]

Senator CHAMBLISS. But we appreciate you being here. I want to thank too the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for hosting today's hearing. The staff here has been just absolutely terrific in assisting the Committee with all the logistics and planning leading up to today's event.

I also wish to welcome the witnesses who are here and thank them for their time and expertise and the discussion about health and wellness and the important role that agricultural products have in healthy lifestyles, and we will take a little more time in a minute to introduce them more formally.

Over the years, there has been growing interest in connecting local farmers and their products directly with school food service providers. The Food Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, or last year's Farm Bill, included a provision which provides schools relief from Federal procurement requirements when purchasing agricultural products directly from local farmers.

There are many innovative approaches in the Farm-to-School effort and I look forward to hearing testimony that will highlight local successes and the tools available at the United States Department of Agriculture to connect farmers and schools across the country. Schools play an important role in shaping nutrition and physical activity habits of our young children.

School cafeterias, gymnasiums and playgrounds are important venues to teach children about healthy eating, as well as exercise. The more we learn about nutrition, the clearer the connection between calories in and calories out becomes. I look forward to hearing Dr. Satcher's testimony about the efforts of Action for Healthy Kids. His dedication to raising awareness about solutions to childhood obesity is to be commended.

The statistics about childhood obesity are very troubling. The obesity rate among children six to 11 years has doubled over the last 20 years. The obesity rate among children age two to 5 years also doubled to over 12 percent over the last two decades. More and more children are entering kindergarten overweight or obese.

As much as schools play an important role in attempts to reverse this trend, nothing can surpass the role of parents and caregivers in the home. Dr. Dietz's work here at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention has played an extraordinary role in helping all Americans understand the significance of this problem.

The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry relies on input from experts on the front lines of administering these programs and working directly with children. In prior hearings in Washington, D.C., we have heard testimony from school food service directors, anti-hunger advocates, a school nurse, researchers, nutrition groups, food companies and parent organizations.

For me personally, I hear firsthand from the school teachers in my family about the importance of good nutrition and the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs. These programs benefit the lives of millions of children in the United States every single day. According to the Georgia Department of Education, over 1,177,000 lunches and 499,000 breakfasts are served each day in Georgia schools.

As Congress moves forward in the reauthorization process, my goal is to ensure that all eligible children can easily access these important nutrition programs. The fact that there are opportunities to benefit farmers by connecting them and their healthy products directly with schools is kind of the icing on the cake.

So Mr. Chairman, again thank you for coming to Georgia. Thanks for your leadership on this issue and I look forward to continuing to work for you and look forward to the testimony from the witnesses here today.

STATEMENT OF HON. TOM HARKIN, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF IOWA, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

Chairman HARKIN. Thank you very much, Senator Chambliss. I could not help but just—I do not know why it did not occur to me before now, but I remember when I was in the military, when I was in the Navy a couple years ago, we always had a plan of the day that would come out.

And on the plan of the day, Dr. Satcher, was the uniform of the day. And you probably do not realize this, but we have that in the Senate. It came out that the uniform of the day for senators were dark blue suits, white shirts and blue ties.

[Laughter.]

Chairman HARKIN. I just noticed that we have the same ties on. That's a joke for all you young people out there.

[Laughter.]

Chairman HARKIN. You probably seriously thought I meant that, right? No, that was not serious. First of all, let me thank you, Senator Chambliss, for your friendship and the great working relationship we have had over all these years on the Agriculture Committee.

Thank you for hosting this hearing today in your home state and for all your work in putting together this great panel of witnesses. We are also grateful to the staff of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention who have generously handled the logistics of the hearing and hosted us here today. This is a fourth in a series of hearings held by this Committee to prepare for the reauthorization of the Child Nutrition legislation.

We held our first hearing back in December and we have been adding to the foundation for this new legislation since. In earlier hearings, the Committee heard testimony about the negative effects of poor nutrition on children's development, their education and their health, particularly on the increase in conditions such as Type II diabetes, overweight or obesity, heart disease.

We learned more about ways in which Federal child nutrition programs are succeeding and ways in which they need to be strengthened. We have also heard testimony about effective ways

to alter what is called the food and nutrition environment in schools to make healthier eating an easier choice for our kids.

We will hear several of these points reiterated today and I know we will hear some valuable new ideas and perspectives. I read all the testimonies of the witnesses coming down last evening and flying down here this morning.

One key point that comes through clearly is that the health and nutrition of our nation's children is closely connected to the overall cost and status of healthcare in the United States and its impact on our economy. For example, healthy nutrition and physical activity are directly related to better learning, preventing illness, reducing healthcare costs and of course, building and maintaining a strong economy.

In other words, improving the nutrition and health of our children pays dividends in many ways and many times over. One of these dividends which we have only recently given proper attention to is that doing the right thing for our kids by providing healthy, local fresh fruits and vegetables and high protein meats is also good for farmers and local communities.

It is really a two-for, if not more. Kids get the nutrition they need and deserve. It helps rural communities, which continue to struggle, particularly during some tough economic times. Undoubtedly, a multitude of reasons support our enacting a strong forward-looking new child nutrition bill this year.

So in the coming weeks, I look forward to working with our Committee, particularly with Senator Chambliss, as we begin to actually craft the legislation to secure the added funding proposed by President Obama and which is so critical to improving Federal child nutrition programs and to see what we can do to expand the fresh fruit and high quality proteins for our kids in school.

I thank our witnesses for being here today to help us in this effort to get this done and now I will yield to Senator Chambliss for introductions.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and before we get started, I have a statement from the Georgia School Nutrition Association that I would ask unanimous consent to be added to the record.

[The prepared statement of the Georgia School Nutrition Association can be found on page 80 in the appendix.]

Senator CHAMBLISS. We will start, Dr. Satcher, on your side here and we will go this way both in introduction and then in testimony. Dr. David Satcher is the current director of Center of Excellence on Health Disparities.

He is the Poussaint-Satcher–Cosby Chair in Mental Health at Morehouse School of Medicine here in Atlanta. Dr. Satcher was the 16th Surgeon General of the United States of America, where he served his country well. Dr. Satcher is a dear friend and someone who, as a Morehouse graduate, and now is back at the Morehouse School of Medicine, I have the privilege of working with on a regular basis and we are extremely proud of him and proud that he is here today.

I want to say too that he began an initiative. He is the founder of Action for Healthy Kids. I know he will talk a little bit about that because it is an extremely interesting and valuable program

and very effective program that he works on there. Then Dr. William Dietz is the director, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity here at the Center for Disease Control.

Dr. Dietz is recognized as a leading government expert on the child obesity issue and we are very pleased that you could be here today. Ms. Cindy Long is the director of the Child Nutrition Programs, the Food and Nutrition Service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

She is the person that is directly responsible for the administration of many of the programs that we are going to be talking about today, as well as in the legislation that we worked on. So Ms. Long, thanks very much for you being here. Mr. Glyen Holmes is going to provide some very interesting testimony.

Mr. Holmes is with the New North Florida Cooperative Association in Marianna, Florida. His organization has been responsible for working throughout several different southeastern states in providing fresh fruits and vegetables from farmers and farmers markets in the school systems. We are particularly pleased that you are here and we look forward to hearing from you, both from your testimony as well as a discussion about this issue.

Dr. Satcher, we will start with you and come right down the row there with your opening statements. Thank you again for being here.

STATEMENT OF DAVID SATCHER, DIRECTOR, CENTER OF EXCELLENCE ON HEALTH DISPARITIES, POUSSAINT–SATCHER–COSBY CHAIR IN MENTAL HEALTH, MOREHOUSE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Dr. SATCHER. Thank you very much, Senator Chambliss and Chairman Harkin and members of the Committee who are represented here. I have submitted full testimony to the Committee and I appreciate the opportunity to summarize these thoughts with you today.

I am David Satcher and I currently serve as director of the Satcher Health Leadership Institute at the Morehouse School of Medicine here. From 1993 to 1998, I was director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and from 1998 to 2002, I served as Surgeon General and assistant secretary for health.

I must say that I grew up about 90 miles from here on a farm outside of Anniston, Alabama and I still consider myself to be a pretty good gardener. While in office, I had the opportunity to release the Surgeon General's call to action to prevent and reduce overweight and obesity. This report was the first to note that obesity was an epidemic in our country and a leading cause of preventable death and it outlined strategies to address obesity and its related problems.

After leaving the Office of Surgeon General in 2002, along with Mrs. Laura Bush, I called a national summit aimed at putting action behind the recommendations laid out in the Surgeon General's report, especially as they related to children and the school environment. The result of that summit was the formation of Action for Health Kids, of which I was the founding chair, and today I remain an active member of the board of directors.

My testimony today is on behalf of Action for Healthy Kids. Action for Health Kids is a national grassroots, non-profit organization that addresses the epidemic of childhood obesity and undernourishment by focusing on changes within schools. We now have teams working in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. We have more than 11,500 volunteers with the support of more than 65 national partner organizations and governmental agents representing—agencies representing education, nutrition, physical fitness and others who care about our youth.

Our vision at Action for Healthy Kids is that all children will develop the lifetime habits necessary to promote health and learning. Obesity and undernourishment among our youth is not a cosmetic problem. It is a health issue and it disproportionately affects low-income and minority children.

As an example, here in Georgia, almost 42 percent of African American children are overweight or obese compared with 26 percent of white, non–Hispanic children, and 26 percent is high. About half, 47 percent, of Georgia children receiving public health insurance are overweight or obese, double the rate among privately insured children.

This places Georgia at number 48 in the state rankings on insurance disparities. These disparities are even more significant when you consider the well-documented increased risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease and certain cancers faced by individuals who are obese. With children spending 1,000 hours per year in schools, schools can serve as the great equalizers across economic, racial and social differences.

Ideally, they provide a level playing field while children are learning lifelong habits that will help them to be healthy. Schools also are a critical conduit to parents, families and communities, all of whom play important roles in helping children learn good nutrition and how to be physically active. So how can we most effectively address the problems of overweight, undernourished and physically inactive children?

Congress took a very important step during the 2004 Child Nutrition Reauthorization by requiring that all schools with federally funded school milk programs have a school wellness policy. While we now believe that nearly all schools, certainly more than 90 percent, have wellness policies on the books, it is imperative that we now take the next important step, making sure that these policies are implemented, monitored and continuously improved to benefit our children.

I would like to summarize several specific recommendations that we at Action for Healthy Kids believe should be taken into consideration. First, we believe that we must provide incentives for schools that make incremental changes toward creating an environment that promotes healthy eating and increased physical activity among students. There are several examples, but to be brief, I will point out that Action for Healthy Kids has experienced significant success with mini grants up of $2,000 or less targeted at increasing school breakfast participation.

For example, in Ohio, we increased participation by 15 percent in a year's time and our goal for a new grant program is that we will reach 41 schools in 17 states and increase participation by 25

percent. With every opportunity we must put children, nutrition and fitness in broader contexts of the challenges our nation faces in addressing healthcare in our system. And as you pointed out, obesity and its consequences are responsible for major costs in our healthcare system, including the chronic diseases responsible for over 75 percent of Medicare costs., this is a very important challenge.

Finally, we must do a better job of developing policies that recognize the relationship among nutrition, physical activity and readiness to learn. In the report that we have submitted, I have included The Learning Connection, which we released in 2003. For example, increased participation in a school breakfast program is associated with better academic test scores, better attendance, better class participation, better discipline.

It also has been correlated with reduction in absenteeism and tardiness. Similarly, schools that have incorporated nutrition, physical education and physical activity goals into continuous school improvement plans experience significant academic improvement. Just as nutrition and physical activity should be viewed in the context of health of our nation, they also should be viewed as an integral part of an effective education system.

In closing, the responsibility for these kinds of changes fall on all of us, so we must work together. We must support parents and communities. Anything that we can do to bring about better coordination, whether between Federal and state policymakers, between nutritionists and educators, or among parents, administrators and students themselves, we have positive results in the long term. Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this very important subject at this very important hearing.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Satcher can be found on page 67 in the appendix.]

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Dr. Satcher. Dr. Dietz?

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM H. DIETZ, DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF NUTRITION, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND OBESITTY, CENTERS FOR DIDEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

Dr. DIETZ. Chairman Harkin, Senator Chambliss, welcome to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and thanks for the opportunity to provide you with this testimony. I am Bill Dietz, the director of the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity located in CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Satcher as well because I believe that his Surgeon General's call to action was the first formal Federal response to this epidemic and the first attempt to mobilize stakeholders and I think it did its job in terms of focusing attention on this problem. So thank you, Dr. Satcher. My statement emphasizes the importance of multi-component strategies and particularly the need to address nutrition standards in foods for children in schools and childcare settings.

I will spend a few minutes outlining our strategies to improve healthy eating, active living and healthy weight. It is clear that we have to move beyond the description of this problem to the implementation of solutions for this problem. So I will just spend a mo-

ment or two on prevalence, focus on its complications and more specifically on its costs, the target behaviors that I think are warranted that we should address with a variety of strategies, and then close with some comments on the opportunities before us.

So it is true that 16 percent of two to 19–year-olds currently are obese, using the NHANES survey. But what is equally important is that we are now at a critical juncture with respect to childhood obesity because the data between 1999 and 2006 indicate that there is a plateau not simply limited to Caucasian children, but also including Hispanic and African American children.

That is true regardless of whether we are looking at overweight, obese or severe obesity. But we cannot become complacent about that. Over 30 percent of the pediatric population is still overweight or obese and those are children that are going to go on to develop the adult complications of obesity, including cancer, Type II diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

In my view, we are at about where tobacco was in the 1960's, that is, there was a plateau in tobacco consumption that coincided with an awareness of this problem. But it was not until at least 20 years later that we began to see declines in per capita cigarette consumption consistent with a variety of policy and environmental interventions, and I believe that the awareness of the obesity epidemic has gotten us to the plateau.

But we have not yet reached the point where we understand what policies and initiatives we need to initiate or can show that have an impact in the decline in pediatric obesity. We fund 23 states from my division. Georgia and Iowa are included among those states. And the Division of Adolescent and School Health funds 22 state-based education and health agencies and one tribal government for coordinated school health programs.

These are the carriers that we think are effective in beginning to address this problem. We also believe that there are at least six target behaviors that warrant addressing. These include physical activity, breast feeding, fruit and vegetable intake, television viewing, sugar-sweetened beverages and energy density. We think that the focus on these behaviors that particularly affect children are childcare, schools and communities.

I would like to just point to policy initiatives in each of those settings that we think have made a difference. With respect to childcare, we are involved in the evaluation of what we consider a model program for group daycare settings in New York City, which has focused on the elimination of sugar-sweetened beverages, regulation of television time, promotion of 60 minutes of physical activity and low-fat milk.

We believe that children are in this program for a substantial period of time and that these initiatives are likely to help control obesity. With respect to schools, there is a model program in Mississippi where the State Department of Education has worked with CDC, the Bower Foundation, The Alliance for a Healthier Generation and other partners to strengthen the state's efforts in improving the health of its youths.

This program has included new snacks, a ban on sugar-sweetened beverages, an effort to replace fryers with combination oven steamers, all of which can be expected to lead to an improvement

in child health. With respect to communities, CDC funded an initiative in Somerville, Massachusetts, a multi-component intervention that lead to a reduction in the rate of increase in BMI among children and adolescents in those school systems.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, a CDC-funded program lead to a farmer's market in a low-income community with high rates of chronic diseases and had a significant impact on fruit and vegetable consumption. The challenge here is that we are under invested in evaluation. We are relying on the best available evidence. What we need to do is grow the best possible evidence. It is critical that we identify what works and expand beyond that. We do not yet know the dose of these interventions sufficient to prevent or control obesity.

It is also essential that we provide states and communities with the metrics to assess success and the capacity to measure the impact of their programs. I would like to close with just a few comments about some pending legislation.

The Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act provides at least four opportunities to strengthen the role of parents. First, peer counseling for breast feeding. Second, the provision of breast pumps to allow mothers who are going back to work to continue to nurse.

It offers an opportunity to focus on parenting practice, not only with respect to the choices that children are given, but also to help educate providers or parents that a fussy infant is not always a hungry infant, and some of the overeating that we think exists may occur because parents are trying to calm fussy infants by feeding rather than other soothing practices.

Finally, it is important to understand the impact of laws on breast feeding at work. Second, the Child and Adult Care Food Program could expand to the policies that seem effective in New York City to other venues. Third, we believe that the implementation and broadening of the IOM recommendations that competitive foods in schools meet the dietary guidelines could be expanded in all schools to apply to all foods and all snacks.

We ought to build on the school wellness policies and use CDC materials, like the School Health Index, to assure that school guidelines align with (inaudible) we need to expand beyond the Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program to foster farm-to-school programs and school gardens. And finally, we need to develop incentives for medical groups to collaborate with community-based programs to foster and monitor community-based interventions. In summary, thank you very much for your leadership in this arena and we look forward to providing more comments.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Dietz can be found on page 39 in the appendix.]

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you. Ms. Long.

STATEMENT OF CINDY LONG, DIRECTOR, CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS DIVISION, FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Ms. LONG. Chairman Harkin and Senator Chambliss, thank you for this opportunity to discuss USDA's Farm-to-School efforts and the other aspects of our Federal nutrition assistance programs that support local farmers and promote healthy eating.

I would like to take the opportunity this afternoon to highlight several important efforts that we have undertaken to support our local farmers and combat the growing problem of childhood obesity through our nutrition assistance programs, particularly the school meals programs.

First I will touch on some of our farm-to-school efforts. We are committed to working with our partners to identify strategies to link children with foods that are produced in the communities where they live and go to school. Local procurement can contribute appropriately and efficiently toward meeting the diverse needs of our child nutrition programs.

Over several years we have been providing guidance on how schools can do business with local producers and still meet their Federal procurement requirements. Strategies for achieving this include tailoring specifications to include high standards for product freshness and quality to help obtain local produce. Another strategy for reaching local producers is utilization of small purchase thresholds by school districts, which allows for streamlined purchasing procedures.

In addition, as you know, the Food Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 provided schools the ability to use a geographic preference to purchase unprocessed locally grown and locally raised agricultural products and in July, we issued guidance on how institutions can use these preferences and continue to work with our program operators to implement that provision. In addition, we also support local farm-to-school efforts by providing a range of technical assistance resources. We have issued a step-by-step guide called Small Farms, Small Schools Initiative, which details how to bring small farms and schools together.

In 2005, we also issued a document targeted at school districts called Eat Smart, Farm Fresh, which is a guide to buying and serving those schools locally produced food. We are actually in the process of updating this document and hope to republish it later this year with new success stories and additional resources. We also support farm-to-school initiatives through our Team Nutrition Training Grants.

Our TN grants offer funding to state agencies for establishing or enhancing infrastructure to support the implementation of healthy eating in schools. In some occasions, these grants have been used for farm-to-school activities, including things like school gardening projects. Of course these are not our only activities. As you know, the 2008 Farm Bill expanded the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, which provides another opportunity for linkages between schools and local producers.

The program is designed to make fresh fruits and vegetables available to children in school and it is targeted to low-income elementary students in every state. Obviously local producers can be an excellent source for schools to obtain the fresh produce they need for this program and we are emphasizing that linkage as we work with our states to roll out the expansion of the program. We are also continuing our efforts to make the school meal programs as healthful as possible.

One of the most important links the USDA can make between producers and the health of all of our program participants is to

make fruits and vegetables an important part of our programs. We estimate that our programs provide about $11 billion in support for fruit and vegetable consumption per year. We are also continuing to work to ensure that our school meal nutrition requirements support and promote healthy eating.

We have contracted with the Institute of Medicine to put together an expert panel to develop recommendations for a comprehensive strategy to bring school meal programs and the Child and Adult Care Food Program in line with the current dietary guidelines for Americans. This effort is well underway and we expect to have the institute's final recommendations this fall.

While the school meal programs are under review, we have been and are continuing to encourage and support schools in following the dietary guidelines within the current program structure and the current meal requirements. We have provided a range of technical assistance materials to support them in this effort and in addition, our HealthierUS School Challenge is a key element of our effort to promote healthy school environments.

The HealthierUS School Challenge recognizes that unhealthy food and beverage choices, along with inadequate physical activity, undermines children's ability to learn in school. The HealthierUS School Challenge encourages and rewards schools that have taken steps to make it easier for their students to make healthier dietary and physical activity choices during the school day.

Schools can earn a gold, silver or bronze award from USDA by meeting specific criteria, including offering lunches that demonstrate healthy menu planning, meeting specific standards for the foods sold outside of the reimbursable meal programs, promoting nutrition education and providing opportunities for physical activity to students.

To date we have about 570 schools that have received a HealthierUS School award. In closing, I want to emphasize that the efforts that I have touched on this afternoon to support local producers and promote healthy food choices have been and continue to be a very high priority for the nutrition assistance programs.

Chairman Harkin and Senator Chambliss, I appreciate the opportunity to be here this afternoon. I would be happy to try to answer any questions you have today.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Long can be found on page 57 in the appendix.]

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you very much. Mr. Holmes.

STATEMENT OF GLYEN HOLMES, NEW NORTH FLORIDA COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION, INC.

Mr. HOLMES. Yes, Chairman Harkin and Senator Chambliss and members of the Committee and guests, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to tell a story about the North Florida Co-op and the benefits of the Farm-to–School program and working with the National Farm-to–School Network. Again, my name is Glyen Holmes.

I am the executive director for the New North Florida Cooperative and I am originally from Mississippi. I worked for USDA for 18 years before going into the private sector. I work with small

farmers, school districts and numerous partners in Florida throughout the southeast region.

One of the most beneficial partners I have worked with over the years is Vonda Richardson and she is sitting here behind me. She is extension specialist with Florida A&M University Cooperative Extension Service and we have collaborated for about 12 years. NNFC, which is the New North Florida Co-op, it is established to assist small-scale farmers in accessing alternative markets for their product.

Farm-to–School, in the beginning we called Small Farm to School. We all know that food has originated on the farm, but what makes our effort unique in what—we link small farmers with their product with school districts. This effort is grass root level and self-supported. We are primarily at the school district level, although we work also at the state level with state food directors.

In my experience, school districts participate with us because they see the nutritional cost-effectiveness and the social value of it. NNFC has worked with all types of school districts, including rural, urban and small and large school districts. School districts are able to incorporate fresh local products in their school meals, increasing the nutritional value of the food they offer to their students.

The farmers also assess alternative, market which is crucial today. The cooperative itself has created jobs for local residents. The cooperative provides a fresh product and in a manner that allows schools to treat them like other vendors. NNFC Farm-to–School model is successful because it benefits the school, local community without overburdening food service.

In May 1995, a group of small farmers from several counties in North Florida met to organize and develop a potential market for Farms-to–School. The group identified four problems faced by small-scale farmers. In some cases, we called it limited resource funds.

One problem was a dire financial situation farmers found themselves in. Another problem was keeping farmers focused on one market while building capacity in the marketplace. The third problem was dealing with destructive attitudes and perception, and the final problem was identifying farmers—wanted too much in the form of property and services too soon.

Taking these issues into consideration, it was decided NNFC will be a service-driven cooperative providing process and transportation and marketing services. NNFC was incorporated in October 1995. Operating structure is very simple and straight forward, consistent with three components that work together.

Participants who are farmers are responsible for what they do best, farming. A small force of part-time day laborers are engaged in value added processing and a management team provided leadership, organization, market development and planning and coordinating.

Our first delivery, which may seem small in a large scale, but are real significant, our first delivery was 3,000 pounds of leafy greens to a small school district, Gadsden County, Florida, which feeds about 7,000 kids a day. We supplied only Gadsden County for about 2 years until we learned the ropes and built capacity in the

cooperative and with farmers. That food director is in Florida—I mean, Georgia now.

She transferred to Georgia. Since 1995, the New North Florida Coop has helped schools, food service incorporate locally or regionally grown fruits and vegetables into child nutrition programs in over 100 school districts in several southern states serving well over one million school children.

These states include Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas. We just left Texas last week. We are getting ready to a pilot with the Houston Independent School District there. We provided training for food service personnel and menu planning, local product procurement in food and fresh produce storage and preparation.

NNFC has worked with about 100 farmers in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Arkansas over the past 14 years. Farmers do not have to actually join the cooperative to participate in Farm-to-School activity. We work with small farmers in the area of crop production management, marketing, value added processing, transportation and distribution and logistics, which is crucial in being able to carry out a Farm-to–School project.

Farm-to–School is more complicated than just asking a farmer to grow a product and instantly having a local fresh product ready to eat or ready to cook at the school lunch. NNFC has a storage, refrigeration and processing facility where it operates its washing, cutting and packaging operation.

The facility is inspected by local, state and Federal health agencies, which is important today. We target products that schools are not currently serving or cannot get in a fresh form. Usually when we do that we look at what is culturally sound in that area that they cannot get through a bidding process.

In that sense, we are known as a specialty item vendor. We are not considered a food vendor. Again we are a specialty item vendor so that we do not have to become competitors with large entities who are already supplying the school district. The products we offer year around are one, bagged collards, sweet potato sticks, green beans, which are seasonally.

We have a small fleet of refrigerated trucks that make deliveries one to two times a month depending on the menu, so the food arrives within one or 2 days prior to being served. This system has given us a reputation of being a reliable distributor of quality produce and facilitates our Farm-to–School efforts. A lot of the—one main question that is always asked about the co-op is how you finance.

We have been sustainable since our inception. Our operation is funded from revenue from direct sales from schools and other market outlets. A few loans and grants we have received to help build infrastructure and outreach to farmers and school districts. NNFC received two small grants after we started from USDA Ag Marketing Service totaling about $70,000 in the early years of the co-op.

These funds were used to enhance ongoing activities with schools we had started a few years prior. We also received a USDA—grant, which I think was very instrumental for us to get to this point here, in 1999 through 2000 for about $325,000 that enabled us to

acquire additional infrastructure that allowed us to increase capacity through increased capacity.

Currently NNFC serves as one of the eight regional leads for the National Farm-to–School Network and is a hub for the Farm-to–School activities in the south—southern region. In this role, NNFC supports the national network in areas of policy, information, media and networking opportunity and training and technical assistance for individuals working on Farm-to–School issues in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. In addition, our work is also is in the State of Florida, because we reside in Florida, so we also work in Florida.

From the network perspective, Farm-to–School Program nationwide enables children to have access to nutritious food while simultaneously benefiting the community and local farmers by providing a consistent, reliable market.

The network sites in over 2,000 school districts in border states are eating farm fresh food for school lunch, breakfast or snacks along with nutrition and agriculture education through taste tests, school guards and farm tours. Just having a choice of healthy options in the cafeteria through Farm-to–School meals may result in the consumption of more fruit and vegetables during the school meals and at home.

Farm-to–School Program also provides great benefits to family farmers by opening up a local market for their product. A better Farm-to–School Program suggests that when schools dedicate a significant percentage of their purchase to local farmers, local farmers gain a significant and steady market.

In closing, every child deserves the opportunity to eat food in a school that ensures their health and wellbeing and Farm-to–School Program is a wonderful solution to incorporate healthy food into the school meals. And as the Child Nutrition Reauthorization approaches, Congress has the unique opportunity to make this possible.

The 2004 Child Nutrition Act included one provision on Farm-to–School section 122, a seed grant program with $2 million in discretionary fund that has failed to receive appropriation. In this Child Reauthorization Act, the network asks—that is the Farm-to–School Network—asks for Congress to enact $50 million in mandatory funding for section 122.

This will fund 100 to 500 projects per year up to $100,000 to cover startup costs for Farm-to–School program. These compared to one-time grant will allow schools to develop vendor relationship with local small farmers and develop hands-on nutrition education to demonstrate the importance and relationship of nutrition and agriculture. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Holmes can be found on page 52 in the appendix.]

Senator CHAMBLISS. Well thank all of you for some very enlightening testimony and again, we appreciate very much your being here. Dr. Satcher, let me start with you. You made the point that I think is so valid, and that I talk about as I get around visiting nutrition folks, and that is that this problem really starts at home.

If you do not have a parent who is willing to make the commitment to try to help their children have healthy meals and a

healthy lifestyle, then it sure makes it difficult just to dump them off at school and expect the schools to do that for them.

Is there a way that your organization has developed any kind of message that can reach parents and what kind of experience have you had with this?

Dr. SATCHER. Well I think it is a very important point. Thank you. I think it is a very important point. There is no substitute for the experience that children have at home in terms of nutrition and physical activity.

The reason we say that the schools are the great equalizers is that there are children, as you know, who come from households where the parents are not really prepared sometimes to be parents. I mean, teenage parents sometimes are not prepared.

Sometimes there is a single parent and all that she can do is to get the children off to school in the morning and try to be there when they get back in the afternoon. So what we hope will happen is that at least during the 1,000 hours that the children spend at school, there will be models of good nutrition and physical activity, and then that the schools can reach out to the parents.

We have worked with the PTAs, and the PTA is represented here today, and they have been trying very hard to better engage parents with the schools and try to bridge that tremendous gap, and with the community, that sometimes there are community institutions, like the church, who can help with parents also.

What we are trying to do more and more, and some of our chapters have done a better job than others, of engaging community institutions that can be supportive of the schools and the parents. But we agree with you that the role of parents is critical.

But we also believe that there are some children who need help right now and if they do not get it, then we pay for it later in terms of overweight and obesity and sometimes even in other forms of illness and behavior. As I pointed out, children who have good nutrition and are physically fit are better disciplined in school.

They are less likely to be absent from school, whereas children who are obese are four times more likely to be depressed and to be absent from school. So I think what we are trying to do, recognizing your point about the importance of parents, is to try to intervene at the level of the schools and then reach out to parents and communities at the same time. I think you are right, it is critical.

Senator CHAMBLISS. And you also make a good point that there are some parents who just are not capable of providing the right kind of guidance and often times it is not through any fault of their own. I like your point about if a child has a good breakfast and a good lunch, that child is going to be less of a discipline problem. They are going to be easier to teach, according to my wife, who is a retired school teacher, and my daughter, who is currently a fourth grade teacher.

Dr. SATCHER. This is a very important point. We struggled at the beginning of this program, because I mean the schools responded by saying well, here you are trying to dump another problem on us; we have enough problems already and now you are going to make us responsible for the child obesity problem. I think when we started to turn the corner was the report on learning, the learning con-

nection, when the schools realized that we were in this together, that we shared their goal, we wanted children to learn, we wanted them to be in classroom, we wanted them to be disciplined. I think that is a lesson for public health, is that if we want real partners, we have to respond to their needs and their goals also.

Senator CHAMBLISS. I like your idea of incentivizing schools to participate in the program too and to have a goal out there and if they achieve that goal, to get some sort of reward. Do you limit the school as to what they can do with this grant money that they are awarded or to do whatever they want to do?

Dr. SATCHER. I think we do not have a lot of money and we have been very fortunate at getting some support from foundations and the National Football League has been a steady supporter of ours and National Dairy Council.

So we have been trying to No. 1, support anything that relates to teaching and learning or anything that relates to improving physical activity and good nutrition. We have some other ideas for the future in terms of perhaps the training and use of community help workers in supporting teachers at school, because many schools do not have the resources to have a physical education teacher.

So I think we just have to continue to work together. But let me make one final point because I know you are dealing with health system reform. The point I tried to make when I testified before the House is that this cannot just be healthcare reform. We have to deal with all of the deterrents of health.

If we deal with deterrents of the kind that we are talking about today, nutrition and learning, it will certainly reduce entitlement costs of healthcare in this country. There is no other way—we cannot—we are in this battle by chasing diseases. We have to figure out a way to intervene and I think incentives are the key to that.

Some businesses have done that quite well. I was with the Technology Association of Georgia yesterday and some of the members there have really developed successful worksite programs by providing incentives for their workers to engage in physical activity and good nutrition.

When I was director here, Bill, in 1996, at our 50th anniversary, what we did was—I think you remember—provided an extra half an hour for lunch if people would use it to be physically active and we tried to change the cafeteria too. And it is amazing how many people responded to that.

Then you asked the supervisor and they said well, we did not miss them because they performed better when they got back than they would have. So I think there is something to be said for these kinds of incentives.

Senator CHAMBLISS. And probably did not miss as many days being out sick too.

Dr. SATCHER. Exactly. And that is what the businesses are saying. They are saying that it is really reducing absenteeism in the workplace and obviously reducing illness that they have to pay for, and improving working relationships, all these things we have seen.

Senator CHAMBLISS. I want to commend both you and Mr. Holmes with respect to your programs primarily because there are

a lot of people who think that the Federal Government is the answer to everything, that we have all the money and we have all the power to make the policy.

While we do probably spend too much money, we do not have the power to exercise the kind of discipline that we just talked about with respect to parent/children relationship regarding this particular issue. But what you two folks are doing with your programs is without basically any help from the Federal Government.

You are out there involving volunteers and admittedly, Mr. Holmes, it is for a profit, but shucks, if it benefits kids and it benefits your farmers, and you do not have to have the Federal Government looking over your shoulder all the time to accomplish a benefit for both ends of it and in your case, Dr. Satcher, where you are seeing some very positive results with respect to the obesity issue and the wellness issue, I think it speaks volumes about your program that you are not looking to the Federal Government to tell you what to do.

And as we are doing right now unfortunately in too many businesses around the country, we are having to pump a lot of money in, but we are putting mandates on them. You guys are out there working your programs and helping kids and not depending on the Federal Government to do it. Well my time is up, but I will come back the next round, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HARKIN. Thank you very much, Senator Chambliss and Dr. Satcher, it is good to see you again. I used to work with you when you were both the Surgeon General and the head of CDC. I just am constrained almost to say, do you even recognize this place now, what it was in the 90's when you were the head of it?

Dr. SATCHER. Well, they invite me over here.

Chairman HARKIN. You are close by. I just want to thank you for all your public service and for all you are doing yet, even today. Both you and Dr. Dietz talked about—mentioned the school wellness policies that we put in the last Child Nutrition Bill.

I will not go into all of that, the history of it, but basically we just said that every school that gets a participation in the school lunch program has to have a school wellness policy. We did not say what it had to be; we just left it up to the schools.

I think you mentioned that 90 percent have some, but there is a long way to go to bridge the gap between the policies and the implementation and even the policies themselves. It was Dr. Dietz who mentioned the IOM standards, Institute of Medicine standards.

First you, Dr. Satcher, and then Dr. Dietz, if you could address yourself to that because as we reauthorize the Child Nutrition Bill again this year, should we be looking at somehow—now we mandated this. We mandated this in the last bill. They had to have a wellness policy. What we did not say is on what basis.

Now the Institute of Medicine, as you know, has come up with standards and should we be thinking of saying to school districts, fine, you have wellness policies, but you should incorporate into those the IOM standards. I just wondered if you thought about that.

How do we get them—there is probably about as many different wellness policies as there are schools in this country. As you say, some of them are really good and some of them are not. How do we get them up to the IOM standards? What should we do on that?

Dr. SATCHER. First let me just say that I think when Congress acted and passed the wellness policy—and I know how much you had to do with that—it was a major, major step forward. Bill has sort of done—Dr. Dietz here has done sort of a study of how long it takes from the time you have the Surgeon General's report until you have this kind of policy and usually it takes much longer if you go back and look at history.

So in 2004, when this legislation passed, it was a big step forward. It was a wellness policy and I think it was a major step. It could have been much more specific in terms of what was required, but I think it at least lead to the schools looking critically at what they were doing and working together with the district school boards to come up with policy. I think now it is time to put more teeth into it in at least two ways and one, as you say, using IOM standards, again which Bill has had a lot to do with, so using IOM standards, but also looking at implementation.

I work—the other organization that I work with here is the 100 Black Men. These are men who are professional black men who decided 3 years ago that they were going to reach back and mentor children from disadvantaged communities and now we have gotten involved with the health issue. They are really working to try to see if they can work with schools in terms of what will it take to implement these policies that you have on your books.

I do not know. In some cases it is more funding and I happen to believe it is a good investment for government in terms of spending money now as opposed to spending it later when people are ill, suffering from cancer and cardiovascular disease and diabetes. So I support providing more funds that would strengthen the schools' ability in physical education and good nutrition. I think it will be a good investment.

Chairman HARKIN. Dr. Dietz, any comments?

Dr. DIETZ. There are at least four things that I think could be—there are at least four things that I think could be done with respect to school wellness policies. One is that although schools are required to have them, they are not required to publish them. So shining some light on them at the community level might be helpful.

Chairman HARKIN. Like published in what? I mean, I did not—

Dr. DIETZ. Just make them publicly available.

Chairman HARKIN. OK.

Dr. DIETZ. Through the PTA or parent/teacher organizations.

Chairman HARKIN. Web sites.

Dr. DIETZ. Web sites. Right. Second, it might be useful to those districts to conduct and publish a periodic assessment of the implementation of those policies.

Third, a lot of those school districts, as I understand from my colleagues in the Division of Adolescent and School Health, lack the capacity to implement or understand what that school wellness policy should be. And I know my colleagues in that division stand

ready to provide technical assistance to schools if they had the resources to do so.

Finally, from the national level, it would be useful to monitor the implementation of those policies and their uptake to assess their effectiveness.

Chairman HARKIN. Four great recommendations because this is something that I think we really want to look at, the last four, five—it has been 5 years since we put that into law—and to see how it is working. In some of our hearings that we have had, it is a patchwork.

Some are really good. Some are really bad and some have good ones, but they do not do anything with it. So somehow we need to somehow get it moving a little bit better and put some more teeth in it someway, as we said. But the IOM puts out standards and it would seem to me that this ought to be at least a base or something that should be reflected in these school wellness policies.

Dr. DIETZ. Could not agree more.

Chairman HARKIN. Hmm?

Dr. DIETZ. I could not agree more with that statement.

Chairman HARKIN. I was just trying to figure out how to do that.

[Laughter.]

Dr. SATCHER. We will help you more. We will come up with some more recommendations, because we looked at a lot of different cities and a lot of different programs.

Chairman HARKIN. That's right, you have a lot of stuff going on.

Dr. SATCHER. We have a lot of people out there working, as the senator said. They are volunteers, but they take very seriously their work in these communities.

Chairman HARKIN. I would invite any input to our Committee. I mean, we are not going to do this tomorrow, but I mean, as we go through the year, Dr. Satcher, I would invite you to be proactive and give us suggestions on how we do that.

Dr. SATCHER. OK.

Chairman HARKIN. You do, you have your fingers out there in a lot of places out there and that can be very helpful.

I want to get to you, Mr. Holmes. From what I read and what I heard, you have the model. It sounds like you have the model. I do not know how you did it. I mean, I have been looking for something like this in the country.

In the last—in the Farm Bill, we put some things in there to promote schools getting non-processed foods locally, the farmers, vegetables, fruits, meats, things like that, eggs, dairy, that was not going through all the processing and stuff, and so we lifted that geographic preference ban that we had.

Then we also did some other things. I was just looking here at my notes. In the Business and Industry Loan Program, we modified it to provide loans to individuals, cooperatives, businesses, any entities to establish and facilitate enterprises that process, distribute, aggregate, store and market locally or regionally produced agricultural food products and the secretary of agriculture is required to reserve at least 5 percent of the money for this activity.

But you already have. You say you have storage, refrigeration, processing. You wash, you cut, you bag. You have a fleet of refrigerated trucks. You beat us to the punch.

Mr. HOLMES. Yeah, because the needs was there.

Chairman HARKIN. How did you——

Mr. HOLMES. Well, back home from Mississippi.

Chairman HARKIN [continuing]. Put all this together?

Mr. HOLMES. Well back home from Mississippi, my momma always told us, we did not have much when we came up, but they teach you one thing, common sense and mother whip, and if you got that, you can make a way when you do not have it, because it teach you to have a vision.

Several years ago, the first Farm-to–School meeting was held here in Georgia and the idea was then how can small farmers—and by that time, I was working for USDA and I worked in Natural Resources Conversation Service and most of my work was done with small-scale farmers.

The problem was no matter what USDA came up with for the cost-share program, most of the small farmers could not afford to utilize it.

Chairman HARKIN. That is right.

Mr. HOLMES. We had more of an economical program than we had a conservation problem. We could not conserve our soil because we could not afford to do what needed to be done to conserve the soil. So I was always looking for a way to create an economical boost for small farmers.

When I came up to that meeting in Georgia, I said that is it. I said that makes perfect sense. I said every county has a school district. Most farmers do not have the transportation logistics to travel out of their county to try to sell a product.

At that time, I met a food director here that was from Florida and she just happened to be at the meeting. She was next door to me. And basically we started from there. I came over and I met with her and she sort of taught me the food service guide book and I sort of took my common sense and mother whip and worked it out to where if the opportunity is there, I figure what I needed to do was try to figure out a way to integrate that market.

The way I do things is I always look at, not—you tell me what you cannot do, then I can figure out what I can do. We know that the school needed to be able to have a product that they can wash—I mean, there's basically washing—and cook, because they have their—most cafeteria workers are part time. They are allotted so many hours, so the school districts do not have a lot of time to cut, dice and chop. Years ago they did that.

So in order for me to stay in that marketplace, we had to upgrade and try to be able to have a finished product for that school district. We work with a lot of school policies that is already on the books. We do not create new policies. We go in and each school district can be different. Each state is different.

But I go in. We work with the food directors, a lot of times the state food director, and they tell us what they cannot do and then we figure out what we cannot do and then we sort of get together and come up with ways to integrate a local partner in their school system.

We went through the loan process. We borrowed money from the bank. We went through—one of the counties that we located in, the county we are located in was an empowerment zone. Some of the

benchmarks that the empowerment zone area had set was to help displaced farmers and workers.

And so we went through there and we did not get a lot of money. We got $10,000, but we had to pay it back. But it is an evolutionary process. We just kept building on it.

Chairman HARKIN. How many farmers you have now in this, in your co-op, that does this?

Mr. HOLMES. One thing, I talk fast. I am from Mississippi again, so I talk real fast.

[Laughter.]

Mr. HOLMES. Wherever it is hot at, people talk fast. They have to get out of the sun.

[Laughter.]

Mr. HOLMES. Years ago, I tried to put—I do not like to put a number, because we provide a service, but we work with anywhere from 100 to 200 farmers at any given time. We do not specifically work—we work with farmer groups now. We stretch—the last project we did in Georgia was in Glennville, Georgia, with a co-op in Glennville, Georgia.

We met with them with 25 district school districts. One of the key reasons they could not sustain it, because a lot of times small farmers and small farmer groups do not have the infrastructure to be able to maintain that market.

But we work, right now, with about 100 farmers. We are working on a project now in Little Rock, Arkansas that hopefully it will be a good example if everything work out with that group in Pine Bluff.

Chairman HARKIN. I do not know how you found this guy, but I am sure glad you got him here because——

Mr. HOLMES. Yeah, I can——

Chairman HARKIN [continuing]. Because this—I am not kidding. We spent a lot of time trying to get stuff in the Farm Bill, because I talked to school districts before and stuff and they said well the problem is, we do not have the time to go out to this one farmer and that one farmer and we cannot do all this stuff.

Mr. HOLMES. Exactly.

Chairman HARKIN. And then I got—I was talking to one of our big grocery people one time in Iowa. I said well, why aren't you buying more stuff from local farmers and stuff and they said well, you know, we cannot do that. We just do not have the resolve to go to every little farmer and stuff like that.

The idea came to set up aggregation centers like co-ops so we could go out to all these different farmers, aggregate it, clean it, cut it, wash it, refrigerate it, store it and deliver it. And then grocery stores are more than willing to buy that and so would school districts.

So I did not know you existed, but I am sure happy I know that now. Just reading and hearing you, this seems to me like a kind of a model. As I said, we have the loan program. We also put in there a grant. So we have grants and loans for exactly what you are doing to be established all over the United States.

The president put in his budget $22 million next year just in grants. Plus we had—and from the loan program, it looks like we are going to have about 199 million next year for the loans and

about another 22 million in grants to establish the kind of things that you have set up.

So if you do not mind, I think I may send some people down to look at your operation.

Mr. HOLMES. That would be great, because the model has been tested. I know the word. You have to have dedication and I think the biggest thing that I think that has been missing in Farm-to–School, is the ability to go in and interpret the menu process.

I think that—if anybody come down to visit us, what I would like them to learn is how to go and do what we call meal analysis, to be able to convert a case and the bushels because when you go out there, remember this, if you remember Sanford and Son years ago, it had Hoppy and Smitty and they had Fred and Lamont.

Well when Hoppy says something, everybody looked at Smitty because they could understand him. Well a farmer and a food director is just like that, but I consider myself Hoppy.

[Laughter.]

Mr. HOLMES. When they look at me, I convert farmer language into food server language. I think that is why a lot of Farm-to–School programs are not really getting kicked off like they should because everyone—there is no one that is trying to understand each other's language. They are assuming that because the school feed fresh produce that they can buy it and the farmer assume that since the school has this big old menu, they can just sell a pile of stuff to them.

Well, it is not like that. Unless you go in and learn that procedure and that language, you cannot do it.

Chairman HARKIN. Very ingenious. Congratulations, and I mean that. I am going to——

Mr. HOLMES. I appreciate it.

Chairman HARKIN [continuing]. Have my staff try to get data on what you have done and we can use that as a model.

Mr. HOLMES. OK.

Chairman HARKIN. Also, you have to—if you need to expand, you can look at these programs to expand to.

Mr. HOLMES. OK.

Chairman HARKIN. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Mr. Chairman, great stuff.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Mr. Holmes, they do not grow any collard greens in Iowa, but if we can ever get them eating collards, we got this thing whipped. We will be shaking all the way up there.

[Laughter.]

Senator CHAMBLISS. Next thing will be vinegar sauce to go with it. Dr. Dietz, you talked about this New York program that I guess it is a pilot program of some sort where you were talking about trying to incorporate exercise, sugar-free drinks and whatnot in this system there.

Have you seen any results from that yet? Has it been in operation long enough that you can tell much in the way of positive results?

Dr. DIETZ. Not yet. It is a group daycare program, which in contrast to other childcare programs, is regulated by the city rather than by the state. We have in the field now an evaluation of the

impact of that program, so I do not have any results to know how successful it is.

Senator CHAMBLISS. I am particularly interested in your mentioning of sugar-free drinks because one thing that Senator Harkin has been a promoter of, and an issue that we have had to deal with, is our snack food and drinks and cafeterias and whatnot. We are going to be talking about that as we go through this process.

What is your thought there with respect to sugar-free drinks versus non-sugar-free drinks versus pure water and nothing else? Any comments you can make there with respect to that?

Dr. DIETZ. Sugar-sweetened beverages supply adolescents with about 15 percent of their daily caloric intake and although you cannot point to any single food behavior that accounts for the obesity epidemic, that is certainly a potential major contributor. And there have been estimates that the caloric excess that accounts for the epidemic, it is about 150 calories a day, or roughly what is contained in sugar-sweetened beverages.

One of the things I learned recently about the city of Boston was that they have turned off all the drinking fountains in their schools because of concern about lead in the pipes. So the only alternatives there are expensive. It is either sugar-sweetened beverages or bottled water.

And one very potentially inexpensive strategy in providing alternatives is to restore the availability of water to schools as an alternative to sugar-sweetened beverages. The other part of your question has to do with dietary sweeteners or sweet beverages which are not sweetened with sugar.

There have been in a couple of studies a relationship between the consumption of those beverages and obesity, that is artificially sweetened beverages, which I don't frankly understand except that it may be not that beverage that is doing it, but what you do when you drink that beverage, so that for example, the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages or even sweetened beverages with artificial sweetener may also be accompanied by other dietary patterns, like the consumption of salty snacks, which could account for obesity.

There is—I know that Dr. Kessler in his recent book talks about this addiction to sweetness and the need to reduce the taste of sweetness in the food supply as a way of weaning the population off sugar-sweetened beverages. I think that soft drink companies could contribute to that by reducing the amount of sugar that they add to those drinks over time.

Dr. SATCHER. The issue of addiction to foods or certainly salt, sweets and fats, is an issue that I think we are really going to have to come to terms with because—and David Kessler in his recent book talks about that.

But if we are addicting our children to sugar and fats and sweet and salts, then I think we have a responsibility to really look at that because that means that we are contributing—I guess we already knew that—greatly to this epidemic, not just in terms of obesity, but learning and all of those kinds of things. So I think it is an issue that needs to be looked at more.

Senator CHAMBLISS. The problem I have with that, things I like to eat get plenty of salt, sugar and fat.

Dr. SATCHER. And most of us, we grew up eating foods that were highly—especially if you grew up like I did without refrigeration, so everything was preserved with salt. So food doesn't taste good unless it is highly salted.

But I think there is growing evidence that we are addicted to sugars and gradually I think you can wean yourself off of that. But we do not need to put our children through that.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Ms. Long, in thinking about Mr. Holmes' project there, Tom is right, this is kind of a model that I would hope USDA would take a look at and certainly try to do more encouraging folks across the country.

As we get into this new era of fresh fruits and vegetables being available to schools for our lunch program and our breakfast program, are you all looking at doing any educational programs around the country to kind of help, particularly maybe inner-city schools that—I come from a rural area and we have access to a farmers market. We have access to farms.

But in metropolitan and urban areas, they are not going to have that access in every case. Do you all have any programs in mind to try to help folks in that respect?

Ms. LONG. Well, as you probably know, the administration has not yet put forward specific proposals or priorities for reauthorization, so I cannot speak to anything specific in that regard. But what I can tell you is that where we are already going in terms of trying to—in terms of nutrition education that would reach low-income children.

My testimony commented on the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. As you know, that is targeted toward low-income schools. We think that provides an excellent opportunity to expose children, elementary school children, to fresh fruits and vegetables in the school context.

We are working very hard with states and school districts to use the resources we have to compliment that program to do nutrition education and promotion as they are rolling that out. We have a lot of resources available that help school food service workers figure out how to serve fruits and vegetables in a way that is appealing to kids and a way that is attractive to their families.

Kind of as Mr. Holmes alluded to, one of the first challenges with getting fresh produce on the menu is educating the food service professionals in how they can do that in a way that is acceptable to their customer, which is the students and the families.

So those are some of the things we have currently planned and ongoing to achieve that.

Senator CHAMBLISS. We have had this pilot program obviously for several years and I guess we got up to 15 states, maybe something like that, and now it is available to everybody in all 50 states. What kind of reaction are you seeing at USDA from our nutrition folks around the country with regard to the availability of these fresh fruits and vegetables?

Ms. LONG. I can say that in general the program is very popular in places where it has been implemented. I would say that the states that are new to the program are definitely embracing it. They are working very closely with their school districts to basi-

cally drum up interest in it because it is based on a school has to apply and want to participate in the program.

We are about to field a major evaluation that was funded in the Farm Bill, as well this coming school year, that will help us—which will give us a lot more information about how the program is being implemented, how it is being received, is it having the kind of impact we hope. So we will have a lot more concrete information on how the program is working in the not too distant future.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Mr. Holmes, do you have a problem in getting farmers to participate in your program or is there enough profit there for them, I guess, which would certainly be their motivation for participating, but is that an issue for your group?

Mr. HOLMES. It is and it is not. It is kind of both ways. I know that seems kind of a funny answer with two answers. But a lot of farmers a lot of time, they like to sit back and let some develop first and then they will ease into it. They are not—they are risk takers when they plant their crop, but they are not marketers.

So create the market then you call them. Well you cannot do that. I cannot go out and meet with the school district and say well I got—I want to sell you strawberries, but I have no way of knowing where I am going to get the strawberries from.

Most farmers, what I try to do when I go into a community, is try to find a farm leader, somebody that everybody looks up to. And if he or she does something, they are going to watch that person and if it works for them, then they will do it.

So the answer to that question is, it is not hard to get farmers onboard. You just cannot start with a lot of farmers at one time. When we do—we go out and we try to work with co-op leaders to try to train them then let them train their members.

For example, the project we are doing in Arkansas now when we shop (inaudible) we chose a small co-op in Pine Bluff to work with. We empowered 25 school districts. We train them on the distribution, what I call the logistics as far as being able to map school district, because when we deliver, unless they have a central kitchen, we have to go to each and every school within that district and deliver to each kitchen.

So map reading is crucial, how to navigate through the city when you are used to living in the country. So after that, we had to go back and make an assessment of whether that group has the capability to actually carry out a Farm-to–School program then report that back to the food director.

A lot of times the farmers will be motivated when they start, but when they see how much work is involved in it, a lot of times they are kind of—they will back up a little bit. But I think if we had more of me out there, you have more time to recruit more farmers and bring them onboard to participate, because it is a great market.

Senator CHAMBLISS. How far in advance do you have to contract with your school districts?

Mr. HOLMES. Well what we normally do, and this may sound funny, but I have been doing this for about 15 years now and I have never one—have signed a contract with a school district. That menu is the contract. When we go in and meet with the school district, we develop a business friendly relationship.

We start now for the fall. We start with the school now. We analyze their menu, help them develop the menu process, because based on the frequency—most schools are on what they call a cycle menu and based on the frequency they are going to serve that item, based on the seasonality of it, then we go in, because most schools—through their menu—probably May to June.

So most of the crop that we are planning, are fall crops, so basically that menu item that the school would—you know, the frequency they may get them, they are going to need that item. We take that and then we go to the farmer with it.

So we start now, like I said, May, at the latest, April or May, because most of the crops have to be put in June and July to be able to catch the school season, which starts in August, September timeframe.

So once we do that, it takes about—well once you get started, it really does not take that long, but the first year, it takes about two or 3 months to get the planning process out because you have to first know what crops to be grown in that particular area. You have to determine the cost per serving, because most schools deal—no matter how good it is for you, schools tell me, that if they cannot afford to buy it, they cannot serve it.

So we have to look at the cost per serving as it relates to the school and then the profit as it relates to the farmer. Both parties have to agree on that process. Once we get that done, the schools then go in and put it on that menu. That is that contract. To me that is a contract. This ain't fun, but that is that contract.

Then the farmer feel confident then because we carry that menu to him and show him that menu and he feels confident in putting that product in the ground. From that point there, we will coordinate with the school and tell them, based on the life of that product far as how long it takes for it to mature out, when to expect that product be served. And they will pass it on to their cafeteria manager.

What we also look at is crops that what we call a year-around crop and then we have what we call seasonal crops. So like, for example, fresh green beans, in Georgia you can expect to have them September, August, September, October timeframe. So they know—schools know that is the only time they can get fresh green beans.

Leafy greens, for example, is a cool season crop. They know they get many of those throughout the school year. The sweet potato a lot of time you can harvest them and so they can have fresh sweet potato fries or sweet potato sticks year around.

In every area we go and every state we go in, we look at what is specific to that state or what is specific to that county and we develop that into the school menu process. That way, they are assured that they have the volume, because most school districts are concerned with volume, and they have the quality control that they need to guarantee the product will be delivered on time, fresh and it will be safe from any type of hazard.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Have you had success in selling your products to urban schools as well as to rural schools?

Mr. HOLMES. Yeah, urban schools are—a lot of times urban schools are easier than rural schools because in a rural area, everybody know—a lot of times you get into a—in a rural school, they

will say well, my cousin, he probably does not know about this, that type of attitude, which is fine.

[Laughter.]

Mr. HOLMES. But you cannot get around to everybody if you are just one person. In an urban school, they think it is trendy. Urban schools are more into the media and marketing type aspect. They want to—I look at urban food representatives, it is almost like politicians. They got to keep it coming, so they go out and they want to make school districts look real good by doing innovative things. So it is easy to sell a unique program to them.

So to answer that question again, we are in Houston Independent School District and that is a management company that we are working with, which is Aramark, and they see it as a good opportunity to promote what they are doing because they are considered outsiders. So they bring in local farmers and they are proud of it. It helps them to ensure that they contract the next year.

That school district serves about 240,000 kids a day. They have a central kitchen that they will be cooking out of and delivering to each school. That is an ideal spot for small farmers because it cuts back dramatic on the logistical problem because now they have a one-stop drop, unlike when we did Little Rock School District week before last, we had 45, 48 individual drops that we had to make, so that particular farmers group has a lot more work to do than the one in Houston Independent School District would have to do.

But rural school districts, urban and what I call trendy school districts, you have some like in South Florida—well, not South Florida. Say in the panhandle of Florida, you have urban—you have rural in the north part. In the middle you have urban. And in the south, where you have a lot of military moving, I call them trendy. You do not know what they are going to each because they come from everywhere.

But your urban school districts are so large the problem they have a lot of times is the cap they have on what they can spend on non-bid items. In Florida, for example, they can only spend $25,000 on produce without actually having a formal bid.

In Alabama, it used to be 7,500; now it is up to 15,000. In Texas, it is 25,000. So with a large farmer, for example, if he tried to deliver say a fresh ear of corn in West Palm Beach, a 1–day serving, they would spend $17,000 just on feeding that corn to every kid in the school.

So the problem they have in South Florida in doing Farm-to–School is that the cap that is on the non-item—I mean, the non-bid item. So it is hard for me to explain a lot because it is 15 to 12 years, so I am trying to condense all that good stuff into an answer. But urban school districts, trendy school districts and the rural school districts, they all speak the same language, food service talk.

If you can communicate, if you can translate per serving feedings into a product they are serving, and most schools want to stay between eight to 13 cents per serving. That is the key. If you get over that—because like the food director in Houston told me, I believe he said every penny he spends, every penny increase mean about,

I think he told me about $40,000 that he will spend if he has to go up one penny.

So when you go from 13 cents a serving to 14 cents, that is a lot of money. So that is how we develop our market. Our product is priced per serving and that goes all the way back to the field. If you can get that per serving feeding cost, most schools will buy from you. I do not care whether they are urban, rural or trendy, they will buy from you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Mr. Chairman?

Chairman HARKIN. Ms. Long, in your written statement, you said—let me read it to you. You said here that in 2005, FNS, Food and Nutrition Service, issued Eat Smart–Farm Fresh, A Guide to Buying and Serving Locally Grown Produce in School Meals, which provide best practices and strategies for finding locally grown food and implementing Farm-to-School initiatives.

We will be updating this publication later this year with new success stories, additional resources from outside organizations and basic tools for operating a successful program from start to finish.

I did not know this, to support these efforts, we have an Emerson–Hunger Fellow assisting the department with Farm-to–School issues. The Hunger Fellow is identifying opportunities to help institutions use local procurement options when appropriate in determining the most effective ways to improve Farm-to–School efforts.

I know that Secretary Vilsack is extremely interested in this and since he has a larger travel budget than I do, maybe you could have your Emerson Fellow come down and take a look at this and analyze Mr. Holmes' program and see if this might not be something that you want to use as a model. So I would like to——

Ms. LONG. Yeah, I had exactly the same thought. Our Hunger Fellow is, part of her mandate is to do some traveling and talk to folks who have had success with Farm-to–School and the things we have heard from Mr. Holmes today very much speak to ways to solve some of the things that have been identified to us as barriers.

Chairman HARKIN. I would like to follow-up with you. I will have Mr. Gary Miller on my staff follow up with you on that.

Now Dr. Dietz, you said in your testimony that the Farm-to–School programs are active in at least 40 states with over 2,000 programs serving nearly 9,000 schools. That is 2006 data. Of the Farm-to–School programs that have been evaluated, most have demonstrated increase selection or intake of fruits and vegetables by students following the incorporation of farm produce into school salad bars, meal selections or class-based education.

Do you have a compilation of these? Do you have a data base of these? I am just not familiar with that? I mean, if I ask you to analyze these programs and how they operate and what seems to be the key to success, would you have that kind of information or not?

Dr. DIETZ. I do not think we at the CDC have that information.

Chairman HARKIN. Would you have it at FNS, do you think?

Ms. LONG. On the frequency of salad bars?

Dr. DIETZ. Farm to?

Chairman HARKIN. Dr. Dietz mentioned all these Farm-to–School programs. He said there is over 2,000. I did not know there were that many. Have you looked at these and analyzed them to see what are the keys to success on these programs?

Ms. LONG. We have. We do not have a systematic way of collecting the number of Farm-to–School programs. We do have a lot of anecdotal information about what is going on out there, and as I said before, that is really one of the—that is the primary focus of our Hunger Fellow's activities for the next few months is going out and gathering information on what works, what does not, what are different models.

Dr. DIETZ. Senator Harkin——

Chairman HARKIN. I [inaudible] CDC you do not track those things?

Dr. DIETZ. No, it is certainly a reasonable area to survey, but we do not have—and I am not sure Dr. Wexler is here in the audience. There may be a mechanism through the school health policies and program survey to begin to track whether those programs exist or not. I am not sure whether we are currently doing it or not.

But with your indulgence, Senator Harkin, I would like to come back to my response to Senator Chambliss, just mention two things that I neglected.

One is there is an agreement between the Alliance for a Healthier Generation and the soft drink companies to change the products in vending machines for children in schools and they are quite useful standards so that there are no sugar-sweetened beverages and only 100 percent juice in elementary schools and it is graded up in terms of the portion size since then.

The second is that the Institute of Medicine report wanted to apply dietary guideline standards to competitive foods and those beverages would be competitive foods. I think that if those guidelines were applied, they would open the door for the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's agreement, which is consistent with the recommendations of the IOM Committee.

Mr. HOLMES. Senator Harkin, I collaborate with the National Farm-to–School Network also and they asked me that, what you just asked, that question you just asked, in this booklet here?

Chairman HARKIN. Sure.

Mr. HOLMES. So I can pass it on to you when it is over with.

Chairman HARKIN. All right, I will take it. We can take that with us, right?

Mr. HOLMES. Oh, yeah.

Chairman HARKIN. We will take that, take that with me.

Dr. DIETZ. And I can let you know whether we are currently assessing this in this school health policies and programs survey.

Chairman HARKIN. I know we are running out of time. This has been a great panel. I cannot tell you how much I picked up on this. But Dr. Dietz, you started talking about—you mentioned a little bit about childcare centers and childcare homes and how many kids are in childcare every day in America.

It seems to me that is another place that we have—because we do provide—as you know, we provide through our childcare program, through the Child Nutrition Program we provide, as you know, supplemental foods for these childcare centers or even in a home-based.

But I am not certain we are doing a good enough job of getting the proper kinds of foods and stuff for kids in childcare and the proper nutrition. I just wondered if you have taken a look at that

since there are so many kids every day either in a childcare center or in a childcare home?

Dr. DIETZ. It is a critically important area because more and more data are becoming available that suggests that growth in early childhood is a significant predicator for subsequent obesity, particularly in the first several years of life.

We are just beginning to explore this area and are hoping to co-convene a conference in the fall to begin to look at policies related to childcare. There is a model program in Delaware hosted by the NewMore's (ph) Foundation, which has negotiated for the Child and Adult Care Feeding Program to apply many of those standards that you see in New York to childcare settings in Delaware.

So I think that is a model and what we do not know is we do not know enough about the variation in state regulations and state practices to generate a very sophisticated response right now, but it is clearly an opportunity, and given the impact of early childhood growth on later obesity, it seems like an increasingly critical area.

Chairman HARKIN. I did not know about Delaware. I will take a look at that. Last, I just hope that we can get a handle on food in schools outside of the lunch room. One of—I am speaking only for myself in here and I do not know how many others, but as you know, the secretary of Agriculture right now has the authority to regulate foods within the school lunchroom, but the secretary has no authority to regulate foods outside of the lunchroom.

So we put a lot of your taxpayer's money into providing nutritious meals for breakfast or for lunch, but then right outside the classroom and down the hall there are all the vending machines where they can get sugared sodas and candy bars and all kinds of junk food and that kind of destroys the value of the nutritious meals that we are trying to have in the lunchroom.

So I am going to propose this year, and I hope there is good support for that, but to get the secretary the authority, if a school is in the lunch program, that the secretary has the authority to regulate all of the food in the schools so that they meet the dietary guidelines.

[Applause.]

Chairman HARKIN. And just try to get over this once and for all so that we do not have the vending machines and stuff competing with nutritious foods. Now a couple of observations on that. When I was in school, we did not have vending machines. We had vending machines. I am not that old.

[Laughter.]

Chairman HARKIN. There were vending machines in gas stations and places like—but not in the school. And if you brought candy or something in, you got your knuckles rapped probably.

I do not know when it was in my life, probably when I was in the House of Representatives, maybe later in the Senate, all of a sudden I walked into a school 1 day, and I had been visiting schools—not that I do not go back to schools—but all of a sudden, I saw all these vending machines all brightly lit up. I looked at it and I thought, when did this happen? How did this happen? Just kind of overnight they just seemed to be all over the place.

And we have had a lot of hearings on this. We had a hearing once—just in the last Child Nutrition Bill I had, and even before

that. In 1996, I had introduced an amendment on the Farm Bill in 1996 to take all vending machines out of schools.

Well as you can see, I was a spectacular failure at that.

[Laughter.]

Chairman HARKIN. But we had—I will never forget, we had a school superintendent from Mississippi came up and testified and they had taken all of the candy and the soft drinks out of their vending machines and replaced it with bottled water, 100 percent juice, healthy snacks, and she said, you know, we found out an interesting thing; we did not lose any money at all.

She said something I will never forget. She said, these kids—kids are funny. They love putting money in machines.

[Laughter.]

Chairman HARKIN. They do not much really care what comes out, they just like putting money in machines. And so they found that they really did not lose any of the income that they were losing from the vending machines by putting water and healthy snacks in there.

I did not mean to take all this time to say it, but this—I hope in this Child Nutrition Bill that we can expand that authority and that we can reach some reasonable compromises on the status of these foods in schools and reach some guidelines.

Who was it mentioned, we reached an agreement sort of with soft drink manufacturers a couple years ago—but we did not get it in the Farm Bill because it is probably more appropriate to put it under the Child Nutrition Bill—but we reached a pretty good agreement, I thought, with them on limiting what—the sizes and no soft drinks in elementary school or in high school and only some certain ones near the gym, that kind of stuff, and maybe afterschool for sporting events, things like that.

But some states are moving ahead even more aggressively. My state of Iowa, just recently the Department of Education just banned for the next school year all soft drinks in schools, period.

[Applause.]

Chairman HARKIN. They just did it. So some people are way ahead of us on this and I hope we can catch up this year. I did not mean to take all that time. I just wanted to give people a flavor of kind of what we have to work with on this Child Nutrition Bill. That is all I have.

Senator CHAMBLISS. We are going to have to wind up, but we do not—well, we had a request, which is unusual. Normally we do not take questions from the audience. We want to ask all the tough questions. Tom and I do not want to have to answer the tough questions. But we understood that maybe some of the young folks who are here with the school groups might have a question or two that they wanted to ask and we will be glad to throw it open.

We only have about 5 minutes, but we will be happy to take a couple of questions if some of you young folks have a couple. And do not be shy now.

Now what you have to do—good, there is a microphone right there.

Ms. COURTNEY. Hello? Hello?

Senator CHAMBLISS. Tell us your name, young lady, and where you go to school.

Ms. COURTNEY. My name is Carolyn Courtney. I go to Arbor Montessori School. For those of you who do not know, we have a garden at our school and we are now starting to get fresh produce that we have been able to do.

The question I had is another part of our agriculture stuff that we have in our school is we have bee hives. So is there any interest in bees and raw honey as sweetener? So as part of your program, you could use raw honey, which is a lot healthier than some of the processed sugars that are really common.

That is what I have been working on recently, is working on comparing processed honey and other processed sweeteners and comparing it to raw honey. It still has all the nutrients in it originally, so it is really healthy and stuff. Is that part of your program?

[Applause.]

Senator CHAMBLISS. Ms. Long, you ought to be thinking of how USDA will address while I——

[Laughter.]

Senator CHAMBLISS [continuing]. Start off by talking a little bit about it. I am not sure that there is any active or aggressive movement within the School Lunch Program to utilize honey. It obviously can be used as a part of it. It is available and I know that school nutritionists, and there are probably a lot of them here, that will tell you that they utilize honey from time to time.

I can tell you this, honey is a very active crop from the standpoint of the work we do on the Ag Committee, both from the standpoint of disease. We have had a serious issue with respect to bees dying all over the country for no reason whatsoever and we have put a lot of money in last year to have a study commissioned at USDA to try to figure out what was wrong because not many people understand what a real service bees perform in the agriculture community.

Most people think bees only sting you. That is their only salvation in life. Bees pollinate crops, whether it is soybeans and corn in Iowa, or whether it is fruits and vegetables in Georgia. Bees are a very integral part of the agriculture community and when we saw what was happening last year, we took some action to commission a study to try to figure out what was going on and we have made some real good progress there.

Ms. Long, let me ask you, do you know if USDA has any aggressive program toward utilization of honey versus any other sweetener?

Ms. LONG. No, Senator, you are correct, we do not prescribe using this type of sweetener versus that type of sweetener. But what I will say is, as we have talked about before, menu planning at the schools is largely driven by student tastes. So to the extent that becomes a more popular item, that would likely follow.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Do you want to comment on that?

Chairman HARKIN. No. Anything else?

Senator CHAMBLISS. Yes, ma'am?

Student. I know in DeKalb County there are certain days on which they serve fresh fruit which could be local or unlocal, and I am pretty sure it is the same in other counties. However, often times a lot of the fruit they are serving is unripe so the students

are not eating it and they are just throwing it away. It is not even getting composted; it is just getting thrown away.

So what is the point of serving fresh fruit if it is going to be unripe and not eaten? Is there something in any of these plans that prevents it from that, that makes it actually edible?

[Laughter.]

Senator CHAMBLISS. I wish we could get some of these nutritionists up here to answer this question. Well obviously you raised a very good point. I go shopping with my wife from time to time, as she does most of the grocery shopping in the family, and I have seen her pick through the avocados, for example. It is hard to find a ripe avocado that she can carry home and eat.

But surely, our folks who know that they are going to be carrying bananas or kiwi fruit, or whatever it may be, back to the school to serve immediately or within a short period of time, will make sure that the fruit is ripe. I do not know what the real answer to your question is obviously, but it is certainly our intention that the fruits and vegetables that are served are served in a way that can be edible immediately.

We do not want to be spending taxpayer money on fruits and vegetables, No. 1, that cannot be eaten, but No. 2, that are not eaten, and I do know there are some issues there. I have heard my wife talk about some kids who maybe do not like milk and they would take their milk and throw it in the trash even unopened or maybe take a banana that was ripe, but they did not want a banana, they wanted something else but they could not get it and they would just throw the banana in there.

We have tried to take some action in that respect, but at the end of the day, both the answer to your question and the issue that I raised comes down to the local situation. It has to be policed and I will have to say, I interact with my school nutritionists on a regular basis and these are very professional men and women who are very dedicated to providing a good quality balanced meal to our young folks in schools and I think do an excellent job.

Is there a mistake made from time to time that raises the issue that you do? Obviously I am sure that is the case.

Chairman HARKIN. Senator, let me just take a little stab at that. When we started this Fruit and Vegetable Program in the 2002 Farm Bill, it was a test. We took four states, 25 schools in the states, 100 schools and an Indian reservation to see what would happen about getting fresh fruits and vegetables.

It was a resounding success. Every one of the first 100 schools that came into it, not a one dropped out. It was all a voluntary program. No one has ever mandated to be in it. And so this Farm Bill, we expanded it greatly to all 50 states and quite frankly, we put $1 billion in there over 10 years to ramp it up.

My hope is, and my goal in doing a lot of this, was not only to get fresh fruits and vegetables to kids in school, but to instigate, to promote farmers growing more fresh fruits and vegetables. If there is going to be this huge demand, someone has to grow it. Now, right now, a lot of these vegetables or fruits, you mentioned fruits, are picked green someplace because they have to be shipped clear across the country and stored. Well maybe some of those could be grown more locally.

[Applause.]

Chairman HARKIN. Take my own state of Iowa. We used to be one of the largest apple producers in America, Iowa. The Delicious Apple, by the way, started in Iowa, in the county right next to mine, as a matter of fact, where John Wayne was born. I do not know how I got into that.

But anyway, but now we hardly have any apple trees. But we obviously have a climate that grows a lot of good apples, but we just got away from it. Well more and more now because of this demand for more fresh fruits in schools, farmers—and I do not mean the big farmers. We have big farmers that have thousands of acres of corn, soybeans. I am talking about smaller farmers. Younger people are finding that they can do this. They might have a job in town or something and they have some acreage. They can plant trees.

We went from 100 acres of grapes in 2002—we had 100 acres of grapes in Iowa. We now have over 1,200 acres. So people are now finding more outlets. So I am hopeful that as we progress and as we get more of the schools involved in this, people locally in Georgia and Florida and places like that will say gee, maybe I could grow some of that for schools in this area and we would not have to pick them green and have them not taste as well as they are when you pick them fresh or to have fresh vegetables, things like that.

So that is sort of maybe a little bit of what I hope we will see transpire. Thank you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Let me again thank all of you for coming today. I particularly want to thank our witnesses for being here and preparing to testify and presenting some excellent testimony and some ideas that we are going to take back to Washington to incorporate in the policies on our Nutrition Reauthorization Bill.

I particularly want to thank Dr. Richard Besser, the acting director here at CDC, Amy Loy, as well as Heather. I saw Heather standing in the back and she must have stepped out. But anyway, Amy and Heather are the ones that really organized all this and it takes a lot of work to put one of these things on, so I do want to thank the folks at CDC for being very gracious hosts here at the Harkin Global Center today.

It is not just by chance that we are in the Harkin Center. Senator Harkin has been very active and very supportive of the CDC for many years and he and Senator Specter both have been primarily responsible for the funding that we have gotten to carry out the 10–year building program that has made this a state-of-the-art facility.

We are doing state-of-the-art work here. Tom, again, I just want to personally thank you for coming to Georgia again and visiting with us today and listening to our witnesses and our other folks here. Your leadership on agriculture issues as well as other issues in the U.S. Senate has been very well noticed and I am just very appreciative personally for our friendship and for your work on this.

So thank you very much and let's give my friend, Senator Harkin, a hand.

[Applause.]

[Whereupon, at 2:51 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MAY 15, 2009

Opening Statement of Senator Chambliss
Benefits of Farm-to-School Projects, Healthy Eating and
Physical Activity for School Children
May 15, 2009

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing and taking the time to travel to Georgia. I would like to thank the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for hosting today's hearing. The staff here has been wonderful in assisting the Committee with all of the logistics and planning leading up to today's event. I also wish to welcome the witnesses and thank them for their time and expertise in the discussion about health and wellness, and the important role that agriculture products have in healthy lifestyles.

Over the years, there has been growing interest in connecting local farmers and their products directly with school food service providers. The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (farm bill) included a provision which provides schools relief from federal procurement requirements when purchasing agriculture products directly from local farmers. There are many innovative approaches in the "farm-to-school" effort, and I look forward to hearing testimony that will highlight local successes and the tools available at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to connect farmers and schools across the country.

Schools play an important role in shaping nutrition and physical activity habits of young children. School cafeterias, gymnasiums, and playgrounds are important venues to teach children about healthy eating and exercise. The more we learn about nutrition, the clearer the connection between calories-in and calories-out becomes. I look forward to hearing Dr. Satcher's testimony about the efforts of Action for Healthy Kids. His dedication to raising awareness about and solutions to childhood obesity is to be commended.

The statistics about childhood obesity are very troubling. The obesity rate among children 6 to 11 years has doubled over the last 20 years. The obesity rate among children aged 2 to 5 years also doubled to over 12 percent over the last two decades. More and more children are entering kindergarten overweight or obese. As much as schools play an important role in attempts to reverse this trend, nothing can surpass the role of parents and caregivers in the home. Dr. Dietz's work here at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has played an extraordinary role in helping all Americans understand the significance of this problem.

The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry relies on input from experts on the front lines of administering these programs and working directly with children. In prior hearings in Washington, D.C., we've heard

testimony from school food service directors, anti-hunger advocates, a school nurse, researchers, nutrition groups, food companies and parent organizations. For me personally, I hear first hand from the school teachers in my family about the importance of good nutrition and the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs. These programs benefit the lives of millions of children in the United States every day. According to the Georgia Department of Education, over 1,177,000 lunches and 499,000 breakfasts are served each day in Georgia schools.

As Congress moves forward in the reauthorization process, my goal is to ensure that all eligible children can easily access these important nutrition programs. The fact that there are opportunities to benefit farmers by connecting them and their healthy products directly with schools is icing on the cake.

Testimony before the
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
United States Senate

Benefits of Farm-to-School Projects, Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for School Children

Statement of
William H. Dietz, MD, PhD
Director
Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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For Release on Delivery
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May 15, 2009

Introduction

Chairman Harkin and Senator Chambliss, welcome to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement on the benefits for farm to school projects, and child nutrition and physical activity. I am Dr. Bill Dietz, Director of the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity, located in CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. My statement emphasizes the importance of incorporating nutrition standards for foods in schools and childcare settings; highlights data about the need to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables; and outlines CDC strategies to improve healthy eating, active living and healthy weight.

Background

Prevention is the key to improving the health and quality of life for all Americans, now and for future generations. At every stage of life, eating a nutritious, balanced diet and staying physically active are essential for health and well-being. This is especially true for children and adolescents who are developing the habits they will likely maintain throughout their lives. Developing effective population-level interventions that create supportive healthful environments for young people and their families is an opportunity to effect positive health outcomes throughout the lifespan.

The reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act provides an important opportunity to assess federal policies for child nutrition, for we recognize healthy eating in childhood

and adolescence is important for overall growth and development. We are concerned that recent tracking data indicate that for too many children and their families, proper nutrition is not part of their daily lives. Between 1999 and 2007, the percentage of U.S. youth in grades 9 through 12 who reported eating fruits and vegetables five or more times per day declined from 23.9 to 21.4 percent. In addition, the need to promote healthy eating has intensified as a result of the growing national epidemic of childhood obesity.

Improving the Health of Youth through Nutrition Standards for Foods in Childcare Settings and Schools

Childcare settings and schools are in a unique position to influence and promote healthy dietary behaviors and to help ensure appropriate nutrient intake. Of the approximately 21 million preschool children, 13 million spend a substantial part of their day in childcare facilities. Each day, the nation's 126,000 schools provide an opportunity for 56 million students to learn about health and practice healthy behaviors.

Meals and snacks served in childcare and school settings should be consistent with the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA)*. The Dietary Guidelines prescribe that a healthy meal is composed of lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts; foods low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars; and stays within the individual's daily calorie needs.

The Dietary Guidelines recommend that children consume 2 – 6 ½ cups of fruits and vegetables per day. Meals provided in childcare and school settings should work toward meeting this recommendation. In addition, the Institute of Medicine recommends that use of fruit juices for elementary and middle school-aged children should be limited to four fluid ounces, and contain no added sugars. This would also be consistent with recent proposed changes to the WIC food package, which eliminates all fruit juice from the infant food package.

Meals should also address other key nutritional recommendations for children: (1) At least half of grains should be whole grains; (2) the *2005 Dietary Guidelines* recommend that children aged 2 years and older should drink fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk; and (3) the *Dietary Guidelines* recommend drinking beverages without added sugar, and drinking water.

The low proportion of youth meeting nutritional guidelines coupled with the obesity epidemic highlight the need for school-based nutrition education and supportive school environments to help youth eat more healthfully (O'Toole 2007). Research has shown a relationship between the availability of low nutrient, high calorie snacks and drinks sold in schools to students' high intakes of total calories, soft drinks, total fat, and saturated fat, and lower intake of fruits and vegetables (Story 2009). Conversely, students in schools with restricted snack availability had higher intakes of fruits and vegetables than those in schools without restricted snack availability (Gonzalez 2009). System-level interventions, policy, and environmental approaches have potential to influence

individual dietary behavior through improvements to the food environment (McKinnon 2009, Story 2009).

To provide schools with guidance on improving the foods and beverages offered to students, CDC conducted a study with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to review the science and make recommendations about nutrition standards for foods and beverages offered in direct competition with school-provided meals and snacks. The study resulted in a report entitled, *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools: Leading the Way toward Healthier Youth,* which was released in April 2007. This report emphasizes the importance of offering healthful snack foods and beverages, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nonfat or low-fat dairy products that are consistent with the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Using the findings of the IOM Report, CDC has developed resources for school staff, parents, and youth to use to support and develop strong nutrition standards that can improve the health of students at school. As examples, recommendations include:

- Review your school wellness policy to help ensure that the nutrition guidelines align with the IOM standards and that students have access to healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat or nonfat dairy during each school day.
- Examine the actual foods and beverages that are available to students—including foods and beverages sold in vending machines, school stores, snack bars and as a la carte items—and determine if they meet the nutrition standards.

- Educate students about nutrition and offer and promote healthy food and beverage choices that meet the nutrition standards.

CDC Activities to Improve Nutrition and Increase Physical Activity through Population-Level Interventions

Through innovative partnerships and funded state programs, CDC is identifying, implementing and evaluating a variety of policy and environmental strategies to prioritize best and promising practices at the community, state and national levels, in the many places where children live, learn, and play. We frame these strategies around six target behaviors, prioritized because they address a significant disease burden, are supported by reasonable or logical evidence, and can prevent and control obesity at the population-level. These six targets are:

1. increasing physical activity;
2. increasing fruit and vegetable consumption;
3. increasing breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity;
4. decreasing television viewing;
5. decreasing consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages; and
6. decreasing consumption of foods high in calories and low in nutritional value.

Support to States for Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Programs

CDC provides funding to 23 states to coordinate statewide efforts to address nutrition, physical activity, and obesity through policy and environmental changes focused on CDC's six target behaviors mentioned above. In addition, CDC has identified a number

of strategies that can improve child and family nutrition through the home and community including farm to institution programs, food policy councils, farmers markets, retail food access, and community and home gardens. Below are some examples of how these strategies are making a difference in communities across the U.S.

Success Story: With CDC funding to Washington State, a series of initiatives, now known as *Healthy Communities Moses Lake*, have encouraged good nutrition and physical activity behaviors through environmental and policy change. Accomplishments include developing a community garden which provides residents and participants with greater access to fresh, nutritious produce as well as opportunities to engage in physical activity through gardening. In addition, to encourage good nutrition from birth, *Healthy Communities* informs residents about proper breastfeeding practices and creates supportive environments for nursing mothers throughout the community.

Success Story: Addressing four of the six CDC strategies, New York City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has developed and implemented regulations that specifically improve the nutritional and physical activity habits of children in the city's group childcare programs. The regulation prohibits the availability of sugar-sweetened beverages; permits only 6 oz. of 100% juice for children 8 months or older; permits children 12 months to under 2 years to have whole milk and then limits milk to 1% or less for children 2 years of age or older; requires water to be available and accessible to children throughout the day; requires children 12 months and older to participate in 60 minutes of physical activity per day and for children 3 years or older to participate in 30

to 60 minutes of structured physical activity per day; and restricts television viewing for children under 2 years of age, and limits television viewing to no more than 60 minutes per day of educational programming or programs that actively engage children in movement to children 2 years of age or older. CDC, in partnership with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is currently conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of these regulations on childhood obesity.

Coordinated School Health

CDC also funds 22 state-based education and health agencies and one tribal government to implement coordinated school health programs. These programs bring together school administrators, teachers, other staff, students, families, and community members to assess health needs; set priorities; and plan, implement, and evaluate school health activities, including those focused on physical activity and healthy eating among school-aged youth. This program fosters collaboration between state and local authorities, as well as between state departments of health and education, and national partners.

Success Story: The Mississippi state Department of Education has worked with CDC, the Bower Foundation, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, and other partners to strengthen the state's efforts in improving the health of its youth. New nutritional standards for school snacks and meal programs and a ban on full-calorie, carbonated soft drinks with sugar have strengthened these efforts. In addition, special project grants have provided funds for schools to replace fryers with combination oven steamers. In the

2007–2008 school year, 20 schools in 13 districts were awarded grants; 16 districts have been selected for the 2008–2009 grants.

Supporting Local Wellness Policies

School wellness policies – like those created in the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 – can be a solid foundation for effective school health programs. Optimal wellness policies can mandate physical education requirements, health education requirements, the types of foods and beverages sold on campus, and many other important practices that promote physical activity and healthy eating, though implementation and evaluation of these policies varies by school district.

CDC has developed a strong product line of technical assistance tools that support wellness policy implementation by empowering schools and school districts with guidance on how to effectively implement these recommended policies and practices. Some examples of these tools include:

- CDC's *School Health Index (SHI),* a self-assessment and planning tool that enables schools to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their health promotion policies and programs, and use those findings to develop an action plan for improving student health;
- *The Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool* which is a user-friendly checklist designed by CDC to help schools select or develop curricula based on the extent to which they have characteristics that research has identified as being critical for leading to positive effects on youth health behaviors; and

- *Making It Happen! School Nutrition Success Stories* is a joint project of CDC, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the United States Department of Education. This report tells the stories of 32 schools and school districts from across the United States (grades K-12) that have implemented innovative strategies to improve the nutritional quality of foods and beverages sold outside of federal meal programs.

Farm to Institutions – Including Schools – Programs

CDC has identified Farm to School Programs as an effective mechanism to improve the quality of school meals, enhance effectiveness of nutrition education, and provide opportunities for eco-literacy training of students through hands-on experiences in the outdoors. Farm to school programs support local farmers and economies, and make schools leaders of socially responsible and innovative food policy. Farm to school programs are active in at least 40 states, with over 2000 programs serving nearly 9000 schools (Farm to School, 2006). Of the farm to school programs that have been evaluated, most have demonstrated increased selection or intake of fruits and vegetables by students following the incorporation of farm produce into school salad bars, meal selections, or class-based education (Joshi & Azuma, 2008). In addition, of the five programs that also examined student dietary behavior outside of school, four found increases in the selection or intake of fruits and vegetables by the children (Joshi & Azuma, 2008).

Success Story: *Fresh to You: Rhode Island* is a farm to work initiative developed in a collaborative manner by public and private partners, including Brown University's Institute for Community Health Promotion, the Rhode Island Department of Health, and

the largest fresh fruit and vegetable distributor in Rhode Island. The program addresses many verified barriers to fruits and vegetable consumption, such as high cost, poor quality, and limited time to shop for produce. Employees at more than twenty worksites, childcare centers, schools and community agencies participate in the program.

Success Story: In Charlotte, North Carolina, CDC funding helped establish a farmers market to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables in a community with high rates of chronic diseases. Since the market opened, 73% of residents said they are eating more fresh fruits and vegetables each day.

Conclusion

In closing, I would like to thank the Committee for its leadership and commitment to the health and nutritional status of our nation's youth. Making balanced nutrition a routine part of life will take a committed, coordinated effort that will need to endure for decades to come.

Positively impacting the health of our youth offers promising prevention opportunities. We know that the young can benefit from better nutrition, as well as from other preventive efforts. While medical treatment for disease management is essential, our nation needs a better balance between treating diseases and preventing them.

Given the challenges ahead, CDC will continue to develop and evaluate policy and environmental strategies to determine effective population-level interventions that will provide a positive impact on the health of our nation's youth. We applaud recent changes in federal policy to support healthier eating; updating WIC program requirements to be more in line with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and the inclusion in the 2008 Farm Bill (Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, Public Law 110–246) of the *Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development Center* and the school-based *Fresh Fruit and Vegetables* Program provisions. These provisions, like others implemented through the 2008 Farm Bill, will help incentivize the consumption of fruits and vegetables. Agricultural policies like these support American families in making healthy food choices, thereby ensuring healthier diets among some of our most at-risk children.

There is much we can do to prevent the consequences of poor diet, such as obesity, disability and death, the need for long-term care, and escalating health care costs. Our youth have an urgent need for more and better prevention policies and environmental change initiatives. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the United States Department of Agriculture to further discuss policies and their impact on the public's health.

Thank you.

Citations:

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Glyen Holmes

Executive Director, New North Florida Cooperative

South Regional Lead Agency Coordinator

National Farm to School Network

Testimony to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
United States Senate

Atlanta, GA

May 15, 2009

Chairman Harkin, Senator Chambliss, Members of the Committee and other guests, thank you for giving me the opportunity to tell you about the many benefits of Farm to School Programs, about my experience working with the New North Florida Cooperative and the National Farm to School Network, and why you should support Farm to School initiatives in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization.

Originally from Mississippi, I have worked in small-scale agriculture most of my life. I worked with the USDA for 18 years before entering the private sector as Executive Director of the New North Florida Cooperative (NNFC). I have worked with farmers, school districts, and numerous other partners in Florida and throughout the Southern Region. One of these beneficial partnerships has been with Vonda Richardson, Extension Specialist for Florida A&M University Cooperative Extension Program, who has collaborated with the NNFC for over 12 years on promoting Farm to School efforts and is here with me today.

NNFC serves as one of the eight regional lead agencies for the National Farm to School Network and is the hub for Farm to School activities in the southern region. The purpose of the National Farm to School Network is to work towards institutionalizing and catalyzing Farm to School programs as viable models for improving the economic viability of family-scale farmers and supporting child nutrition efforts. In this role, NNFC provides free training and technical assistance, information services, networking, and support for policy, media, and marketing activities. We are based and work with school districts in Florida, but our regional responsibilities cover Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

Through the Farm to School program, students in over 2000 school districts in 40 states are eating farm-fresh food for school lunch,breakfast, or snack. Farm to School programs enable every child to have access to more healthful food while simultaneously benefiting the community and local farmer by providing a consistent, reliable market. In addition to supplying nourishing, locally grown food in the cafeteria or classrooms, Farm to School programs often also offer nutrition and agriculture education through taste tests, school gardens, composting programs, and farm tours. Existing research shows that Farm to School programs influence students on many levels, increasing their knowledge and awareness about food sources, nutrition and agriculture, as well as improving their eating behaviors and lifestyles. Just having the choice of more healthful options in the cafeteria through Farm to School meals results in the consumption of more fruits and vegetables during school meals and at home.

Farm to School programs also provide great benefits to family farmers by opening up a local market for their products. Data from Farm to School programs suggests that local farmers gain a significant and steady market when schools dedicate a significant percentage of their purchases to them. For example, the New York City School District signed a $4.2 million contract with farmers in upstate NY to provide apples for NYC schools over a three-year period. For most participating farmers, school sales represent 5 to 10 percent of their total sales. My organization is another example where farmers saw the advantage in sourcing to schools in order to stabilize their market.

As one of the pioneers of the Farm to School approach, the NNFC has been working with school districts providing fresh produce for school meals since1995. NNFC has 60-100 farmers involved at any given time from the states of Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas. We have served over one million students in 72 school districts! The cooperative is responsible for the marketing, handling, processing, and delivery services of agricultural products produced by participating local small farm operators. The NNFC also hosts field trips that allow students to see first-hand where and how their food is grown and prepared.

To provide you more detail about our roots, in May 1995, a group of small, limited resource farmers from several counties in northern Florida met at the Florida A&M University Research & Extension Center in Quincy, FL to organize and develop a potential market for farm fresh produce. The farmers at the table were concerned about surviving in the farming business and wanted to find a way to preserve their land and way of life. They were well aware of the growing trend of farmers finding themselves in dire financial situations, often forced to sell the farm, and they had a strong motivation to save the family farm. Their idea was to provide a competitive price as a collective of small farmers and sell produce to local school districts, thus providing a supplemental income to the other aspects of farm business. By keeping farmer participants focused on one market (that of the school), the Cooperative

was able to build its capacity and avoid spreading themselves too thin – a common mistake in many new small business operations. The cooperative also worked with farmers to overcome destructive attitudes or perceptions based on previous failed relationships in order to foster new market relationships. As a result of this initial meeting, the NNFC was incorporated on October 18, 1995 and was established as a service-driven cooperative, providing its members with processing, transportation and marketing services.

In the early stages, NNFC had a very simple organization, consisting of three groups working together: participants, small farmers, responsible for what they do best - farming; a small force of part-time day laborers engaged in value-added processing; and a management team who provided the leadership, organization, market development, planning and coordinating. North Florida, where the program initially began, is an economically depressed area with high unemployment rates. Farm to School was a benefit for all: farmers, land use, children, schools, community, and the local economy. We saw that sourcing to schools would create a new market that could bring stability, profitability, and organization to small-scale farm operations. The farmers wanted bargaining power; to be "price-makers" instead of the usual "price-takers." From the food service perspective, integrating fresh local produce into school meals was a nutritionally sound decision that benefited the local economy and community. It was a win-win-win situation. Our first delivery was 3,000 pounds of leafy greens to Gadsden County (FL) Schools. Today, the purpose of NNFC is to assist small-scale farmers in accessing alternative markets for their products, including assistance in crop production and distribution. Assistance in market development and networking of small farmers inter- and intrastate is one of our objectives. We work primarily at the school district level, but there are some state level efforts. Our efforts have demonstrated an innovative way to promote healthy eating and enhance nutrition for school meals while cultivating schools as a local market for small-scale farmers. We also provide training for food service personnel in menu planning, local product procurement, fresh produce storage and preparation.

Farm to School is more complicated than asking a farmer to grow a product and then instantly having local fresh products "ready to eat" or "ready to cook" at school lunch. NNFC has a storage, refrigeration, and processing facility where it operates its washing, cutting, and bagging equipment, so that schools, which often do not have full-scale kitchens, can receive ready to use products. The NNFC is able to offer local foods at competitive prices so that schools are not paying more to buy local. The processing and value-added packaging maintains the quality and freshness of their products, providing convenience to food services that are not able to handle fresh, "unprocessed" greens. The signature products we offer year-round are bagged collard greens and sweet potato sticks; we offer green beans

seasonally. Additionally, schools have purchased strawberries, blackberrries, watermelon, okra, turnip greens, and muscadine grapes, as well as a variety of southern peas. It is often challenging to organize and manage delivery of fresh products to numerous sites that have varying requirements. We have managed to create an efficient system to handle distribution of products. We have a fleet of refrigerated trucks that make deliveries to schools one to two times a month, depending on the menus, so that the food arrives within one to two days of when it will be served. This system has made us a reliable distributor of quality produce.

NNFC has developed relationships with school districts to facilitate fresh, local (or regional) products grown by small-scale farmers. This effort is ground-level and self-supported. In my experience school districts that have participated with us have done so because they saw the value in it—the nutritional, cost-effective and social values. NNFC has worked with all types of schools, including rural and urban, small and large. The NNFC program provides a buffet of benefits. School districts are able to incorporate fresh, local products in school meals and increase the nutritional value of the food they offer their students. The farmers have access to an alternative market. The cooperative itself has created jobs for local residents. The cooperative provides a finished product in a manner that allows schools to treat them like any other vendor. The NNFC Farm to School model is successful because it benefits the school and local community without burdening food services.

We are often asked, "how is NNFC financed?" Initially, we received financial assistance mainly for the purchase of infrastructure and equipment to expand processing and distribution, along with a $40,000 grant from the USDA Agriculture Marketing Service. Although grant money was used in the initial stage of the program, approximately 90 percent of the funding for the NNFC's marketing efforts now comes from direct marketing sales, which contributes to the sustainability of the Farm to School program today. Without this initial grant funding, the cooperative would not have come into existence, which is where we see the lasting benefit of a National Farm to School Grant Program.

Every child deserves the opportunity to eat food in school that ensures their health and well-being, and Farm to School programs are one solution to incorporating healthier foods into school meals. Support for farm to school efforts was included in the 2008 Farm Bill, which allows geographic preference in bidding for and purchasing food for school meals. While this mandate has been helpful, we are seeking simplification and a broader interpretation of the rules associated with geographic preference. We are currently working with the administration on rule changes that would streamline the administration of procurement processes (specifically to retain and strengthen paragraph (1)(D) of Section 122).

And, as the Child Nutrition Reauthorization approaches, Congress has the unique opportunity to

strengthen national Farm to School efforts. The 2004 Child Nutrition Act included one provision on Farm to School (section 122): a seed grant program with $10 million in discretionary funding that has failed to receive an appropriation. In this Child Nutrition Reauthorization we ask for Congress to enact $50 million in mandatory funding for section 122. This would fund 100-500 projects per year up to $100,000 to cover start-up costs for Farm to School programs. These competitive, one-time grants will allow schools to develop vendor relationships with nearby farmers, plan seasonal menus and promotional materials, start a school garden, and develop hands-on nutrition education to demonstrate the important interrelationship of nutrition and agriculture—similar to the work we do on a daily basis. Please support other farmers, students, and communities in their desire to nourish the nation, one tray at time through Farm to School programs.

Statement of Cindy Long, Director, Child Nutrition Division

Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
Field Hearing – Roybal Campus, Centers for Disease Control
Atlanta, Georgia

May 15, 2009

Thank you Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Chambliss, and members of the Committee for this opportunity to discuss USDA's Farm to School efforts and other aspects of Federal nutrition assistance programs that support local farmers and promote healthy eating and an active lifestyle for our Nation's school children. I serve as Director of Child Nutrition Programs for USDA's Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services (FNCS). I have spent most of my career working on these important programs, and it is a privilege for me to represent our mission area before you today. However, I must emphasize that I am a career executive, not an appointed official. I anticipate that I may have to confer with Secretary Vilsack and his staff to provide you with answers on questions of policy.

Before I discuss the programs I want to offer some context on the problems related to the large and growing number of overweight and obese people in the United States. I am sure this information is not news to you, and can assure you that they have been matters of serious concern – and action – by USDA for many years.

The latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that two-thirds of adults are overweight or obese, and almost one-third of children and adolescents are overweight or obese. In the past 20 years, the percentage of children who are overweight has doubled and the percentage of adolescents who are overweight has more than tripled. The evidence is clear and overwhelming that these problems are truly reaching epidemic proportions and cut across all groups of our Nation. Unfortunately, there is no simple solution. While the immediate reasons for the large and growing numbers of overweight and obese people are clear and uncomplicated--too many of us eat too much, eat too much of the wrong things, and get too little physical activity--each of these sets of behaviors is subject to innumerable influences throughout our lives, especially as children. Shaping an environment that supports healthier choices for children is a responsibility shared by all those involved in their lives-families, schools, communities, and local, state and Federal policymakers.

I want to discuss some of the programs and activities that USDA is undertaking to ensure our children have a healthy diet and the educational foundation to continue to make the right nutritional choices in the future while continuing to support our local farmers. Matching our local farmers to our nutrition programs is a win-win for our children and local economies.

FNS Farm to School Activities

FNS is committed to working with our partners to identify strategies to link children with foods that are produced in the same community where they attend school. FNS has undertaken activities to help support effective and efficient local procurement initiatives for several years.

Local food procurement can contribute appropriately and efficiently toward meeting the diverse needs of child nutrition programs, within the context of Federal, State, and local procurement requirements. We have provided guidance on how schools can do business with local producers and still meet the Federal procurement requirements. These strategies include tailoring specifications to include high standards for product freshness and quality in an effort to obtain local produce. Reaching local producers can also be facilitated when the procurement falls below a small purchase threshold. In these circumstances, informal procurement methods may be used which can facilitate the participation of local producers.

In addition, recent legislation provides schools the ability to use geographic preference in some circumstances. Section 4302 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) amended section 9(j) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA) to require the Secretary of Agriculture to encourage institutions operating the Child Nutrition Programs to purchase unprocessed locally grown and locally raised agricultural products. As amended, effective October 1, 2008, the NSLA allows institutions receiving funds through the Child Nutrition Programs to apply a geographic preference when procuring unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products. In July 2008, FNS issued guidance on the use of geographic preference and continues to work with States and school districts to assist them in using this provision within the confines of Federal procurement regulations.

In addition to these efforts to assist schools with their own procurement efforts, we have also worked closely with the Department of Defense (DoD) since 1994 to utilize DoD's existing purchase and distribution system for school meals. Funding for the program began with $3.2

million and later increased to $50 million. FNS and DoD entered into a memorandum of understanding under which DoD buys and distributes fresh fruits and vegetables to schools using Federal commodity entitlement dollars. Some of these purchases are made locally.

We also support local farm to school efforts by providing technical assistance resources to our cooperating agencies. In 2000, FNS issued a step-by-step guide entitled *Small Farms/School Meals Initiative* which details how to bring small farms and local schools together. In 2005, FNS issued *Eat Smart—Farm Fresh! A Guide to Buying and Serving Locally-Grown Produce in School Meals*, which provides best practices and strategies for finding locally-grown food and implementing Farm to School initiatives. We will be updating this publication later this year, with new success stories, additional resources from outside organizations, and basic tools for operating a successful program from start to finish. To support these efforts, we have an Emerson Hunger Fellow assisting the Department with Farm to School issues. The Hunger Fellow is identifying opportunities to help institutions use local procurement options when appropriate, and determining the most effective ways to improve Farm to School efforts.

FNS also supports farm to school initiatives through its *Team Nutrition (TN) Training Grants.* TN Training Grants for Healthy School Meals offer funding to State agencies to establish or enhance sustainable infrastructure for implementing TN to support the implementation of USDA's nutrition requirements in school meals. Grants have been used for Farm to School related activities, such as school gardening programs.

Finally, the recent expansion in the 2008 Farm Bill of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program provides another opportunity for linkages between schools and local producers. This program is designed to make fresh fruits and vegetable snacks available to elementary schoolchildren, and is targeted to students in the neediest elementary schools in each state. All students in participating schools receive fresh fruits and vegetables at no cost. Local producers can be an excellent source for schools to obtain fresh produce for the program.

Support for Healthy School Meals

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) gives children the nutrition they need to develop and grow. Compared to nonparticipants, NSLP participants are more likely to consume vegetables, fruit or 100 percent juice and milk, and less likely to consume beverages other than milk or 100 percent fruit juice at lunch and through the day. In addition to providing healthful food, the presence of a School Breakfast Program means that low-income students are more likely to start their school day with a substantial breakfast, ready to learn.

One of the most important linkages that USDA makes between agricultural producers and the health of our clients is to make fruits and vegetables an important part of nutrition assistance programs. We estimate that the programs together provided $11 billion in support for fruit and vegetable consumption in 2008 – through USDA's distribution to program providers, support for schools and other institutions to buy these nutritious foods, and support for clients to purchase them in the retail marketplace.

More generally, FNS has launched an aggressive initiative to improve the nutritional quality of our commodity programs. Schools participating in NSLP today have access to the widest choice of healthful USDA foods in history. Over the past two decades, we have worked to reduce the levels of fat, sodium, and sugar. We now offer schools more than 180 choices of quality products, including more fruits and vegetables, whole grains and low fat foods. Consider just a few examples:

- USDA pioneered a partnership with the Department of Defense to buy more than 60 types of fresh fruits and vegetables for schools. Besides fresh produce, USDA also purchases over $180 million of canned, frozen, and dried fruits and vegetables for schools.
- USDA purchases brown rice, rolled oats, whole-wheat flour, whole-grain dry-kernel corn, and whole grain pastas; we are pursuing the purchase of whole-grain macaroni and quick-cooking brown rice.
- Most USDA canned vegetables meet the Food and Drug Administration's "healthy" standard for sodium. Our intent is to reduce the sodium content of canned vegetables even more.
- Canned fruits must be packed in light syrup, water or natural juices.
- Since 1992, USDA beef is 85-percent lean, compared to a commercial standard of 70-percent lean. We also offer several types of reduced-fat cheese, and have eliminated *trans* fats, shortening, and butter.

It is important to remember that school districts are offered a wide range of choices, and select the foods they want from USDA's foods available list. They are *never* required to accept any USDA food item they cannot effectively use or do not want to use.

In addition, we are working to ensure that our school meal nutritional requirements support and promote healthy eating. We have contracted with the Institute of Medicine to convene experts to develop recommendations for a comprehensive strategy to bring the school meal programs and the Child and Adult Care Food Program in line with the latest *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. We expect to receive their school meal recommendations this fall.

While the school meal program requirements are under review, we continue to encourage and support schools to follow the Dietary Guidelines within the current program structure. We have provided technical assistance materials to support these efforts. In addition, our Healthier US Schools Challenge is another key element in our efforts to promote healthy school environments.

Healthier US School Challenge

Because unhealthful beverage and food choices, as well as inadequate physical activity, at school undermine children's ability to learn and practice healthy eating, we have also focused on promoting healthy school nutrition environments and local school wellness policies. The Healthier US School Challenge encourages and rewards schools that have taken steps to make it easier for kids to make healthier dietary and physical activity choices during the school day. Schools earn Gold, Silver or Bronze awards by meeting specific criteria such as offering lunches that demonstrate healthy menu planning, providing nutrition education and opportunities for physical activity to students. Awards are for a two year period. To date, 569 schools have earned this prestigious award since its inception.

Our efforts in the nutrition assistance programs complement and are integrated with our strategies to promote healthy dietary practice, healthy weight, and active lifestyles for the general public. At the center of this commitment is the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) and its integral role in nutrition policy through the development and promotion of scientific, evidence-based dietary guidance and nutrition education. The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, published jointly every 5 years by the USDA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), is the cornerstone of Federal nutrition policy, allowing the Federal Government to speak with one voice. We are currently in the midst of preparing the 2010 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, an initiative that we will lead over the next two years, and which will serve as the core of Federal nutrition and research programs in the ensuing years.

A wide range of nutrition promotion efforts based on the *Dietary Guidelines* are already reaching the public on the Web and through other venues. *MyPyramid*, the Department's *Dietary Guidelines*-based food guidance system, has been integrated into the food marketplace through over a hundred innovative public-private partnerships to promote healthy eating and physical activity. These partnerships exist between CNPP and food companies, health care providers, day care facilities, consumer electronics companies, youth and education organizations, research organizations, and Federal and State agencies.

MyPyramid.gov provides interactive, personalized tools to help consumers, health professionals, and nutrition educators make food and physical activity choices that follow the *Dietary Guidelines*. The *MyPyramid Menu Planner*, a state-of-the-art personal dietary assessment tool, allows users to enter their age, gender and physical activity level to obtain quick and easy

appraisals of the extent to which their daily menus meet the *Dietary Guidelines* and ways to improve diet quality. The *MyPyramid Tracker* is an online diet and physical activity assessment tool that provides in depth information on diet quality and physical activity status, nutrients consumed, as well as providing nutrition messages and links to related government Web sites. Since the launch of MyPyramid.gov in 2005, public interest has been overwhelming: Over 7 billion hits, about 100 million each month, and over 3 million registrations to *MyPyramid Tracker*.

For many years, we have been working to integrate science-based nutrition and physical activity promotion within and across the programs. USDA makes a major investment in nutrition education delivered through the nutrition assistance programs – over $800 million in 2008, including over $300 million in SNAP and over $480 million in WIC, almost all distributed as grants to State agencies. Our Team Nutrition initiative provides nutrition education and technical assistance to help schools serve healthier meals and motivate kids to form healthy habits. The *MyPyramid for Kids* and *Eat Smart. Play Hard* campaigns stress the need to balance what you eat with what you do. In December 2008, FNS released a set of sixteen consumer-tested nutrition education messages, designed to be used across all nutrition assistance programs to increase consumption of fruits, vegetables or low-fat milk products and encourage development of healthy eating habits among young children. States and others have moved quickly to adopt the messages, supporting content such as tips and recipes, and implementation guidance to put these messages into practice in all of the nutrition assistance programs.

We have been working with the Ad Council on a series of public service announcements (PSAs) designed to inspire parents and children to adopt healthier lifestyles for their families. In February, Secretary Vilsack announced the latest set of PSAs, featuring characters from Walt Disney's classic film, Pinocchio, recently re-released on DVD. The announcements encourage parents to visit MyPyramid.gov to find the right balance to a healthy lifestyle for their children.

This is not an exhaustive list of the initiatives and strategies that USDA is pursuing to ensure our children are getting the most nutritious meals available and to assist local farmers. But I hope that it offers a sense of our ongoing commitment to make sure that the programs we administer are working proactively and effectively to combat this substantial threat to our Nation's health and support our local farmers. But the strategies we have in place can make – are making – a real difference in the lives of the children and continue our traditional support of our local farmers.

Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Chambliss, I appreciate the opportunity to make this presentation, and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Taking Action for Healthy Kids:
Helping Kids Eat Well, Play More and be Ready to Learn

Testimony to the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
Chairman Tom Harkin

David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D
16th United States Surgeon General
Director, Satcher Health Leadership Institute at Morehouse School of Medicine
Founding Chairperson, Action for Healthy Kids

May 15, 2009

Thank you, Chairman Harkin and Senator Chambliss, for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you and other Committee members today about the importance of healthy eating and physical activity in school children.

Although I am here today on behalf of Action for Healthy Kids, for which I am a member of the Board of Directors, I currently serve as director of the Satcher Health Leadership Institute at Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta, Georgia. Before joining Morehouse School of Medicine in September 2002, I served in government for almost nine years. From 1993-1998, I served as director of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and then from February 1998 to February 2002, I served as Surgeon General of the United States, three years of which I also served as Assistant Secretary for Health. Prior to entering government, I was president of Meharry Medical College for eleven years from 1982-1993. Since leaving government, I have directed a Center of Excellence on Health Disparities at Morehouse School of Medicine.

As you know, the topic of children's health is very near and dear to my heart. While Surgeon General in 2001, I released a report on overweight and obesity, *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*. This report was the first to note that obesity and overweight could overtake cigarette smoking as the leading cause of preventable death in this country. It outlined strategies that communities can use in helping to address obesity-related problems, including requiring physical education at all school grades, providing more healthy food options on school campuses, and providing safe and accessible recreational facilities for residents of all ages.

After leaving the Office of Surgeon General in 2002, I served as chairman of a Summit that was aimed at putting action behind the recommendations laid out in this report as they related to children and the school environment. The result of that Summit was the formation of Action for Healthy Kids, of which I was the Founding Chair and remain an active member of the Board of Directors.

What is Action for Healthy Kids?

Action for Healthy Kids is a national grassroots non-profit organization that addresses the epidemic of childhood obesity and undernourishment by focusing on changes within schools. We now have teams working in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and have more than 11,500 volunteers. By the way, we do have active state teams both here in Georgia and in Iowa, if you are interested in their activities.

We are supported by more than 65 national partner organizations that include professional, nonprofit and government groups working in the fields of education, nutrition, physical activity. Our partner support is diverse, including organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National School Boards Association, the American Diabetes Association and the National Association of Sport and Physical Education, just to name a few. We also have been fortunate to work with and have the support of the Centers for Disease Control, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-free Schools.

Our vision at Action for Healthy Kids is that all kids will develop the lifelong habits necessary to promote health and learning. Our core message is simple:

Kids who eat well and are physically active are healthier and do better in school. As part of our focus on school communities, we also engage parents to reinforce our message at home.

The Relationship Between Diet, Physical Activity and Readiness to Learn

As documented in the Action For Healthy Kids report, "The Learning Connection," there is a growing body of evidence demonstrating that children who eat poorly or who engage in too little physical activity do not perform as well as they could academically. Conversely, it has been shown that improvements in nutrition and physical activity can result in improvements in academic performance. In a study published in the *Journal of School Health* just last year of more than 5,000 children, an association was observed across multiple indicators of diet quality with academic performance.

This relationship has been particularly well documented when it comes to breakfast eating. Omitting breakfast can interfere with learning even in well-nourished children. Numerous studies, reviews and position papers , many references in "The Learning Connection," have found that increased participation in School Breakfast Programs is associated with better academic test scores, daily attendance and class participation, and it also has been linked to reductions in absences and tardiness. We believe that this connection is significant enough that we recently testified before the 2010 Dietary Guidelines Committee to urge that this group include a Dietary Guideline recommending that Americans eat a healthy breakfast each day.

Addressing the Challenge Through School Wellness Policies: The First Step

How can we best address the problems of overweight, undernourished and physical inactive children? Congress took an important step in the right direction during the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 by requiring that all schools with federally funded school meal programs put in place school wellness policies. Following that mandate, Action for Healthy Kids took a leadership role in working with states, school districts and schools across the country to encourage the development of meaningful, comprehensive school wellness policies.

Yet, we know that this mandate was not the full answer to the school challenges we face. Even though we believe that nearly all schools (more than 90%) now have wellness policies on the books, we still have far to go to bridge the gap between policy and actual implementation and monitoring of these plans. We need more nutrient rich foods in our children's diets. Our children need to play and be more active. More than 30 percent of our children are overweight or obese, with low-income and minority children remaining disproportionately affected. This continues to be an epidemic, and it should be unacceptable to all of us.

To give an example, here in my home state of Georgia, almost 42% of the African American children are overweight or obese, compared with only 26% of the White, non-Hispanic children. About half (47%) of Georgia children receiving public health insurance are overweight or obese, double the rate among privately insured children. By the way, this places Georgia at 48th in a state ranking on insurance disparity. These disparities are even more significant when viewed in the context of the well documented increased risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease and certain cancers faced by individuals who are obese. Children who are obese are

more likely to be depressed and have four times the absenteeism rate in school as other children.

Taking the Next Steps

With kids spending 1,000 hours per year in schools, we continue to believe that an important part of the answer to the obesity epidemic resides here. Schools can serve as the "great equalizer" across economic, racial and social disparities. Ideally, they provide an environment where the playing field is level and where our children will learn lifelong habits that will help them to be healthy. And schools are a critical conduit to parents, families and communities, all of which play important roles in patterns of good nutrition and physical activity.

While the requirement that schools have wellness policies on their books was a good **first step**, it is imperative that now we – as government policy makers, as organizations, as parents, as volunteers – take the **next important steps**: making sure that these policies are implemented, monitored and continuously improved.

How can we best achieve this goal?

Support programs that work: For one, we can make sure that initiatives like USDA's Team Nutrition and CDC's Coordinated School Health Program are adequately supported and that sufficient funds are allocated so that they can be carried out optimally. These are examples of effective government programs where relatively little money goes a long way.

Make nutritious foods available: Second, while we have done a reasonable job of raising awareness about eliminating so-called "junk food" in many school settings, we need to do a much better job of improving availability and encouraging

consumption of nutrient rich foods, such as good tasting fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat and non-fat dairy products.

Toward this end, we have seen through Action for Healthy Kids' work that it often doesn't take much money to help schools expand access and get more kids eating a healthy breakfast. In fact, we recently initiated a school breakfast mini-grant program that targets schools with at least 50% of students in the free or reduced meal categories. We received more than 210 applications over two weeks for grants of $2,000 or less. We're awarding 41 grants to schools in 17 states, and because of these grants, more than 20,000 kids will have the opportunity to eat a nutrient rich breakfast at school. Our goal is that these schools will increase their breakfast participation by an average of 25% during the school year. We've seen improvements approaching this level from a similar program in Ohio, where Action for Healthy Kids distributed $25,000 in school breakfast mini-grants. Due to this program, along with other initiatives over a 13-month period, school breakfast participation has increased 15%.

Integration of physical activity: Although the final issue I would like to address may be only indirectly related to the focus of this field hearing for the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, I believe it is impossible to dissociate it from the discussion of good nutrition. Today, only 4% of elementary schools, 8% of middle schools and 2% of high schools provide daily physical education for all grades throughout the entire school year. These numbers are unacceptable. Until we begin to recognize that what happens at school is central to addressing our nation's broader healthcare challenges, we will not be successful. We simply must find more effective ways to encourage and support schools in providing daily physical activity opportunities for all students throughout the school year.

Specific Recommendations

In closing, I would like to summarize several specific recommendations that I believe should be taken into consideration by this Committee:

1) **We must provide incentives for schools that make incremental changes in creating an environment that promotes healthy eating and increased physical activity among students.** Improvements worthy of incentives might include better access to after-school programs, in-class breakfast availability, percentage increases in physical education time or better monitoring and accountability for existing wellness policies. We have seen that incentives are effective in the adult work environment, and we believe they can be effective in schools as well, particularly given the funding limitations our schools face today. As I noted earlier, even small grants can be very effective in motivating and reinforcing positive changes.

2) **At every opportunity, we urge you to put child nutrition and fitness in the broader context of the challenges we face as a nation in addressing health care and the systems to address it.** The costs of obesity to our health system, not to mention unnecessary pain and suffering, are astounding. We need a healthcare model that targets the major determinants of this obesity epidemic, including the social and behavioral determinants. We need to further strengthen the local school wellness policy mandate to include language requiring standing school wellness committees that can monitor, evaluate and continually improve upon a school's wellness policy framework. We also need to invest in programs to support an environment of good nutrition and physical activity that will help children learn healthy habits for a healthy

lifestyle. Such programs have been documented to reduce the onset of Type 2 diabetes by up to 60 percent and reduce hypertension and other forms of cardiovascular disease.

3) **We would like to see broader communication about the relationship between nutrition and physical activity and readiness to learn – as well as the development of policies that take advantage of this relationship.** Just as nutrition and physical activity should be viewed in the context of the health of our nation, they also should be viewed as an integral part of an effective education system. Schools that have incorporated nutrition, physical education and physical activity goals into continuous school improvement plans, for example, have seen significant academic improvements as well. All schools should be encouraged to take similar measures.

Regarding each of these issues, responsibility for improvements fall on us all. Anything that we can do to bring about better coordination – whether between federal and state policy makers, between nutritionists and educators, or among parents, administrators and students themselves – will yield positive results in the long term.

Clearly, an opportunity exists within this Committee to enact changes that will improve the nutrition and physical fitness of our children and bring us one step closer to reducing the future societal burden of obesity and the economic and racial disparities that accompany it. We at Action for Healthy Kids appreciate that you have embraced this opportunity and offer you the continued support of our nationwide network of caring volunteers in this important work.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

MAY 15, 2009

COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY COALITION

May 15, 2009

Senator Tom Harkin, Chair
Senator Saxby Chambliss, Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture Committee
c/o Jessie Williams, Clerk
jessie_williams@agriculture.senate.gov

Dear Senators Chambliss and Harkin,

Thank you for all of your hard work and leadership regarding child nutrition issues and for this opportunity to tell you more about Farm to School Programs and the vital role they can play in Child Nutrition Reauthorization. The major aims of the Farm to School approach are based on the premise that students will choose healthier foods, including more fruits and vegetables, if products are fresh, locally grown, and picked at the peak of their flavor and if those choices are reinforced with educational activities. Additionally, Farm to School projects provide benefits to the entire community: children, farmers, food service staff, parents, and teachers.

School meals are a vital part of our responsibility to ensure the health and well being of future generations. Improving the quality of school meals, and making them accessible to all children is essential to our nation's future. School food services are constantly fighting an uphill battle to provide kids with more healthful food, and with the proper support Farm to School projects can be an easy solution to this problem. Existing research shows that Farm to School programs influence students on many levels. According to a Missouri study, the greater the exposure to farm-fresh fruits and vegetables, the greater the likelihood that a child will eat them. Studies in Portland, OR and Riverside, CA have found that students eating a farm-fresh salad bar consume roughly one additional serving of fruits and vegetables per day. Additional research has shown that Farm to School programs have also reduced consumption of unhealthy foods and sodas.

Farm to School programs also greatly benefit the local farmer by opening up a multi-billion dollar market to family farmers. Data from Farm to School programs suggests that when schools dedicate a significant percentage of their purchases to local producers, local farmers gain a significant and steady market. For example, the 60 farms providing products to local schools in Massachusetts are generating more than $700,000 in additional revenue each year. This $700,000, which could have been spent bringing fresh produce in from across the country, has instead been deposited back into the local economy, thus acting as its own min-economic stimulus package. Research from Oregon, though in its initial stage, shows that Farm to School programs can have an economic return of 1.87 – greater than that of Food Stamps in the most recent economic stimulus package.

3830 SE Division Portland, OR 97202 Tel 503-954-2970 www.foodsecurity.org

COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY COALITION

With high overhead costs, the financial viability of school food services often depends on their ability to increase participation of paying students and adults in school meal programs. Farm to School programs typically increase the participation rates in school meal programs, enhancing the overall financial viability of participating school food services. Overall, schools report a 3 to 16 percent increase in participation in school meals when farm-fresh food is served.

Nourishing the Nation One Tray at a Time
Farm to School Initiatives in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization

The two most effective ways Congress can rebalance the way American children eat in schools, while also benefitting the local economy, include:

• Enact $50 million mandatory, for Section 122: Access to Local Foods and School Gardens for grants to schools.
- Such funding covers start-up costs for farm to school programs through one-time competitive grants.
- 100-500 farm to school programs could be created with such funding—having the potential to impact tens of millions of children.
- This would allow schools to develop vendor relationships with nearby farmers, plan seasonal menus and promotional materials, start a school garden, and develop hands-on nutrition education

• Establish a farm to institution initiative within the Secretary of Agriculture's Office.
- This initiative will help provide national leadership to a rapidly growing movement, helping to consolidate and guide the various policies and programs necessary to expand and institutionalize farm to institution across the country.

The bottom line: is that the ripple effect of farm to school programs will benefit more kids, be more fair and just, and enable schools to have the tools to do this the right way!

Once again, we are deeply appreciative of your strong support of this vital issue. Please feel free to call on us for any support you may need as we move through the Child Nutrition Reauthorization process.

Sincerely,

Megan Elsener
Policy Coordinator

Andy Fisher
Executive Director

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U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

Benefits of Farm-to-School Projects, Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for School Children

Friday, May 15, 2009
Roybal Campus of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Harkin Global Communication Center
Auditorium A
Atlanta, Georgia

I am Josephine Mack, President of the Georgia School Nutrition Association and the Director of School Nutrition Programs at the Richmond County School District in Augusta, Georgia. I am submitting comments today on behalf of our more than 6,000 members of the Georgia School Nutrition Association and the 55,000 members of the School Nutrition Association (SNA).

As you know, our members serve lunch to 30 million students each and every school day and almost 10 million breakfasts each day. The National School Lunch Program is over 60 years old and continues to serve our country very well. If we are going to compete effectively in the world, we must educate our children. In order to do that, we must provide nutritious school meals.

Today, I would like to take this opportunity to discuss a number of priority issues which we would like to see addressed in the upcoming Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act.

In the last year or two, most of the attention with regard to child nutrition has focused on the key issue of nutrition standards. It is a two part challenge: 1) how to implement the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans into the meal program; and 2) what standards to apply to so-called "competitive foods" sold outside of the meal program whether in the cafeteria or sold down the hall in vending machines.

SNA is deeply committed to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and we believe that they should be applied to all foods and beverages sold in school throughout the entire school day. Years ago we successfully petitioned the Congress to apply the Guidelines to school meals. Since 1983, however, we have been trying in vain to amend the law and provide the Secretary of Agriculture with the authority needed to regulate the sale of all foods and beverages sold on the school campus, ending the so-called "time and place" rule.

SNA believes that we need to craft a science based, practical, nutrition standard that applies throughout the school and throughout the entire country. The children in Georgia need the same nutrients for healthy development that are needed by the children in Iowa and California. Schools

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have a critical role to play in the fight against obesity. We must, however, craft a standard that would NOT undermine the financial status of many local programs thereby jeopardizing their service to children, including low income children.

Over the past several years, school nutrition programs have made tremendous strides in offering more whole grains, more fresh fruits and vegetables, and more low-fat dairy products. All of these healthy food items cost more in today's marketplace. Due to the increase in food, milk and energy costs, combined with high labor and benefits costs, the federal school meal reimbursement no longer covers the cost to prepare a balanced, nutritious school meal.

In 2008-2009, USDA reimbursed local schools $2.57 for every "free" lunch provided to a child with income below 130% of the poverty line…less than the price of a latte at the neighborhood coffee shop. While the new federal reimbursement for school year 2008-2009 is $2.57 per meal, the cost to prepare a school meal averages over $2.90. School nutrition programs lose money on each school meal provided. As you know the national school lunch program produces 5 billion meals per year, which mean programs, on a national average, are losing approximately $2.5 billion dollars per year on school lunch alone. Financial losses on the school lunch and breakfast programs are estimated at more than $4 billion dollars per year!

School nutrition programs are providing balanced, nutritious meals; however, they are being pushed to the breaking point. The school food service authority needs the revenue from the sale of all beverages and foods sold on campus to "balance the books" and make the program work for all children. Consistent nutrition standards must therefore be provided for all foods and beverages sold in the school in order to protect the financial and nutritional integrity of the school nutrition program.

As this Committee begins to think about the 2009 Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act, SNA has several goals with regard to nutrition standards and financial integrity:

- First, and foremost, provide the Secretary of Agriculture with the authority to regulate the sale of all foods and beverages sold on the school campus, thus ending the "time and place" rule.
- Require that all foods and beverages provided on campus (with some exceptions) be consistent with the Dietary Guidelines, as is currently required for school meals that are reimbursed by USDA.
- Require a uniform national nutrition standard throughout the country. Children in all states and local districts need the same nutrients to grow and be healthy. The greater the disparity in nutrition standards, the higher the cost to the schools.
- We urge USDA to please support an increase in the federal reimbursements as a part of any legislation to improve school meals and nutrition standards anywhere in schools.
- Indirect costs are a major factor for local school food authorities. As you know, there is not federal limit on those costs. Many schools have to pay outrageous indirect costs and there is no appeal process.
- The school breakfast program needs to be expanded and we need to identify strategies to reach all who are currently eligible.
- Families that qualify for free WIC benefits should qualify for free school meals.

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- Schools should be provided with USDA commodities for breakfast as well as lunch.
- Last but not least, we support the financial integrity of school nutrition programs, but many of the administrative rules, contribute to increased rates of error within our programs. We ask USDA to review administrative rules, such as those involved with certification, eligibility and reporting to identify issues and implement positive solutions that will benefit all school nutrition program operators and recipients.

Thank you very much for holding this field hearing and allowing us to participate today.

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School Food **FOCUS**

Transforming Food Options for Children in Urban Schools

May 15, 2009

Senator Saxby Chambliss
Senator Tom Harkin
c/o Jessie Williams, Clerk
Senate Agriculture Committee
jessie_williams@agriculture.senate.gov

Dear Senators Chambliss and Harkin,

Thank you so much for your leadership on child nutrition issues and especially in support of Farm to School initiatives. We at School Food FOCUS are pleased to have this opportunity to submit this letter in conjunction with the Farm to School Field Hearing in Atlanta, Georgia on May 15th. School Food FOCUS (www.schoolfoodfocus.org) is a national initiative that helps large school districts with 40,000 or more students serve more healthful, more sustainably produced and regionally sourced food so that children may perform better in school and be healthier in life. FOCUS works with food service and other stakeholder groups to collect, analyze, and use food system data and peer-tested research to spur change in procurement methods. FOCUS supports a network of people who are engaging over 20 big-city school districts in systems change and also facilitates the sharing of best practices and lessons learned.

We would like to encourage you and your fellow Senators to consider the following policy priorities in support of our mutual goals of 1) making nutritious, local food more available and accessible to children, 2) increasing participation in meal programs, and 3) providing economic stimulus in agricultural production and processing sectors across the nation.

1. Procurement Related Improvements for School Food Program Operations
Farm to school programs ensure that our children eat the highest-quality food available. These programs not only deliver food that nourishes children's bodies immediately, but also knowledge that enhances their educational experience and cultivates long-term healthy eating habits. They are a win-win for kids, farmers, communities, educators, parents, and the environment. To support these programs, we recommend the following:

a) Streamlining the administration of procurement processes, including implementing USDA rules on geographic preference. (Retain and strengthen paragraph (1)(D) of Section 122) This could include an "office of farm to institution" for greater coordination among state and federal agencies.

b) Fund local government and non-governmental technical assistance providers to develop and scale up procurement pilots, including model practices in product sourcing, bid specifications and menu planning for all child nutrition programs. (clarify that paragraph 4 of Section 122 should fund technical assistance providers)

c) Provide funds from existing Food and Nutrition Service authorization for training webinars and other formats, (paragraph (1)(b)) in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and school districts, to assist food service professionals in writing more effective product specifications about the use of commodity and locally available foods.

2. Improve Access to Child Nutrition Programs and Increase Reimbursement Rates
The School Nutrition Association estimates that the actual cost to produce a school lunch is on average nearly 35 cents greater than the current federal reimbursement for a "free" meal, and School Food FOCUS recognizes that the cost of providing more healthful food is far greater than this. Reimbursement rates need to be increased, not only to defray the real cost of food, but to allow continued improvements in its quality. The following will improve access to child nutrition programs and increase reimbursement rates:

Expand the free meal category from 130% of poverty to 185%, consistent with the WIC income eligibility guidelines (thereby eliminating the reduced price meal category).

- Increase the school lunch reimbursement rate by at least 35 cents.
- Expand universal breakfast programs in low-income neighborhoods.
- Simplify the application process for all child nutrition programs.

3. Strengthen Nutrition Standards for School Meal Programs and Competitive Foods
Schools send a message to children with the foods that are served; therefore we support offering a consistent standard of more healthful food for the entire campus throughout the school day. Combining an increase in the reimbursement rates with clear and consistent standards should result in food and beverage choices that include more whole grains and leaner meats, low-fat dairy, fresh fruits and vegetables, and locally/regionally sourced and produced foods, when possible.

- Require all foods served where child nutrition programs operate to meet or exceed national standards consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, or to meet state and local standards where they are stronger. These standards should apply to meal programs as well as competitive foods such as those sold in vending machines or by clubs, student stores and the PTA, as well as a la carte items.

4. Support Education and Advocacy for Healthful Foods and Nutrition
Food and nutrition education provides children at all stages of growth and development, and their families, with the skills necessary to make healthy lifelong choices.

- Fund proven, elective educational opportunities, including partnerships with culinary professionals in schools, school gardens, farm to school programs, classroom activities and cooking with children and families.
- Engage students through means such as student health councils and wellness policy provisions to provide leadership in integrating school-based food and nutrition education with the improvement processes currently taking place in school cafeterias.

Once again, we are deeply appreciative of your strong support of this vital issue. Please feel free to call on us for any support you may need as we move through the Child Nutrition Reauthorization process.

Sincerely,

Kathy Lawrence	Thomas Forster	Sheilah Davidson
Program Director	Policy Consultant	Manager, Policy Working Group

School Food FOCUS 220 Church Street, 5th Flr. New York, NY 10013 616 619-6449 www.SchoolFoodFOCUS.org



Contact:
Alice Rolls, Executive Director
Erin Croom, Farm to School Coordinator
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678.702.0400

– **Position Statement** –

Sustainable and Organic Local Food Must Be Integrated Into Georgia Schools

May 18, 2009 – We applaud today's effort by Sen. Saxby Chambliss to learn about the health epidemic affecting Georgia's youth and the constructive opportunities that Farm to School programs offer.

Current policies in no way address the rising rates of diseases such as obesity, type II diabetes and other diseases in our youth that are most often linked back to food. In fact, for the first time in modern history, children born today have a shorter life expectancy than their parents. Most of the chronic diseases that are contributing to this sad trend, including obesity, heart disease, and Type II diabetes, are directly related to diet, and are therefore preventable.

Georgia is caught up in a paradox. We produce plenty of food — the state is No. 1 for chicken production, and sixth for overall vegetable production. Yet, of the $20 billion Georgians spend on food each year, $16 billion is going to out- of-state – and in many cases out of country – producers.

We hope today was the first step in a meaningful effort to begin a dialog that leads to action. Parents in Georgia want safe and healthy food for their children.

Farm to School programs offer a holistic solution to create lifelong improvements in student health, establish stable economic markets for farmers, and strengthen community ties. We aim to create comprehensive Farm to School programs that incorporate food, farm and nutrition education into schools across Georgia.

Buying from local sustainable farms would not only create a healthier Georgia, it would also spur job creation across the state, empowering family farmers. Georgia families deserve a thriving infrastructure linking local growers, ranchers, and producers with the markets, schools, shops, universities, and grocers who can offer safe, healthy, and locally-produced food.

We urge Senator Chambliss, as ranking member of the Agriculture Committee, to vote for $ 50 million in mandatory funding for Farm to school programs in the 2009 Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act.

Comprehensive Farm to School programs strive to involve all of the stakeholders participating in the school food web. They include food service professionals, farmers, chefs, distributors, teachers, administrators, nutritionists, students, parents, and community leaders.

Georgia Organics Farm to School efforts include:

- Mentoring 40 school representatives across Georgia
- Piloting two comprehensive farm to school programs
- Creating and circulating a monthly newsletter, the e-bite, with over 700 subscribers
- Serving as key partners to Atlanta Public Schools and Decatur City Schools who are planning district-wide farm to school initiatives
- Trained 10 chefs and paired with 10 separate schools and facilitate ongoing relationships between them
- Provided expert educational sessions at six statewide conferences reaching 500+ teachers, parents, food service professionals and school policymakers
- Advocating for farm to school policies at the local, state and national level
- Partnered with Environmental Education in Georgia to inventory, track and share information from farm to school programs through an online database clearinghouse
- Provided seed funding to train, support and establish on-site gardens at four schools
- Planning the first statewide farm to school summit
- Working closely with Atlanta Public Schools to identify 2-3 Georgia-grown products to procure and serve in fall of 2009

The goals of the Atlanta Farm to School pilot program are to:

• Increase student preference and consumption of fresh, local foods;
• Increase student understanding of where food comes from;
• Assist schools in developing sustainable experiential-based gardens that are fully integrated into the curriculum and supported and sustained by the faculty and community members;
• Facilitate the creation of long-term school and district wide policies that Address the priorities of student nutrition, and consumption of fresh, local Foods;
• Establish long-term relationships between schools and local farmers; and
• Increase the food service provider's purchase of local foods from local Farmers.

Benefits of Farm to School programs include:

- Nutrition education that works.

- Evaluations of Farm to School programs have shown to increase students' consumption and knowledge of local and nutritious foods.
- Improved educational performance and behavior.
- Supporting local farmers. With more than 30 million children eating the federally supporting school lunch every day, schools offer farmers a great opportunity to provide safe, fresh food that is easily traceable.
- Supporting the local economy. While most food travels over 1,500 miles before it reaches a plate, schools can choose to spend their dollars on fresh, local produce.

Research that supports edible school gardens

- Increased Consumption of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

• Adolescents who participated in the garden-based nutrition intervention increased their servings of fruits and vegetables more than students in the two other groups. Although further research is needed, the results of this study seem to indicate the efficacy of using garden-based nutrition education to increase adolescents' consumption of fruits and vegetables. (McAleese, J. D. & L. L. Ranklin. (2007).

• Consumption of fruits and vegetables, as a habit in childhood, is an important predictor of higher fruit and vegetable consumption as adults and can help to prevent or delay chronic disease conditions. (Heimendinger, J. & M. Van Duyn. (1995).

GEORGIA ORGANICS
GOOD FOOD FOR ALL

the DIRT

The Quarterly Newsletter of Georgia Organics

Growing Healthy Foods, Farms, & Families • Spring 2009

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Don't Miss

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May 7 – "Why Organic?" Statesboro. Middle and High Schoolers learn all about what organic means and why it's the best choice. p 15

The Health Crisis: Growing Awareness

By Michael Wall



"You can't have a healthy population without a healthy diet. You can't have a healthy diet without healthy agriculture." — Michael Pollan

On the afternoon of Friday, March 20, while more than 100 Georgia Organics conference goers were visiting farms, gardens, and restaurants around the Atlanta area, Michael Pollan was standing at a podium addressing an auditorium full of scientists working for the nation's premiere agency for health promotion, the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

The day-long event, "The Food System & Health: A visit with Michael Pollan," was months in the planning and represented a sincere effort by CDC officials to wrestle with the nation's pressing health crisis.

While introducing Pollan, Anne Schuchat, interim director of Science and Public Health, invited Pollan to jolt the agency's thinking about health, and to "provoke us."

Pollan delivered. One of his first comments directed the scientists to leave their statistics, epidemiology, and correlations behind and focus on the farm. "You can't have a healthy population without a healthy diet. You can't have a healthy diet without healthy agriculture."

Pollan then described the American food paradox: The more American's worry about health, the more unhealthy Americans become. The United States is the first civilization in history to engineer a food system that is actually making its citizens sicker, he said.

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From the Director

The table is set and every one is invited.

"I was blown away by the energy in that tent." - Michael Pollan

There was something magical about this year's conference.

I've been attempting to dissect it and understand why the community spirit of the Farmers Feast was so electric. We had a lot going for us – bestselling author, Michael Pollan, the only sunny weekend in what seemed like months, an amazing line-up of knowledgeable speakers with ideas and solutions that truly work.

We had Michelle Obama digging up the new White House garden that very weekend. We had a generous team of organizers, sponsors, and volunteers giving it their all on the beautiful campus of Agnes Scott College. And we had the tent.

The tent seemed to lend a Southern, revival-like atmosphere – the "church of good food" if you will. It was a hive of excitement derived not from just one group but a collective of many individuals, expertise, passions, and origins.

Sure, Georgia Organics could offer separate conferences for farmers, farm to school organizers, chefs, or home gardeners. But we would never have experienced the same energy if we all stayed in our separate silos.

As Michael Pollan reminded us, our movement finally has "a seat at the table." We hope you will stay connected with us. No matter what part of the food chain you are working on, there's work to be done either individually, in the field, or collectively under the big top.

If you're a teacher or a parent, learn the basics of farm to school and find an entry point to begin educating kids about healthy food in the classroom, garden, or cafeteria.



New Board President Will Harris, of White Oak Pastures, Georgia Organics Executive President Alice Rolls, and Michael Pollan, who is holding a painting titled "Pollinator" by Prudence Carter that was given to him in thanks for his conference participation.

If you're a farmer, invite your county extension agent to your farm and be a resource to him or her to assist other farmers.

If you're new to this local food thing, visit our website and sign up for a weekly box of local farm produce, through a CSA.

And if you're not one of the above, eating sustainably-produced, local food is the best way to start having an immediate impact.

Yours in healthy foods and farms,

Alice Rolls

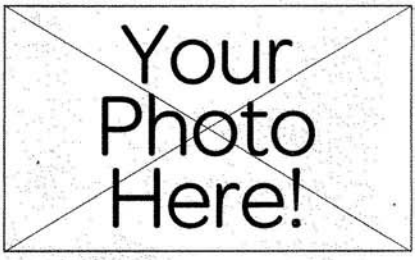
Executive Director

Show Us Your Vision of Sustainable Food, Farms

Beginning with the Summer 2009 issue of *The Dirt*, Georgia Organics will announce the winner of its new quarterly photo contest. The winner's photograph will appear in this space, and be used in additional Georgia Organics promotions. Winners will receive their choice of a Georgia Organics hat, t-shirt, or apron, and full credit each time the photograph is used.

To submit your photo, email digital versions, no later than June 30 and no larger than 2 megs, to michael@georgiaorganics.org. Mail printed copies to Georgia Organics Photo Contest, PO Box 8924, Atlanta, Ga., 31106. Please include your name, phone number, and address.

Submissions will be available for viewing on Georgia Organics' page on Facebook. Georgia Organics reserves the right to use submissions for promotional efforts, and will publish full credit for the photographer.



By the Numbers: The Health of Georgia



25 - Percentage of Georgia third-graders who are obese.

80 - Percent of overweight children between the ages of 10 and 15 who are obese at age 25.

$500 - Estimated cost of materials to install raised bed gardens at Burgess-Peterson Elementary school on Feb. 21 in East Atlanta for a school-wide program to integrate gardening with math and science classes and nutrition education.

2,232 - Number of K-12 schools in Georgia.

$1.1 million – Extrapolated cost of installing similar raised bed gardens at every school in Georgia.

$2 billion - Estimated amount of dollars Georgia spends each year on direct healthcare treatment for obese and overweight Georgians.

8 - Georgia's rank of most obese states in the country.

6 - Georgia's ranking in terms of conventional vegetable production

60 - Percent of herbicides regularly used in conventional farming that contain known carcinogens.

90 - Percent of fungicides regularly used in conventional farming that are known carcinogens.

40 - Percent of additional antioxidants, iron, and zinc that organics fruits and vegetables have that conventional produce does not.

90 - Percent of additional antioxidants, iron, and zinc that organic milk has that conventional milk does not.

33 – Percent reduction of fossil fuel use when farming organically versus conventionally.

10 million - Acres in Georgia farmed conventionally.

3,000 - Certified organically farmed acreage in Georgia.

$500 - Minimum cost of organic certification and inspection process for Georgia farmers.

$350 – Administration and inspection fee for organic certification for processor/handlers, livestock and poultry operations.

$500 - Amount of financial aid available from the Georgia Dept. Of Agriculture for organic certification.

For The Record



"If it tastes like a real carrot, and it's really sweet, they're going to think that it's a piece of candy." **Michelle Obama**, as quoted in the *New York Times* on Feb. 22.

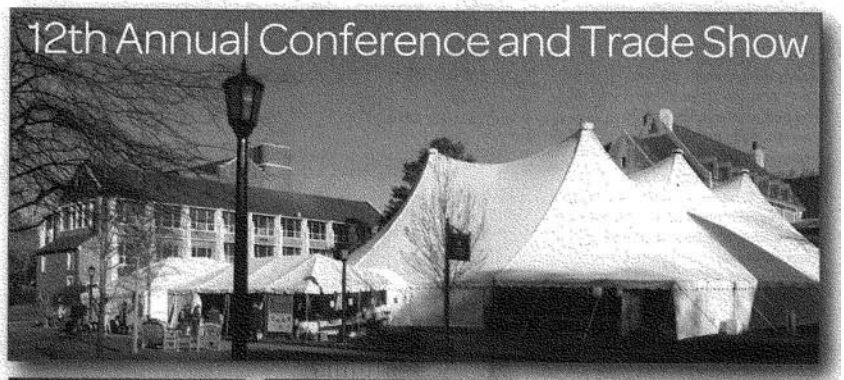
The former first lady, Laura Bush, insisted that fresh, organic foods be served in the White House, but did not broadcast that fact to the public... – **New York Times,** March 10, 2009.

"A real delicious heirloom tomato is one of the sweetest things that you'll ever eat. ... I wanted to be able to bring what I learned to a broader base of people. And what better way to do it than to plant a vegetable garden in the South Lawn of the White House?" – **Michelle Obama**, March 19, 2009.



"[There are] as many arguments as there are for organic agriculture, there are just as many arguments against it..." – **Sen. Saxby Chambliss,** April 1, in a Senate Agriculture Committee hearing.

12th Annual Conference and Trade Show





The 2009 Land Stewardship Award was presented to Daniel Parson for his influential leadership, 12 years of organic growing, service as a former Georgia Organics board member, and work with emerging farmers and dozens of groups promoting the health and environmental advantages of organic farming.



Barbara Petit received the first ever Barbara Petit Pollinator Award for her contributions that include serving as Georgia Organics' board president from 2003-2009 and her continuing work with the Atlanta Local Food Initiative.



Tom Stearns, left, of High Mowing Seeds, and Dan Imhoff, director of Watershed Media, took part in a challenging discussion on the best ways to overcome obstacles to sustainable food systems during the March 21 panel, "Building a Food System That's Good and Fair."

— By The Numbers —

- 1,109 total people registered for the conference.
- 6 pigs were provided for food.
- 136 volunteers enabled the conference to succeed.
- 30 farmers received full scholarships.
- 16 additional farmers received sponsorships.
- 13 top chefs collaborated for the Farmers Feast.



The Georgia Organics 12th Annual Conference and Trade Show came close to being one of the first zero waste conferences in Georgia history. Thanks to GreenCo Environmental, 1,600 lbs of food was diverted from the landfill to be composted.



The Atlanta Chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier (LDEI), a worldwide society of women in the culinary field, awarded $14,000 to Georgia Organics on March 21 to be used for the Local Food Guide publication, conference production, and general operations.

Stimulus Package Includes Agriculture, Educational Opportunities

The current financial crisis isn't pulling punches, least of all for farmers. But there are a few financial opportunities that can help, thanks to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. President Barack Obama's stimulus package includes funding for USDA programs, small business tax breaks, and increased funding for improving broadband internet technology and hospitals in rural areas.

Below is a laundry list of the opportunities available, but be forewarned. It will take patience and resolve to access this funding so please call us if there's any way we can help.

USDA funding included in the package includes: $17.3 million for direct farm operating loans; $50 million in assistance to catfish farmers for increased feed costs; $150 million to support $3.1 billion in rural business loans and grants for rural businesses.

The stimulus package also includes $20 billion in tax incentives for renewable energy and energy efficiency initiatives. To address current credit market concerns renewable energy projects are having, the package provides grants of up to 30 percent of the cost of building a new renewable energy facility.

Farmers and small business owners will get a tax break with the extension of enhanced small business expensing levels and bonus depreciation. Last year, Congress allowed businesses to write-off 50 percent of the costs of depreciable property purchased in 2008. The stimulus package extends this tax benefit to capital expenditures purchased in 2009. Last year, Congress also increased the amount that small businesses could write-off for capital expenditures incurred in 2008 to $250,000 with a phase-out threshold of $800,000. This has been extended to cover 2009.

The package allocates $7.2 billion to install broadband internet technology in underserved and un-served areas, of which $2.5 billion is for an existing program run by the USDA's Rural Utilities Service.

Stimulus money for school kitchens

Georgia was allocated $4,420,793 from the economic stimulus package for school food service equipment grants, which can fund new freezers, salad bars, milk coolers, etc. Georgia applications are being finalized and will be sent to schools.

For more information, contact Valerie Bowers at the Georgia Department of Education at VaBowers@doe.k12.ga.us. Applications will be due June 8, 2009.

Learn more by going to http://www.recovery.gov/ and http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/?navid=USDA_ARRA.

Want to Learn How to Farm Organically? Here's Step 1

An updated and revised version of Fundamentals of Organic Farming and Gardening, An Instructor's Guide, is now available for extension agents, master gardeners, high school teachers, and anyone else interested in learning about the organic farming trade.

The science-based curriculum, designed by Lynn Pugh of Cane Creek Farms and produced on a CD-Rom by the Organic Farming Research Foundation, and Southern SARE, covers many topics, including: soils, soil biology, soil management, plant biology, crop management, composting, marketing, organic certification, instructions for setting up an organic demonstration bed and farmer profile videos.

You can get the CD-Rom free if you are a farmer and a member of Georgia Organics. For non-farmers, they are $5 for Georgia Organics members and $10 for non-members. Call 678.702.0400 to order.

Growing Growers



Photo By Tom Brodnax

During her presentation at the Glover Family/Love Is Love Farm in Douglas County on March 19, Kathy Ruhf, co-director of the non-profit organization Land for Good, described successful methods of passing farms from one owner to another. Navigating through the tax, financial, and legal issues are only parts of the complicated processes of farm succession. Access sample lease arrangements and learn more at www.landforgood.com.

Together, We Can Make Lawmakers Hear Us

Now is the time to reach out to your lawmakers and let them know how critical our local and organic food systems are for local economies, job creation, and human and environmental health.

Georgia Organics is giving you a voice at the state Capitol and in Congress. We are monitoring movements within the state legislature on issues impacting our community. But we won't be effective unless our sustainable food and farm family speaks as one with us. Locate your lawmakers with the League of Women Voters of Georgia Citizen's Handbook, online at http://www.lwvga.org/resources/handbook.html.

Georgia Organics is pleased to announce our membership in the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), a new alliance of farm, rural development, and conservation groups with the purpose of affecting federal agriculture policy. This means as a Georgia Organics member, you will receive more information on national level policy. To learn more, visit www.sustainableagriculture.net

STATE LEVEL ACTION NEEDED

A bill establishing a farm to school program statewide to promote Georgia-grown products was introduced this session by State Rep. Stephanie Stuckey Benfield. The bill, HB 847, was not heard in committee during the 2009 legislative session, but will be eligible next year when the General Assembly reconvenes in January 2010.

If passed, this legislation would stimulate local economies and create jobs in every corner of the state.

— FACT —

- Georgians spend $20 billions a year on food - $16 billion going to out of state producers.
- Food on average travels 1,500 miles from farm to fork.

Lawmakers need to hear from constituents that this is an important issue that needs attention. To take action, contact your state representative and express your support for this bill and encourage a hearing when the Assembly reconvenes in January. To read the complete text of the bill, visit www.legis.state.ga.us

NATIONAL ACTION

In light of recent food security scares, worries over the safety and security of our food has driven Congress to take action. These conversations have instigated the introduction of numerous bills, including:

H.R. 759 by Representative John Dingell would update and extensively expand FDA's authority on food and drug issues as well as mandating electronic trace-back systems

H.R. 814 by Representative Diana Degett would require systems to trace food at all stages

H.R. 875 by Representative Rosa DeLauro would establish a new Food Safety Administration separate from the FDA. The bill would require farms to maintain more detailed records and use "good practice standards," increase inspection of food processing plants and would require imported food to meet the same standards as food produced in the U.S. Georgia Organics has received numerous calls about this resolution and we appreciate the attention being paid by our members. However, in working with our partners around the country, we have no reason to believe that this bill would make organic farming illegal, subject backyard gardeners to inspections or mandate pesticide use. Many believe that this bill is a distraction and our national partners are keeping an eye on its status.



In The Field: Georgia Organics Program Update (January–April 2009)

Farmer to Extension Training: Georgia Organics is partnering with the University of Georgia and Fort Valley State University in developing sustainable agriculture extension specialists. Georgia Organics will pair agents with established organic growers to provide hands-on training and education in each of the five extension districts.

Grower Education: More than 1,100 people attended the annual conference featuring 32 educational sessions, 6 in-depth workshop, and nine farm and food tours. Four of the seven tracks were specifically devoted to farming. Two additional grower education workshops were held this quarter with 44 growers in attendance.

Online Farmer Network: A project to increase connectivity with growers across the state, the farmer network has added 42 new growers so far this year.

Farm to School: Georgia Organics helped host a chef-to-school training and consulted with over 20 schools. The Atlanta Public Schools District Wellness Council approved the inclusion of a Farm to School Program as part of the District Wellness Plan for the 2010 school year. Dr. Hughes, Director of Nutrition Administration for APS, will work with community partners to develop and implement the initiative. Additionally, the City Schools of Decatur Board of Education unanimously voted to institute a district-wide Farm to School program. A three-year plan will be created with key community stakeholders in the coming months. The online F2S newsletter, e-Bite, now reaches over 600 individuals.

Refugee Family Services: RFS has begun its community garden and urban farming project in southwest DeKalb County as part of an urban agriculture mentorship program. Georgia Organics' boardmember, Rashid Nuri, is serving as a mentor and consultant on the project which will establish community gardens, an urban farm and micro-enterprise opportunities for refugees.

Outreach: General outreach activities at conferences, events and partner workshops has reached nearly 3,500 people so far this year.

Media: Georgia Organics received a kind donation of two billboards, one in metro Atlanta and one in Monroe, that tell passersby that "Local food = local economy." Additionally, more than 20 media hits have been registered through such outlets as the Weather Channel, The Gainesville Times, 11Alive News, the Atlanta Business Chronicle, the Douglas Neighbor, the Savannah Morning News, Natural Awakenings, Creative Loafing, and the Atlanta Journal Constitution.

Membership & Board: The Georgia Organics family, which is now made of more than 1,300 members, elected seven new board members and seven incumbents. Georgia Organics also has the following new officers: Will Harris, President; Leeann Culbreath, Vice President; Alex Rilko, Treasurer; Gina Hopkins, Secretary.

Grants: Georgia Organics received three grants this quarter from Les Dames d'Escoffier (farm to school, conference and general support), the Brewer Family Foundation (general support) and the Georgia Department of Agriculture (website and grower education).

Generous Chefs Get Class, and Other Farm to School News

In an effort to educate local chefs on working with children, Georgia Organics and the Mendez Foundation's Seeds of Nutrition Program hosted a Chef to School workshop on Feb. 25 at the Neighborhood Charter School in Grant Park, Atlanta.

During the energetic workshops, some of the region's top chefs led a hands-on collard cooking demonstration with excited 4th graders. Afterwards, chefs were paired with parents and teachers representing area schools eager to incorporate hands-on cooking into their school programming.

"I had been looking for an opportunity to work with a local school to teach children that veggies don't have to be scary," says Woodfire Grill Executive Chef Kevin Gillespie." When this workshop came along, I knew this was my chance to not only work with a classroom but work with an entire school on developing better nutrition for students." To download the Chef to School tool-kit, visit our website at www.georgiaorganics.org and you can also see photos of the fun event on the Georgia Organics Facebook page.

Farm to School Video Now Online - Sharing the Farm to School concept with school and community members is sometimes easier to show than to explain. Now, thanks to Anthony-Masterson Photography, we are able to provide a clear and compelling case for the Farm to School effort. View it at http://www.vimeo.com/3770665 .

Policy update - Every four or five years, an opportunity arises for us to evaluate, defend, and improve Child Nutrition Programs. The Child Nutrition Act, which established the National Farm to School Program, is set to expire in September 2009. While the program received $10 million in seed funding for schools to set up farm to school programs, that money was never actually appropriated.



This student tries her very first mustard green, with Star Provisions Chef Dan O'Brien.

What can you do now?

- Write and call your representatives to let them know that you need their support of Farm to School programs in the 2009 Child Nutrition Act reauthorization.
- Encourage your school district to apply for a new stimulus grant to receive funding for kitchen equipment.
- Attend Georgia Organics' Farm to School Roundtable discussion in May focused on Child Nutrition Act reauthorization and specific actions to consider.

You can find much more details and Congressional contact information on our farm to school website at www.georgiaorganics or by calling Farm to School Program Coordinator Erin Croom at 678.702.0400.

The Health Crisis: Growing Awareness Cont'd from page 1

The CDC officials, nodding their heads in agreement, get it. Each day they work with the alarming facts about America's ever expanding waistlines, and our love affair with cheap, convenient, and unhealthy food products.

The majority of Americans, however, have yet to link the rise of debilitating, and painful diseases with the food they put into their mouths, and where that food came from.

Here's the ugly truth. Since 1980, obesity rates for adults have doubled and rates for children have tripled, according to the CDC.

Nationwide, more than one third of U.S. adults—about 72 million people—and 16 percent of U.S. children are obese.

It's not just a matter of one's size. Obesity has physical, psychological, and social consequences in adults and children. It's been linked to a myriad of serious and often deadly health issues. Dr. Joel Kimmons, of the CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity, says that obese and overweight people are more likely to experience heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, at least three difference kinds of cancers, hypertension, stroke and liver and gallbladder disease.

"Among adults obesity rates do not appear to be increasing as rapidly as they did in past decades, but still remain high, with over a third of people aged 20 years and over considered to be obese in 2005-2006," says Kimmons.

If current trends continue, one of three people born in the United States will develop diabetes during their lifetime. Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in America. It is also a leading cause of complications such as blindness, kidney failure, and lower extremity amputations.

At this scale, the costs of treatment are massive. Between 1987 and 2001, diseases associated with obesity account for 27 percent of the increases in medical costs. Medical expenditures for obese workers, depending on severity of obesity and sex, are between 29 percent to 117 percent greater than expenditures for workers with normal weight.

But the most damaging cost of the nation's inability to reform our food system is the effect on future generations. By neglecting this issue, we're cultivating a nation of the sick and ill.

"Obesity rates have tripled among young adults in the past three decades, rising from 8 percent in 1971-1974 to 24 percent in 2005-2006," says Kimmons.

One study found that approximately 80 percent of children who were overweight at aged 10 to 15 years old were obese adults at age 25 years.

The full story of America's food-related sickness must include a financial component, too. The final cost to our nation's economy is staggering. Each year, obesity-related health care costs total more than $117 billion. Add to that, the total cost of treating diabetes in the United States annually – $174 billion.

"What's staggering to me is that we know these diseases are preventable if people change their diet and ate more fruits and vegetables and other wholesome foods," says Georgia Organics Executive Director Alice Rolls. "Imagine what we could accomplish if we attacked food-related diseases on the front end, imagine the money the country would save on treatment, and imagine what the health of this country would look like if we encouraged healthy diets, enabled sustainable farmers to expand, and incentived the spread of sustainable farmers."

In Georgia, the problem is much more acute than most other states.

The south leads the nation in childhood obesity, consumes the lowest amounts of fruits and vegetables, and engages in less physical activity.

In the Peach State, 28.2 percent of the population is obese or overweight, one of the highest rates in the nation. Georgians also eat one of the lowest amounts of vegetables per capita, even though it's the 6th largest vegetable producer in the country.

Georgia's youth are especially prone to poor eating habits and their the unhealthy results. The Georgia Dept. of Human Resources estimated that 25 percent of Georgia third-graders were obese.

In all, direct treatment for obesity and related health problems cost the state of Georgia $2 billion annually, according to the CDC.

One of the reasons unhealthiness is so entrenched here in Georgia is that it is home to the some of the world's largest agriculture corporations.

Huge industrialized agricultural operations and global food distribution systems dominate the physical and political landscape of Georgia.

The large-scale operations strain local economies, especially in rural Georgia, keeping state poverty rates near the nation's highest. And the poverty, in turn, perpetuates a diet dependent on cheap, processed food.

But there are promising signs of change. National organic food sales have grown an average of 20 percent annually in the last ten years, reaching sales of $16.7 billion in 2006.

Of the 10 million farmable acres in Georgia, 3,000 are organic. That's a small slice of the pie, but it is a 1,000 percent increase since 2003.

Until recently, no formal educational institutions in the state provided growers with organic and sustainable resources. But in 2006, the University of Georgia initiated its first certificate program in organic agriculture and appointed a full-time sustainable agriculture coordinator.

On a smaller scale, Georgia Organics is working with multiple partners to establish new gardens. In the Atlanta area, more and more schools are adopting Farm to School programs, and chefs statewide are pushing local and healthy foods with their menus.

And best of all, the number of farmer's markets across the state increased 588 percent between 2003 and 2008. The number of Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) co-ops, which receive food straight from local farms, has increased 600 percent since 2003.



Dr. Howard Frumkin, CDC disease registry director, Dr. Anne Haddix, CDC chief policy officer, and author Michael Pollan at the March 20 "Food System and Health" event in Atlanta.

Change at the national level is even more crucial, and there are promising signs there as well. Michelle Obama's outspoken support of local and organic food, and the garden she had planted on the White House lawn, has helped propel the good food movement almost as much as the work of Michael Pollan.

So far, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has made promising appointments, directed encouraging policy changes, and spoken of a need to produce more real food and less commodity crops.

In fact, one of Pollan's preferred ways to communicate the current administration's awareness of the need for a drastic food system reformation, is to ask his audiences to guess who said the following:

"Our entire agricultural system is built on cheap oil. As a consequence, our agriculture sector actually is contributing more greenhouse gases than our transportation sector. And in the mean time, it's creating monocultures that are vulnerable to national security threats, are now vulnerable to sky-high food prices or crashes in food prices, huge swings in commodity prices, and are partly responsible for the explosion in our healthcare costs because they're contributing to type 2 diabetes, stroke and heart disease, obesity, all the things that are driving our huge explosion in healthcare costs."

The answer, Pollan tells his audience, is Barack Obama.

When the auditorium at the CDC, filled with the nation's top scientists and researchers with long titles, was told by Pollan that President Obama made that statement, a noticeable murmur of eagerness spread across the room.

Dr. Annie Haddix, the CDC's Chief Policy Officer later said, "Yes, we are at a fork in the road."

In closing the event, Janet Collins, director of the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, said to Pollan, "Thank you for challenging us. Thank you for being a catalyst."

Pollan's time in Atlanta proved to be a catalyst for many things. In addition to his inspiring keynote address at the Georgia Organics Farmers Feast on March 21, Pollan's visit to Georgia strengthened Georgia Organics' relationship with Slow Food USA and Agnes Scott College, and generated a new partnership between Georgia Organics and the CDC.

For example, the CDC and Georgia Organics plan to co-host a screening of the upcoming documentary, "Food Inc" in the Spring.

And, Dr. Howard Frumkin, Director of the CDC's National Center for Environmental Health and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, will, along with many other notable officials and community leaders, co-host the one-day "Atlanta Local Food Forward!" on May 1. The event kicks-off a focused initiative to realize the vision of a sustainable food future.

Within the CDC itself, "Pollan's visit was a catalyst for the many groups who work on food related issues at CDC to connect and consider the organizing potential around food," says Kimmons, the CDC official with the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity. "These meetings will hopefully lead to more linkages throughout CDC and possibly more efficient and coordinated efforts to improve American's relationship to food."

However, the single largest roadblock that Georgia faces is that demand for locally grown, sustainable food is outpacing supply. But there simply aren't enough sustainable growers.

It's a paradox. Georgia produces plenty of food – the state is No. 1 for chicken production, and 6th for overall vegetable production.

Change, the kind that will heal America's healthcare crisis, will have to come from multiple levels.

"We need to get organized and then flex our muscle," Pollan said in his keynote address. "We need to sign those petitions on-line, to track the issues in Congress ..., to turn people out in the hearing rooms, to master the farm bill, to write our legislators."

"Now's not the time to savor the moment or rest."

Please Get Involved – See page 6

Feeding Your Family the Fruit of Your Labor

By Stephanie Van Parys

It's amazing what you learn when you ask your kids what vegetables and fruits they like to eat directly from the garden. To my surprise and delight, I find that just about everything we grow is gladly eaten by at least one of my three children (okay, no okra or peppers). So, all that effort is worth it...

The following vegetables and fruits are meant for planting in May. Brief planting descriptions are included. All vegetables listed fulfill the basic requirements of tasting good, growing untended, and super fun to harvest.



Stephanie and Benjamin plant carrots in early Spring.

Carrots rolled off first out of Oscar's mouth. Why does he prefer juicy carrots over the store bought? "Because they just came out of the ground!" May is the latest we can plant carrots in Decatur. Last May, I planted seven different varieties and started pulling them up late July. Take a garden fork (the one with the broad tines) and pierce the length of the row to loosen up the ground for the carrots to grow. Sow seeds by gently sprinkling over the disturbed row. Lightly sprinkle dirt over the seeds and water daily until you see the sweet sprouts. Thin the sprouts to 3-4 inches between plants.

Basil. It's green, a leaf, and loved by my kids. They run into the garden and pull leaves off, eating them whole. Basil grows well planted in May and will stick with you the entire summer. Plant basil in full sun, about 12 to 15 inches between plants. A handful of compost in the planting hole and around the stem will suit it just fine. Water only when in extreme drought. Basil is a fairly tough garden plant.

We can't get enough of **Edamame/ Soybeans** in our house. Sweet, nutty bean pods that the kids can help you pluck when it's harvest time. We grow enough to feed us through the summer as well as freezing for winter. Push soybeans into well-dug and composted garden soil. The beans should be placed six to eight inches apart within rows and between rows. After about 75 days, cut the plants off at the ground, carry the bundle to your front porch, and pluck the plump pods off. Parboil them in boiling water for 30 seconds if freezing immediately, or up to six minutes if fresh eating. Yum!

When Eleanor was two, she discovered **cherry tomatoes**, eating as many as her hands could hold. We like to sneak tiny bits of tomato into Oscar's food without him knowing – he abhors tomatoes. Plant cherry tomatoes 18" to 24" apart and use a cage system to keep them off the ground. A handful of compost in the planting hole gives a nice jumpstart.

Peanuts are fun! Plant shelled, raw peanuts 8-10 inches apart in a well-worked garden starting in May. Harvest them right before the first frost by pulling up the entire plant and letting the peanuts dry in a covered place, like the front porch. My kids had a great time harvesting peanuts and couldn't wait for me to roast them.

Where to Find Seeds

- Peanuts: www.southernexposure.com
- Carrots, sunburst squash: www.TerroirSeed.com
- Basil, tomatoes, sunburst squash: www.johnnyseeds.com
- Soybeans: www.kitazawaseed.com
- Sweet Potatoes: www.sweetpotatoplant.com
- Strawberries: www.johnsonnursery.com

The only vegetable my two year old will admit to liking at this point is **sweet potatoes**. Sweet potato slips are easily found at a garden center or online. We choose a space that can fit at least 50 slips, since we grow enough to keep all winter long. Rake your soil in to hills and valleys, with 6" high hills about 18" apart. Plant the slips every eight to 10 inches along the hilled row. Water for the first week until the slips start mining for their own moisture and mulch with leaves or straw. Harvest after 90 to 120 days depending on the variety and definitely before the first frost. Cure in a protected place for a week, then store inside your house.

Two summers ago we tested a variety called **Sunburst Squash** that stuck its tongue out at the multiple attempts by the squash vine borer in bringing it down. The plants were sprawling monsters that produced enough fruit to feed at least a couple of my neighbors. Place seed two feet apart in a composted and worked bed. Water well and step back!

Sweet organic **strawberries** are a must for any garden that involves kids (and adults). They can be grown in your garden almost pest free. Yes, there is that occasional slug trail to cut off, but never mind that! Plant as many as you can squeeze in, spacing them six to eight inches apart from one another. Planting this year will yield fruit for next year's spring.

And so I've run out of room. After moments of thought, my kids kept adding items: eggs, honey, pears, apples, muscadines (Mama, say that we eat those in the fall), and definitely Irish potatoes. It pleased me that even though I often work in the garden alone while the kids climb the crabapple tree, that they really are paying attention.

Stephanie Van Parys lives in Decatur with husband Rob, children Oscar, Eleanor, and Benjamin, their two dogs, and chickens. She gardens any time she can in their city garden, and shares her knowledge and enthusiasm for organics and gardening in many ways. Stephanie earned her degree in horticulture from UGA, and serves as the executive director for the Oakhurst Community Garden Project in Decatur.

Going Organic: Program Offers One-on-One Mentoring for Growers

When Andy and Hilda Byrd, owners of the successful 74-acre Whippoorwill Hollow Organic Farm in Walnut Grove, first heard about the Georgia Organics mentoring program, they said, "We wish this program had been available when we bought our farm in 1997!"

Direct mentoring by experienced and proven farmers has proven to be one of the best ways to educate new farmers, help them develop successful farming enterprises, and avoid pitfalls.

"It's crucial to pass the wisdom of experienced farmers on to beginning farmers," says program coordinator Karen Adler. "There's also tremendous support in this program for conventional farmers to transition to organic, and we appreciate the experience that they bring to this process."



Nicolas Donck, of the Crystal Organic Farm, shares his organic growing experiences with a group of mentees. Photo by Anthony-Masterson Photography.

Program activities include on-farm training visits to both the mentors' and mentees' farms, and opportunities for regional farm tours. Georgia Organics provides additional resources and guidance, including materials, information, online resources and a Growers' Exchange, workshops, an annual conference, and other educational opportunities.

But the most powerful aspect of the program is the one to one mentoring. For instance, Terrie Jagger Blincoe is currently in her first season as a future organic farmer. Last May, she bought an old, 14-acre cattle ranch in Clayton. She's a mentee in the 2009 program, and has been paired with Joe Reynolds and Skip Glover of Love Is Love/Glover Family Farm, in Douglas County.

She says the hardest learning curve, so far, has been learning about something the vast majority of Georgia farmers ignore: crop rotation.

"Joe is helping me a lot with crop rotation which is something that is very new to me, very foreign," she said. "It takes a lot of planning and thinking ahead. He's been a big, big help."

The Georgia Organics Annual Conference, mentoring meetings, in-depth workshops, and farm tours, which are outstanding educational opportunities, are important to participation in the mentoring program.

Georgia Organics inducted 18 new members into its 2009 class earlier this year. The mentees come from 14 different counties, and nine are women and nine are men. The program also strives for racial diversity and is supporting three African Americans, two Hispanics and several Burundi refugees.

This program is made possible by a partnership with the Risk Management Agency (RMA) of the USDA, and is supported by the generous participation of the mentoring farmers. To receive an application form, get answers to questions, or learn about serving as a mentor in this program, please contact the program coordinator, Karen Adler, at karen@georgiaorganics.org or 404.633.4534. There are a limited number of spaces available. There is one-time registration fee of $50.



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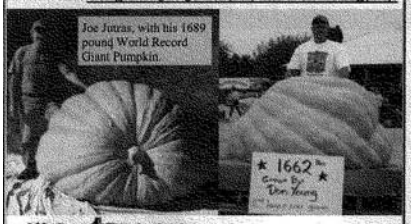

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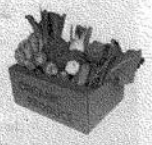
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Earth Share of Georgia - Georgia Organics is a proud member of Earth Share of Georgia, which provides a simple way to care for our air, land and water. As Georgia's only environmental fund, Earth Share partners with businesses and employees to support more than 60 leading environmental groups, including Georgia Organics. If you work for a company that has the United Way campaign find out how your business can offer an environmental choice. Contact Alice Rolls at 678.702.0400. www.earthsharega.org.

Southface - Promotes sustainable homes, workplaces, and communities. Free tour of the Energy & Environmental Resource Center, 241 Pine St, Atlanta. 404.872.3549 or e-mail info@southface.org or www.southface.org.

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DESTINY PRODUCE is a CERTIFIED organic produce distributor located in the State Farmers Market in Atlanta shipping the highest quality organic produce to large and small retailers, co-ops, and buying clubs throughout the Southeast. Destiny Produce also sells supplemental produce to buying clubs/co-ops that distribute CSA/Organic produce boxes to their members. We also offer a direct box program to buying clubs and co-ops, who handle subscription sales - Destiny does the work and delivers the boxes to you! We are looking to buy organic produce from certified organic growers in the Southeast, and we can offer growers widespread distribution and marketing of locally grown organic produce. Please contact Dee Dee Digby at 404.366.7006 or 866.366.7006. deedee@destinyproduce.com.

Events Calendar

For more information and event registration, please visit http://www.georgiaorganics.org/events.

May 7, 2009 9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.
Why Organic? Statesboro, GA
Middle and High Schoolers learn all about what organic means and why it's the best choice. The day will begin with an introduction to Coastal Organic Growers. Then they will see a 20 minute clip from the ongoing bee film, Return of the Honeybee, a project of Empowerment Works which is exploring Colony Collapse Disorder. After the program, students will meet organic farmers, beekeepers, and artists while enjoying an organic brown bag lunch. Cost: $5

May 24, 2009 8:30 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.
Changing the Nutrition Education Conversation: An Experiential Workshop, Atlanta, GA
A groundbreaking experiential education workshop for professionals who talk to people about food and food choice. Leave with a new passion for what you do and lots of exciting ideas to use with individuals and groups in private, corporate or community settings. Cost: $129/$149 up to 14 days prior to workshop, $165 (regular) less than 14 days from workshop. Visit www.fieldtoplate.com for more information.

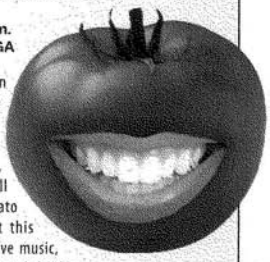
May 30, 2009 10 a.m. -12 p.m.
Volunteer Training for Tabling Events, Atlanta, GA
Volunteering with Georgia Organics is a great way to meet others with a passion for fresh, locally grown food. If you are interested in learning how to represent Georgia Organics at tabling events, we invite you to join us for this training event. The event will be held at our office in the Virginia Highlands neighborhood of Atlanta. Please RSVP at www.georgiaorganics.org/events or contact Stephanie at stephanie@georgiaorganics.org or (678) 702-0400 for more information.

June 13, 2009 9:00 a.m.- 9:00 p.m.
Wild Foods Walk, Seminar, and Local Food Dinner, Clayton, GA
Beechwood Inn Executive Chef David Darugh in conjunction with Author and Herbalist Patricia Kyritsi Howell of BotanoLogos School for Herbal Studies, offer guests the opportunity to forage for dinner. Classes are scheduled to coincide with nature's seasonal generosity. Tickets are $100. For more information, visit www.georgiafoodways.org or call (706) 782-5485.

Events Calendar Continued

June 21, 2009 8:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.
Greater Birmingham Food Summit, Birmingham, AL
This summit should be a big step forward in bringing-local food and food access to the forefront in the Birmingham area. There will be some exciting speakers and representatives from several local food/farm/garden programs. There will also be a continental breakfast and a locally-grown food lunch. After lunch, the summit leads into the Summer Solstice and Sunflower Festival one block away at Jones Valley Urban Farm. Cost: $10. For more information, call 205-706-6405.

Attack of the Killer Tomato
August 9, 2009
1:00 p.m.- 6:00 p.m.
Festival, Atlanta, GA



This August, JCT Kitchen pays homage to the summer wonder, the mighty tomato. Teams of chefs, mixologists, and local farmers will feature creative tomato dishes and drinks at this hip event featuring live music, chef demos, tastings and drinks. All proceeds will benefit Georgia Organics. Cost: $30 per person, $25 for GO members. For more information email jennifer@georgiaorganics.org or call 678.702.0400.

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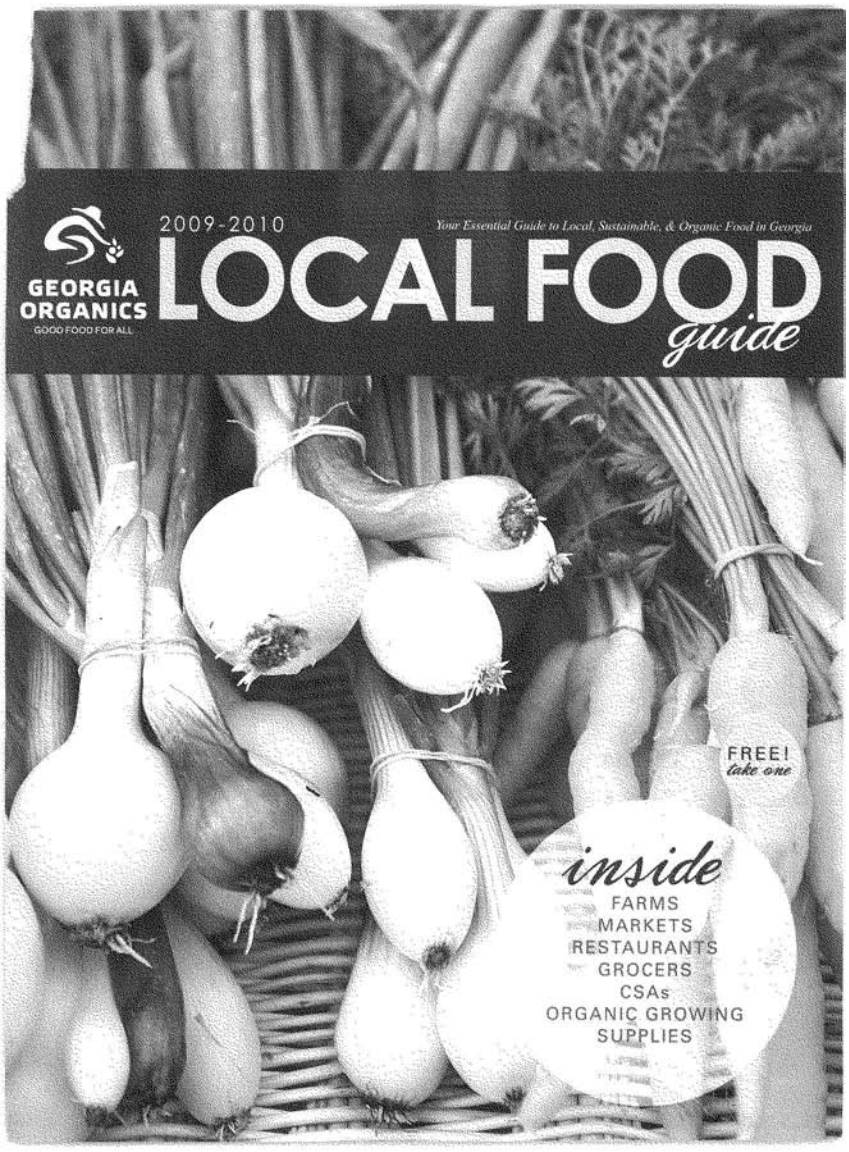
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Your Essential Guide to Local, Sustainable, & Organic Food in Georgia

Published September 9, 2008

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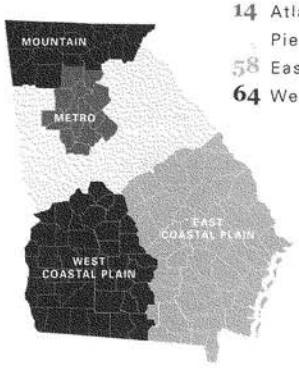
Piedmont
58 East Coastal Plain
64 West Coastal Plain



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Georgia Organics is the pre-eminent nonprofit organization supporting organic, sustainable, and small-scale farmers in the state. We advocate, educate, and publish resources like this one–the third edition of the *Local Food Guide*–Georgia's best resource for connecting consumers with sustainable and organic family farms.

This updated and comprehensive *Guide* includes:

New LOCATOR MAPS, one for each of five geographic regions, to help you find the farms, farmers' markets, restaurants, grocers, and specialty retailers that are closest to you.



Mountain | Atlanta Metropolitan | Piedmont | East Coastal Plain | West Coastal Plain

A new CSAs & DELIVERY SERVICES section where you can learn about Community Supported Agriculture programs and find business that will deliver locally grown food to your neighborhood, business, or home.

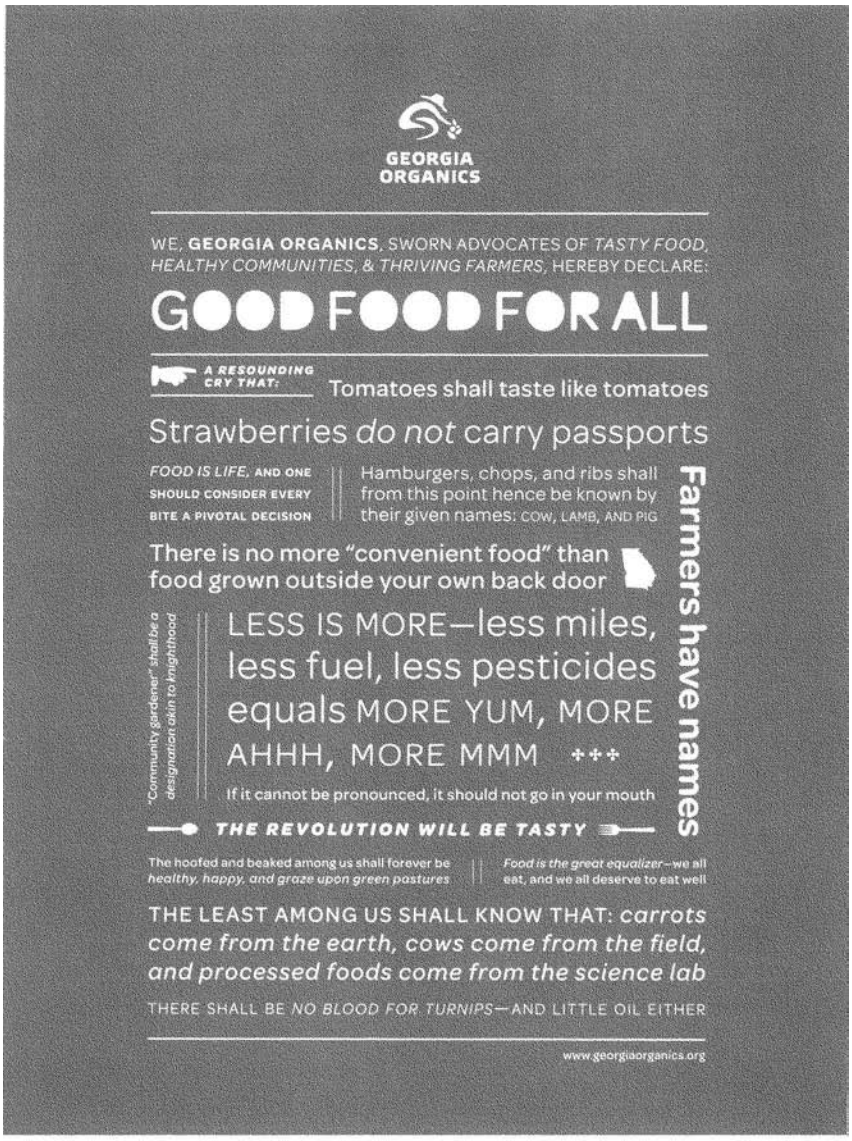
An expanded GROWING SUPPLIES & SERVICES section you can use to find the resources you need to create a backyard harvest of your own.

Why local?

If all of us made one meal per week a local one, U.S. oil consumption would fall by 1.1 million barrels each week. Prepare that local meal with organic or sustainable food, and breakfast, lunch, and dinner become the three most important environmental decisions that you make, every day. It's a decision with immediate consequence: in Georgia, the number one cause of water pollution continues to be agricultural run-off.

GEORGIA ORGANICS IS INTEGRATING HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE, AND LOCALLY GROWN FOOD INTO THE LIVES OF ALL GEORGIANS.

Join Georgia Organics today and become part of the local food movement that seeks to know your farmer's name, celebrate taste, and ensure that all citizens have access to healthy, life-giving food. Contributions are tax-deductible and support our nonprofit organization's work to mentor new farmers, foster farm to school programs, cultivate urban and rural community agriculture projects, and more. Visit www.georgiaorganics.org to learn more and become a member online, or fill out the application on page 81 of this *Guide* to become a member today.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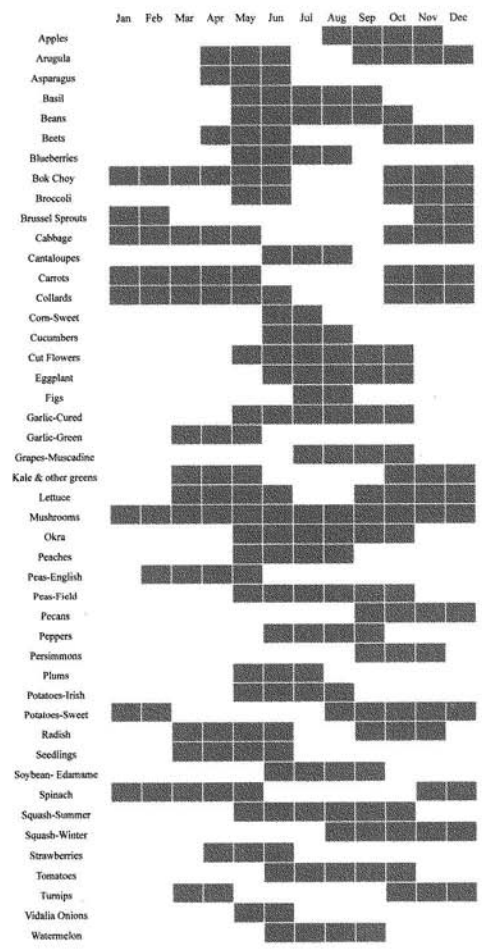
WE, GEORGIA ORGANICS, SWORN ADVOCATES OF TASTY FOOD, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, & THRIVING FARMERS, HEREBY DECLARE:
GOOD FOOD FOR ALL
A RESOUNDING CRY THAT:
Tomatoes shall taste like tomatoes
Strawberries do not carry passports
FOOD IS LIFE, AND ONE SHOULD CONSIDER EVERY BITE A PIVOTAL DECISION
Hamburgers, chops, and ribs shall from this point hence be known by their given names: COW, LAMB, AND PIG
Farmers have names
There is no more "convenient food" than food grown outside your own back door
"Community gardener" shall be a designation akin to knighthood
LESS IS MORE—less miles, less fuel, less pesticides equals MORE YUM, MORE AHHH, MORE MMM
If it cannot be pronounced, it should not go in your mouth
THE REVOLUTION WILL BE TASTY
The hoofed and beaked among us shall forever be healthy, happy, and graze upon green pastures
Food is the great equalizer—we all eat, and we all deserve to eat well
THE LEAST AMONG US SHALL KNOW THAT: carrots come from the earth, cows come from the field, and processed foods come from the science lab
THERE SHALL BE NO BLOOD FOR TURNIPS—AND LITTLE OIL EITHER
www.georgiaorganics.org

GEORGIA ORGANICS
GOOD FOOD FOR ALL

annual harvest calendar





Eating local means eating seasonal. This harvest calendar reflects the diverse array of sustainable produce available from local farms during peak season and season extension periods.

Visit us online at www.georgiaorganics.org

FARMS

This *Guide* includes farms in Georgia, and in some cases just over the border, that meet at least one of the following definitions:

Certified Organic The USDA National Organic Program outlines the strict uniform standards that farms must meet in order to sell their products as organic. Organic growing methods replenish soil fertility, and prohibit use of persistent chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

Certified Naturally Grown This certification program, administered by a nonprofit organization, is tailored to small-scale farms that observe growing practices based on the highest principles and ideals of organic farming.

Sustainable Sustainable growing methods aim to produce food while minimizing damage to the surrounding physical and social environments.

Biodynamic Biodynamics works with the health-giving forces of nature to improve the health of the planet and its people. Farms can be Certified Biodynamic by Demeter® USA.

Permaculture Permaculture is an ethical design philosophy whereby a farm consciously follows nature's patterns to maintain sustainable habitats, dwellings, and living techniques.

Pasture Pertaining to livestock husbandry, grassfed systems that raise livestock on pasture are ecologically sustainable, humane, and result in healthier meat, dairy, and eggs.

KEY

Special icons indicate the products and services offered by each farm:

Produce | Dairy | Eggs | Meat/ Seafood

CSA: Community Supported Agriculture subscriptions are offered by this farm. See page 70 to learn more about CSA programs.

U-Pick: This farm welcomes visitors to pick their own produce. Call ahead to confirm hours and harvest availability.

Agritourism: Farms displaying this symbol host visitors interested in learning about agriculture. Call ahead to schedule your visit.

On-Farm Market: This farm has a stand or store that sells their products, and maybe the products of nearby farms, too.

Bed & Breakfast: Located on the farm.

FARMERS' MARKETS

The farmers' markets in this *Guide* are all producer markets where you can buy fresh produce, meats, and dairy directly from the farmer who grew the food. The *Guide* does not include markets that predominately feature brokers or resellers, or markets that do not feature local producers selling locally grown food products.

RESTAURANTS

All restaurants in the *Guide* are business level members of Georgia Organics. Some of the listed restaurants are committed to featuring fresh, locally produced food on their menus every day, year-round. Others purchase locally produced food occasionally. Georgia Organics urges you to contact the restaurants directly to find out more about their commitment to feature sustainable and local food.

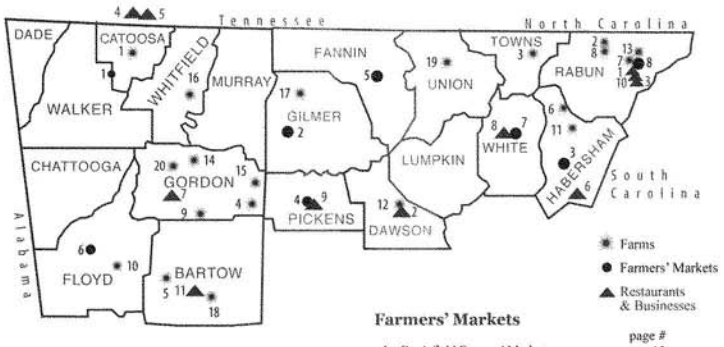
BUSINESSES

The businesses in the *Guide* are food-focused. All support local farmers by purchasing from them.

mountain

Georgia's mountains, known for their lush forests and sparkling waterfalls, support a growing home-grown and handmade movement. Use this section to find sustainable and organic farms in the mountains, the farmers' markets they sell at, and the restaurants and businesses that feature their products. Listings are organized by county, with special symbols for the products and services available at each farm.





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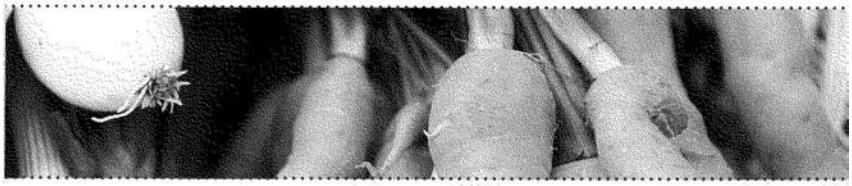


BARTOW

Farmers & Growers

Holt Heritage Farm and Supply, LLC
1235 Euharlee Road, Euharlee, GA 30145
Chaz & Georgia Holt, 770.386.8305
chaz@holtfarmsupply.com
www.holtfarmsupply.com
We offer: over 40 herb/vegetable/fruit crops throughout the year; children's summer farm camps and school field trips on our farm; and a farm store selling exclusively organic farming supplies, plants, and sustainable living supplies.

Ward Valley Gardens
38 Ward Mountain Road, Adairsville, GA 30103
Ronnie & Tammy Farr, 770.773.7234
rtfarr@bellsouth.net
We're a small market garden that uses only sustainable and organic methods. From late spring through fall, we grow a wide variety of vegetables and herbs, which we sell directly to the public.

Restaurants & Businesses

Swheat Market Deli
5 E. Main Street, Cartersville, GA 30120
Kari Hodge, 770.607.0067
karihodge@bellsouth.net
www.SwheatMarket.com
We are a grocer and restaurant working to provide fresh, healthy produce–mostly locally grown–to the public. Come see us soon!

The number of farmers' markets in the U.S. has more than doubled since 1996.

CATOOSA

Farmers & Growers

Burns Best Farm
135 Shirley Lane, Ringgold, GA 30736
Mike & Denise Burns, 706.375.1377
contactus@burnsbestfarm.com
www.burnsbestfarm.com
Specializing in blueberries and blackberries. We also grow a wide variety of heirloom tomatoes and vegetables such as okra, cucumbers, melons, squash, filet beans, and beets. We sell at the Marietta Square Farmers' Market on Saturdays, and by appointment.

DAWSON

Farmers & Growers

P.O.P.S. (Pike's Organic Products and Services) Farms
Etowah River Road, Dawsonville, GA 30534
John Pike, 404.397.7443
serenityeink@yahoo.com
www.popsfarms.com
Registered with the Georgia Department of Agriculture as an exempt organic grower in 2004 and 2005, we will eventually be certified organic for produce, nuts, berries, and fruits.

"Let us never forget that the cultivation of the earth is the most important labor of man. When tillage begins, other arts follow. The farms, therefore, are the founders of civilization."

- Daniel Webster



"She asked me, 'Did you put sugar in this broccoli?' I said, 'No, that's how broccoli is supposed to taste.'"

Alex Szecsey
A & J Farms
Winston, Georgia

Farmer Alex Szecsey and his son Jonathan enjoy the bustle of farmers' markets–vibrant gathering places that infuse communities with a lively air that's all about fresh, healthy foods. Choose an authentic producers' market where you can talk directly with the farmers that picked your food, and channel your retail dollars directly into a nearby farm.

You can find A & J Farms–and their tasty produce–at the Peachtree Road Farmers Market, where one-on-one relationships and superior taste keep customers returning, week after week.

Alex says, "I am constantly learning new things with Georgia Organics."

DAWSON (CONTINUED)

Blue Bicycle
671 Lumpkin Campground Road
Suite 116, Dawsonville, GA 30534
Guy Owen, 706.265.2153
info@bluebicycle.net
www.bluebicycle.net
Here you will find a unique menu featuring locally grown and fresh dishes that change with the seasons. We strive to use the freshest local products that we can obtain. We hope to become your "spot" where you will find your favorite table, taste new things, and talk of what reaching your dreams will be like.

FANNIN

Mountain Fresh Market of Blue Ridge
West Main, Blue Ridge, GA 30513
Libby Stewart, 706.258.4552
libstew@tds.net
Located across from the courthouse and park in downtown Blue Ridge. Open from 8am-noon every Saturday, starting in late May until first frost.

FLOYD

Loving Hearts Pharm & Wellness Center
102 Old Calhoun Road NE
Rome, GA 30161
Janice Holley Houck, 706.234.2862
jelizabethfarms1@bellsouth.net
We are a holistic health center and working farm specializing in happy, healthy living, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, figs, eggs, and seasonal veggies. Call or email for availability. We also raise happy, healthy children, alpacas, and horses–but these are not for sale!

Farmers' Markets

Rome Green Market
2nd Avenue & Broad Streets, Rome, GA 30165
Janice Holley Houck, 706.234.2862
jelizabethfarms1@bellsouth.net
Market operates from 9am-noon, May through October. Specializing in locally and naturally grown/organic produce, eggs, honey, organic artisanal breads, and more. Live entertainment, arts, and crafts. Located at BridgePoint Plaza on the river downtown.

GILMER

Farmers & Growers

Smokey Hollow Farm
2897 Goose Island Road, Cherry Log, GA 30522
Frank & Pat Corker, 706.635.7313
fcorker@smokey-hollow.com
www.smokey-hollow.com
Located near Ellijay. Growing cucumbers, squash, tomatoes, collards, turnips, beets, kale, okra, corn, potatoes, lettuce, herbs, garlic, broccoli, cherries, pears, apples, muscadines, blueberries, and blackberries. We have registered Oberhasli dairy goats and are licensed to sell raw milk for pets.

Farmers' Markets

Gilmer County Farmers' Market
McCutchen Street, Ellijay, GA 30540
Lynn Robey, 706.276.6872
lkrobey@ellijay.com
The Master Gardeners and Extension Service of Gilmer County invite you to attend the Saturday Morning Farmers' Market, starting in early July through the beginning of October, 9am until noon. At the Scout Barn, First Methodist Church of Ellijay, on McCutchen Street.

GEORGIA ORGANICS

Want to be included the next edition of the *Local Food Guide*?

Go to www.georgiaorganics.org/organic_directory/addentry.php to submit a listing.

GORDON

Farmers & Growers

Etc. Farms
3096 Highway 411 South, Fairmount, GA 30139
Chad & Lisa McKinney, 706.337.5496
etcfarms@msn.com
We grow a large variety of vegetables and herbs with a focus on growing during the "off" seasons: fall, winter, and spring. We supply CSA groups and restaurants in Cartersville, Canton, and Ball Ground.
CSA

LeiHall Farm
1678 Riverbend Road SW, Plainville, GA 30733
Rhonda Shannon, 404.310.6967
rhondashannon@leihallfarm.org
www.leihallfarm.org
Certified Naturally Grown farm and Wildlife Refuge. Small, high-quality produce, eggs, and fruit CSA offered June-September. Extra produce available via email. Eggs sold throughout the year. See our website for other offerings.
CSA A

Rise 'N Shine Farm
191 Carpenter Road, Calhoun, GA 30701
Mitch Lawson, 706.676.0825
risenshinefarm@yahoo.com
Rise 'N Shine started in 2004, and grows a plethora of Certified Organic vegetables and plants. We operate two small cold frame greenhouses and farm 5 acres of vegetables.
CSA

Riverview Farms
954 White Graves Road, Ranger, GA 30734
Charlotte & Wes Swancy, 706.334.2926
wcswan@yahoo.com
www.grassfedcow.com
Riverview Farms is a Certified Organic family farm specializing in grassfed beef and pastured Berkshire pork. We grow everything our animals eat, and grain for milling and feed. We support many small urban markets, restaurants throughout North Georgia, and a large CSA.
CSA

GORDON (CONTINUED)

Zio Micu's Garden
334 Baxter Road NE, Resaca, GA 30735
Domenico Giovanna, & Domenic Luca
706.313.9515
dom3372@hughes.net
Handmade Italian pastas, flat breads, sauces, all Certified Organic. We grow all of the vegetables and fruits used in our products on our homestead in the North Georgia Mountains. Find us selling at the Morningside Farmers' Market every week.

Mother Nature's Eden
220 South Wall Street Suite 100 B
Calhoun, GA 30701
Kay Goldberg, 706.625.1952
mothereden@aol.com
Organic food, juice bar, vitamins, minerals, supplements, essential oil, homeopathics, skin and beauty products. We welcome local organic farmers to come and sell their produce in front of our store.

Keeping Agriculture Alive!

HOLT HERITAGE FARM & SUPPLY
EUHARLEE, GEORGIA

Our goal is to help agriculture producers and home gardeners while insuring a safe healthy environment and working to develop a sustainable food shed and living system

Specializing in Organic and Sustainable Farming Supplies and Practices

Fresh Produce & Farm Programs
- Farm Coop
- Children's summer farm Camps
- School Fieldtrips
- 10 Herb varieties
- 30 Vegetable varieties
- Seasonal Fruit
- Farm Fresh Honey

Sustainable Living Products
- Mini Solar Power systems
- "Bee Natural" 100% wild bees wax candle orbs
- Eco Friendly Cleaning supplies
- Canning/Preserving Supplies
- Literature
- Home made soaps and salts
- Farm fresh herbal tea blends

Organic Gardening & Farming Supplies
- Garden Tools
- Vegetable Seed
- Cover Crop Seed
- Landscape Plants
- Heirloom & Organic Plant Starts
- Greenhouse supplies
- Low Impact Pest Controls
- Organic Fertilizers
- Biological Amendments
- Soils
- Compost
- Infused Oils

1235 Euharlee Road - Kingston, GA 30145
770-608-4093 | www.HoltFarmSupply.com

HABERSHAM

Indian Ridge Farm
Echota Road, Clarkesville, GA 30523
Edward Taylor, 706.754.7403
indianridgefarm@gmail.com
Growing vegetables, fruit, and specialty potatoes for restaurants, our CSA, and the local farmers' market.
CSA

Mountain Earth Farm
P.O. Box 2124, Clarkesville, GA 30523
Ronnie Mathis, 706.754.4003
Mountain Earth Farms grows blueberries, blackberries, strawberries, and over 40 vegetable varieties. In the process of becoming Certified Organic. Selling wholesale to area and regional restaurants and produce dealers, and retail at markets in Gainesville, Suwanee, Cumming, and Atlanta.

Homegrown and Handmade
1335 Washington Street, Clarkesville, GA 30523
Annie Williams & Michelle Wetherbee, 706.839.1441
mwetherbee@alltel.net
Local farmers' market dedicated to small farms that are committed to growing naturally grown food. We also accept vendors who create and sell handmade items and other environmentally conscious products. A portion of the produce and sales are donated to the local ministry for the homeless, and the soup kitchen.

Manna To Go, LLC
1335 Washington Street, Clarkesville, GA 30523
Michelle Wetherbee, 706.839.1441
mwetherbee@alltel.net
www.mannatogo.com
Manna To Go is a gourmet food store dedicated to local, sustainable, and organic foods. We also carry fine wines and imported and microbrew beers.

PICKENS

Farmers' Markets

Jasper Farmers' Market
Park & Ride Lot off of Highway 53
Jasper, GA 30143
Kathy Bell, 706.253.8840
ramblewood@ellijay.com
www.pickensmg.com
Open most Saturdays from early April through late October, and Wednesdays 7:30am-12:30pm from mid-June through the end of August. Held in the Park & Ride Lot, near Lee Newton Park and the Pickens County Chamber of Commerce off of Highway 53, near downtown Jasper.

Restaurants & Retailers

Natural Market Place
69 N. Main Street, Jasper, GA 30143
Sandy Gerhardt, 706.253.6933
www.naturalmarketplace.net
After 12 years in Marietta, we moved to Jasper. We carry vitamins and herbs plus local organic plants in season and local handmade soaps. We specialize in gluten-free foods and natural pet food. Quantum Biofeedback services available by appointment.

RABUN

Coleman River Farms
1252 Coleman River Road, Clayton, GA 30525
David Lent, 706.782.1515
crop@colemanriverfarms.com
www.colemanriverfarms.com
We grow a wide variety of Certified Organic vegetables and some fruits. We market to our CSA, restaurants, farmers' markets, and wholesale outlets. Our CSA is set up market style which allows for maximum flexibility and value.
CSA

Buy locally grown. Food that travels twenty miles from the field to your kitchen is more sustainable than food that travels 2,000 miles.

La Gracia
2489 Glade Road, Satolah, GA 30525
Fran & Joe Gatins, 706.782.9944
jgatins@alltel.net
www.simplyhomegrown.org
A small Certified Organic operation in far Northeast Georgia. Specialties: garlic, beans, winter squash, heirloom veggies, and a limited number of seeds for resale. Sideline: wildcrafted preserves and chutneys. Main market: Simply Homegrown community market in Clayton.
A

Ladybug Farms
676 Coleman River Road, Clayton, GA 30525
Terri Jagger Blincoe, 404.403.1129
ladybug@bellsouth.net
Offering an eclectic mix of produce, herbs, and flowers grown using organic methods, eggs from grassfed hens, and honey collected from bees foraging on fragrant wildflowers. All offered fresh and in season at Decatur and Piedmont Park Farmers' Markets.
CSA

Persimmon Creek Vineyards
81 Vineyard Lane, Clayton, GA 30525
Maryann Hardman, 706.212.7380
hardmanathns@aol.com
www.persimmoncreekwine.com
Persimmon Creek is nestled between Lake Rabun and Burton. The rocky soil and the cool mountain air make it perfect for growing grapes. Four varieties are grown at Persimmon: Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Riesling, and Seyval Blanc.

Farmers' Markets

Simply Homegrown
74 N. Main Street, Clayton, GA 30525
Joseph Gatins, 706.782.9944
jgatins@alltel.net
www.simplyhomegrown.org
Small, award-winning outdoor market. Open Saturday mornings in season (May-October). Located in historic downtown Clayton at Butler's II. Concentrating on sustainably grown, local produce and farm items (honey, preserves, salves, goat products, stone ground grain, fresh bread).

RABUN (CONTINUED)

Beechwood Inn
220 Beechwood Drive P.O. Box 429
Clayton, GA 30525
David G. Darugh, 706.782.5485
david-gayle@beechwoodinn.ws
www.beechwoodinn.ws
Most of our seasonal foods are from local and sustainable farms, orchards, and gardens, and much of it is organic and natural. Most of our dinner entrée meats are natural (organic, no hormones, no antibiotics, no feed lots). We are proud of our local suppliers.

Grapes & Beans Café
42 E. Savannah Street, Clayton, GA 30525
Susan Willis, 706.212.0020
grapesandbeans@yahoo.com
www.grapesandbeans.com
Grapes & Beans is a quaint little restaurant, wine, and coffee shop nestled in the North Georgia Mountain town of Clayton, the heart of Rabun County. We serve lunch daily, eat-in or carry-out. Our menu includes fresh soups, salads, several entrees for vegetarians and meat-eaters alike and wholesome homemade treats. And as a member of such a great community we are committed to providing fine cuisine while supporting local and sustainable food systems.

Persimmon Creek on the Square
28 E. Savannah Street, Clayton, GA 30525
Maryann Hardman, 706.212.7972
hardmanathns@aol.com
www.persimmoncreekwine.com
Visit our new tasting room and culinary shop on the Square in downtown Clayton where you can taste the wines from our nearby vineyard. The shop also stocks Georgia farmstead artisinal cheese, locally milled stone ground grits and cornmeal, earthenware from Ryan Gainey's The Gathered Garden, and much more!

www.georgiaorganics.org

TOWNS

Enota Mountain Retreat
1000 Highway 180, Hiawassee, GA 30546
Dr. Suan Freed, 706.896.9966
enota@enota.com
www.enota.com, www.enota.org
Enota is a 60-acre sustainable organic farm, campground, and retreat center on ancient Cherokee land in the beautiful Georgia Mountains, surrounded by the Chattahoochee National Forest. Our property contains waterfalls, crystal-clear streams, and a country store, restaurant, and lodge.

UNION

Wolfcreek Wilderness Farm
2162 W. Wolf Creek Road, Blairsville, GA 30512
Robert Steele, 706.835.8456
wolfcreek@windstream.net
www.wolfcreekwildernessfarm.com
Fresh blueberries. Located in Northeast Georgia near Vogel State Park. We are open for U-pick and sales Monday through Saturday 9am to 6pm, Sundays 1-6pm. Open July 1 through August 15.

WALKER

Battlefield Farmers' Market
10052 N. Highway 27, Rock Spring, GA 30739
Karen L. Bradley, 706.638.2207 ext 3
mktmgr@battlefieldfmkt.org
www.battlefieldfmkt.org
Locally grown and produced products from the region around the Chickamauga Battlefield in Northwest Georgia. Open May through November on Wednesdays from 3-6pm, and Saturdays 8am until noon at the Walker County Agriculture Center. Also in downtown LaFayette at the Joe Stock Memorial Park Mondays 3-6pm from mid-June through mid-August.

Member · Certified Naturally Grown · Certified Organic · Produce · Dairy · Eggs · Meat/Seafood · Agritourism · CSA · On-Farm Market · U-Pick · Bed & Breakfast

WHITE

Sautee Nacoochee Farmers' Market
283 Highway 255N, Sautee Nacoochee, GA 30571
Saturday morning market operates from 10am-12:30pm during the growing season. Located at the Sautee Nacoochee Community Center.

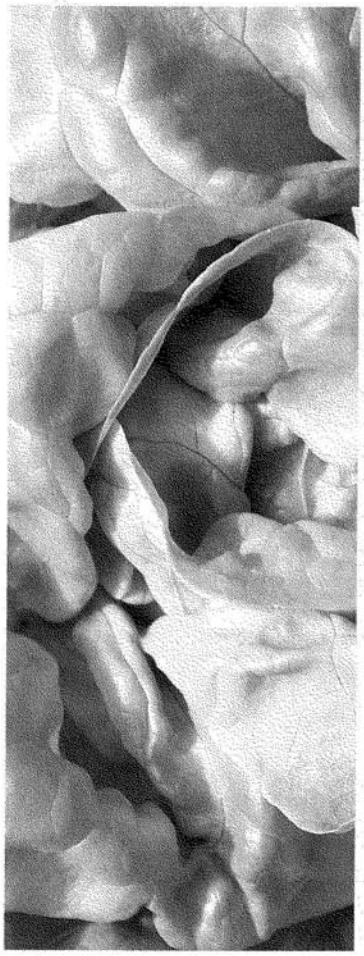
Natural Health Center
783 S. Main Street Suite 9, Cleveland, GA 30528
Cameron Williams, 706.865.6075
Complete nutrition store, with a full selection of bulk foods and herbs. We can help you find farmers in our area.

WHITFIELD

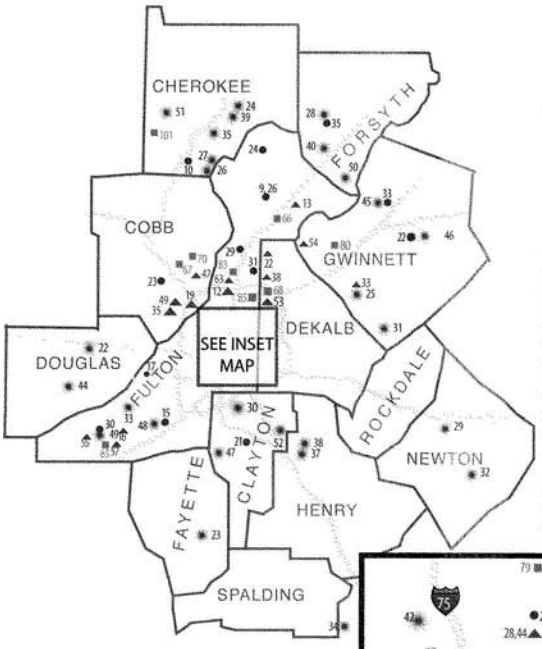
Sleepy Hollow Farm
1421 Boyles Mill Road, Dalton, GA 30721
Randy & Cindi Beavers, 706.259.7647
info@sleepyhollowherbfarm.com
www.sleepyhollowherbfarm.com
We produce Certified Organic medicinal plants and distribute OrganiPharm liquid herbal extracts. We also handcraft our Goldenseal, Frankincense, and Myrrh line of natural skin care products. Available on-farm, Internet, and at the Prater's Mill Country Fair in Dalton.

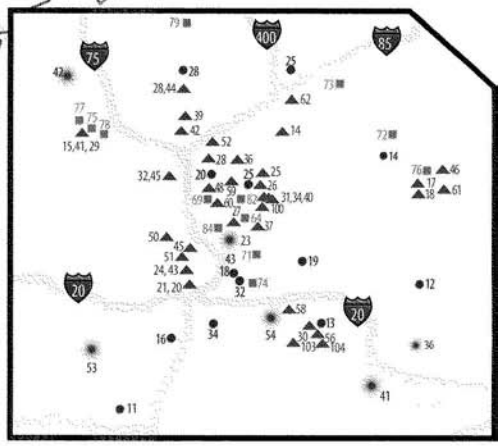
TENNESSEE

Greenlife Grocery
301 Manufacturer's Road, Chattanooga, TN 37405
423.702.7300
1100 Hixson Pike, Chattanooga, TN 37405
423.267.1960
www.greenlifegrocery.com
Greenlife Grocery is a full service natural foods store dedicated to bringing you and your family the freshest and healthiest foods and products available. No artificial flavors, colors, preservatives, or hydrogenated oils. We are committed to supporting local foods and the local economy.



atlanta metropolitan





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atlanta metropolitan

Georgia's largest metropolis isn't only about good eating–Atlanta harbors some farms and growers in unusual places. Use this section to find sustainable and organic farms in Atlanta, the farmers' markets they sell at, and the restaurants and businesses that feature their products. Listings are organized by county, with special symbols for the products and services available at each farm.



CHEROKEE

Farmers & Growers

Blossom Hill Farms
1408 Edwards Mill Road, Ball Ground, GA 30107
Melissa Flock, 770.887.5911
blossomhillfarms@yahoo.com
www.blossomhillfarms.com
Blossom Hill Farms was started out of love for all things natural. We found that there was no greater joy than to step out into the garden and pick anything! We are Certified Naturally Grown.
CSA A

Buckeye Creek Farm
2115 Jep Wheeler Road, Woodstock, GA 30188
Liz Porter, 678.491.5843
liz_por@msn.com
Fresh seasonal vegetables and fruits for local markets, custom growers for the restaurant/food trade. We also grind grits and cornmeal from an old variety of corn using a stone mill.

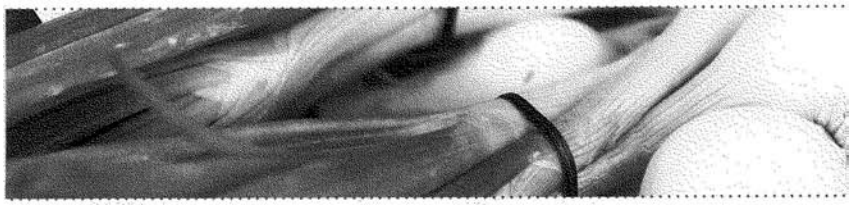
Cagle's Farm House
150 Stringer Road, Canton, GA 30115
Bernese Cagle, 404.567.6363
Bernese@caglesfarmhouse.com
www.caglesfarmhouse.com
Vegetables in season: greens, cabbage, broccoli, lettuce, onions, shallots, potatoes, tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, corn, peppers, sunflowers, etc. Two fishing ponds. Recreational fun for children. Garden walks with the farmer. Parties at the 1838 vintage farmhouse. Roadside market.
A

Freehome Gardens
901 Trinity Church Road, Canton, GA 30115
Mary Anne Woodie & Harold Carney, 770.720.9690
mawoodie@mindspring.com
We are a small CSA/market garden in East Cherokee County, using only sustainable farming methods. In addition to a CSA, we sell our vegetables, herbs, and flowers at the Vickery Green Market on Saturdays, June through August.
CSA

Greystone Farms
50 Cornerstone Creek, Ball Ground, GA 30107
Collin Davis, 770.842.8689
greystonefarms@tds.net
www.greystonefarms.net
Family farm, specializing in heritage breed animals and heirloom vegetables. This spring we will have milk for pets, eggs, and vegetables. On-farm pick-up. Email us to join the waiting list for milk and eggs.

Sweetwater Growers
4060 Knox Bridge Highway, Canton, GA 30114
404.992.0199
james@sweetwatergrowers.com
www.sweetwatergrowers.com
Our family-run business is dedicated to bringing fresh culinary herbs and specialty greens of the highest quality to you. Our herbs and greens are grown hydroponically in a sterile environment. We sell online, at specialty grocers, and to fine dining establishments.

Member · Certified Naturally Grown · Certified Organic · Produce · Dairy · Eggs · Meat/Seafood · Agritourism · CSA · On-Farm Market · U-Pick · Bed & Breakfast



Farmers Markets

Cherokee Fresh Market
362 Stringer Road, Canton, GA 30115
Bernese Cagle, 770.345.6663
bernesecagle@mindspring.com
Located at Cagle's Dairy Farm in Hickory Flat, open every Saturday from 9am until noon from the last Saturday in May through the first weekend in September. Any farmer within 40 miles is welcome to sell at the market.

Grocers & Specialty Retailers

Magnolia Bread Company
2299 White Road, White, GA 30184
Dianne Reinhardt, 770.479.5162
magnoliabread@gmail.com
www.magnolia-bread.com
Magnolia Bread Company specializes in European-style handmade, hearth-baked breads. We bake in a wood-fired oven, heated with untreated wood scraps from local businesses. We are the only Certified Organic bread company in the state of Georgia.

CLAYTON

Farms & Growers

Decimal Place Farm
4314 Almach Avenue, Conley, GA 30288
Mary Hart Rigdon, 404.363.0356
mary.rigdon@comcast.net
www.decimalplacefarm.com
Decimal Place Farm produces award-winning, farmstead artisanal cheeses from our herd of certified Saanen goats. Our goats are hand-raised. We make traditional chevre, feta, and tuma cheese. We market at the East Atlanta Village Farmers Market on Thursday evenings.

Riverdale Chicken Ranch
7690 Lyle Drive, Riverdale, GA 30296
Keith Poole, 770.997.1968
keithpoole@webtv.net
Offering free-range eggs from rare heritage-breed chickens. We also have naturally grown vegetables, including tomatoes, okra, beans, garlic, broccoli, cucumbers, squash, peppers, and greens. Selling direct to consumers.

TaylOrganic dba Split Cedar Farm
7095 Highway 155 North, Ellenwood, GA 30294
Neil Taylor, 770.981.0827
TaylOrganic@bellsouth.net
www.localharvest.org/farms/m7359
www.Taylorganic.blogspot.com
Additional productive acreage at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Conyers and high tunnels are increasing the volume and varieties of high-quality, nutrient-dense produce for CSA families, restaurants, and markets throughout metro Atlanta on a year-round basis.

CSA

Farmers Markets

Jonesboro Farmer's Market
1262 Government Circle, Jonesboro, GA 30236
Tom Bonnell, 770.473.5434
hortta@uga.edu
Open the second and fourth Saturday of the month, from 9am to 3pm.

Visit the Organic Directory at
www.georgiaorganics.org
for the latest, up-to-date listings.



It's healthy for the body, and the environment. This is how it is meant to be done.

Emeka Okona
Village Farm
Atlanta, GA

Farmers like Emeka Okona believe that the more you give to the earth, the more you receive in return. Organic growing methods build healthy, fertile soil that heals the farm's eco-system, and grows healthier produce with better taste, too.

Village Farm's sustainably grown produce–from fresh arugula to turnips–is picked less than one mile from the East Atlanta Village Farmers Market.

Emeka says, "Georgia Organics' educational programs help me connect the dots."

COBB

Marietta Square Farmers' Market
65 Church Street, Marietta, GA 30060
Johnny Fulmer, 770.499.9393
JFulmer@ChurchStreetMarket.com
www.MariettaSquareFarmersMarket.net
Fruits and vegetables, fresh flowers, local honey, herbal soaps, whole grain breads, fudge pies, jelly, jam, and preserves. Open Saturdays starting in early May through the end of August, 9am until noon, on the historic Marietta Square.

Canoe
4199 Paces Ferry Road
Atlanta, GA 30339
Carvel Grant Gould, 770.432.2663
info@canoeatl.com
www.canoeatl.com
Located on the banks of the beautiful Chattahoochee River, Canoe offers locally grown, organic seasonal dishes. Whether dining with us for lunch, brunch, or dinner, Chef Gould provides our guests with a unique culinary experience. We want to support our local farmers as well as take advantage of the quality, freshness, and flavor of heirloom vegetables, quality meats, and local dairies.



Muss & Turners
1675 Cumberland Parkway Suite 309
Smyrna, GA 30080
Ryan Turner, 770.434.1114
ryan@mussandturners.com
www.mussandturners.com
We are a deli by day, restaurant by night, and specialty food store in between. We try to use as many local, organic, and sustainable products as possible. We are always in pursuit of making our food better tasting and better for you. We make almost everything from scratch, maintain relationships with local farmers, and change the menu every four weeks.

Six Beans
1401 Johnson Ferry Road Suite 140
Marietta, GA 30062
Margie Weldon & Amy Waldner, 770.565.1001
greatfood@sixbeans.com
www.sixbeans.com
Eat well and live well with Six Beans! We are your one-stop shop for quick, convenient, and healthful restaurant-quality meals at a fraction of the price. We also make your life easier by offering specially selected wine and gift items. Let Six Beans be your personal chef, creating delicious food from all-natural, whole ingredients. Non-processed food with no preservatives, made fresh! Online ordering, and delivery available.

South City Kitchen Vinings
1675 Cumberland Parkway Suite 400
Smyrna, GA 30080
Tim Gates, 770.435.0700
sckvinings@fifthgroup.com
www.southcitykitchen.com/vinings
Southern smiles and sophisticated tastes come together at South City Kitchen, a Vinings hotspot that has earned popular and critical acclaim since 1993 for merging traditional, regional ingredients with contemporary style. The sophisticated atmosphere conveys the energy of a big city with the warmth of a neighborhood soul food kitchen.

Harry's Farmers Market (Marietta)
70 Powers Ferry Road SE, Marietta, GA 30067
770.664.6300
www.wholefoods.com
We strive to obtain products from local and regional suppliers to offer the highest quality, least processed, most flavorful and naturally preserved foods. Worldwide we support organic and sustainable farming because the future of our food depends on it.

Life Grocery
1453 Roswell Road, Marietta, GA 30062
Lisa Maden, 770.977.9583
info@lifegrocery.com
www.lifegrocery.com
Natural foods market featuring organic produce, nutritional supplements, natural groceries, and bulk foods. Vegetarian café highlights freshly prepared organic entrees, salads, and a living bar, hot bar, juice bar, and desserts. Free lectures, health fairs. One-half mile east of the Big Chicken in Marietta.

Pure Bliss Organics
1165 Allgood Road #14, Marietta, GA 30062
Jon Morgan, 770.579.7665
pureblissorganic@bellsouth.net
www.pureblissorganics.com
We are a Certified Organic bakery specializing in granola, granola/energy bars, and roasted nuts. Our customers include Whole Foods and other health food stores, grocers, restaurants, schools, etc. We have bulk and packaged lines and also do private labeling.

Yummy Spoonfuls
1860 Sandy Plains Road Suites 204-109
Marietta, GA 30066
Sherri Sims, 678.464.3103
info@yummyspoonfuls.com
www.yummyspoonfuls.com
100% fresh USDA Certified Organic baby food. Dairy- and gluten-free, no extenders, fillers, preservatives, salt, or sugar added. 25 flavorful foods for your baby, infant or toddler. Located in the freezer section at Whole Foods and other fine markets.

Member · Certified Naturally Grown · Certified Organic · Produce · Dairy · Eggs · Meat/Seafood · Agritourism · CSA · On-Farm Market · U-Pick · Bed & Breakfast

DEKALB

Farmers & Farmstands

Gaia Gardens
900 Dancing Fox Road, Decatur, GA 30032
Karen Minvielle, 404.373.5059
gardener@eastlakecommons.org
www.eastlakecommons.org
Gaia Gardens is a 5-acre urban market garden situated between Decatur and East Atlanta. We sell our produce, cut flowers, and shiitake mushrooms through our 55-member CSA and at the Morningside and East Atlanta Village Farmers Markets.
CSA

Harvest Farm
2124 Bouldercrest Road, Atlanta, GA 30316
Collins Davis, 404.308.1307
collins@valterrafarm.net
We are a 12-acre sustainable, organic farm inside the Atlanta perimeter. Our fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, and eggs can be found at Atlanta restaurants, farmers' markets, and through our CSA. Sustainability and education are central focuses. Interns welcome, please contact us.
CSA

Farmers' Markets

Decatur Farmers' Market
Corner of Church Street & Commerce Drive
Decatur, GA 30030
Lauren Justice, 404.245.8589
info@decaturfarmersmarket.com
www.decaturfarmersmarket.com
Decatur Farmers' Market, located in downtown Decatur, offers locally grown fresh organic produce, flowers, bread, and other organic food products. Come meet the farmers who grow your food! Open year-round on Wednesdays from 4-7pm in the summer, and 3-6pm in the winter.

East Atlanta Village Farmers Market
1231 Glenwood Avenue SE, Atlanta, GA 30316
Jonathan Tescher, 404.275.4064
info@farmeav.com
Every Thursday afternoon from 4pm until dusk from May through November. Fresh local vegetables, flowers, herbs, music, and local crafts. Located in the parking lot of the East Atlanta Ace Hardware.

Emory Farmers Market
Cox Hall Bridge, 569 Asbury Circle
Atlanta, GA 30322
Emory Office of Sustainability
www.emory.edu/sustainability.cfm
The Emory Farmers Market supports Georgia farmers and allows the Emory campus community to expand their knowledge about healthy eating and sustainable production systems through interaction with farmers. Open Tuesdays June through November, 11am-2pm.

Restaurants

Avalon Catering
2191 D Briarcliff Road, Atlanta, GA 30329
Cathy Conway, 404.728.0770
info@avaloncatering.com
www.avaloncatering.com
Avalon Catering is a Southeastern catering company specializing in local, sustainable menus. We purchase from local organic farms and co-ops to bring incredible, sustainable seasonal foods to your event. Beyond this, we offer an organic look and feel to our buffet presentations, incorporating clean lines, natural materials, and an earth-toned color palette. Our fifteen years of catering experience comes through in our flawless event execution.

Brick Store Pub
125 E. Court Square, Decatur, GA 30030
Mike Gallagher, 404.687.0990
michael@mail.brickstorepub.com
www.brickstorepub.com
At Brickstore Pub, now in our 11th year, we are committed to value, community, hospitality, and quality. Quality for us includes a commitment to offer local foods, in a casual environment with neighborhood prices, and to foster positive relationships with local farmers.

Visit the CSAs and Delivery Services section that starts on page 70 for a complete listing of farm CSA programs and other delivery services

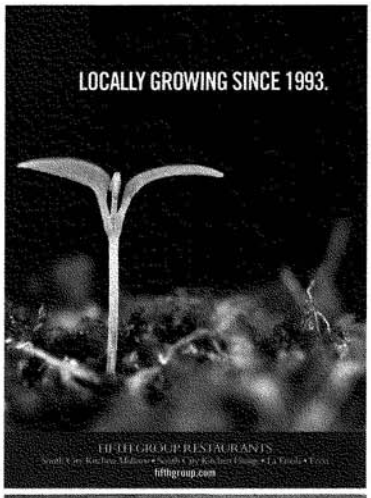
Café Slush
491 Flat Shoals Avenue Suite F, Atlanta, GA 30316
404.525.7587
opulentmgmt@bellsouth.net
A natural fruit smoothie lounge that serves up all-natural deli sandwiches, fresh juices, and an after-hours all-natural breakfast on the weekends. Café Slush is opening a natural foods market next door. If it's available in organic, that's what we choose!

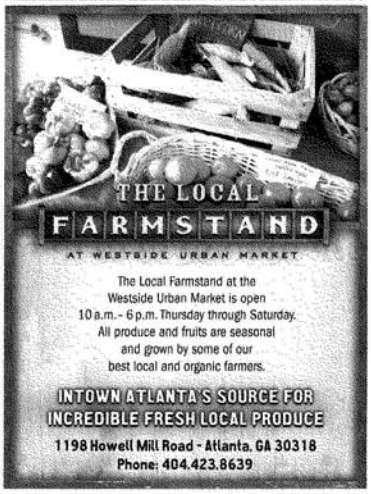
Cakes & Ale Restaurant
254 W. Ponce de Leon Avenue, Decatur, GA 30030
Billy & Kristin Allin, 404.377.7994
cakesandale@comcast.net
www.cakesandalerestaurant.com
Cakes & Ale means "the good things in life" and we hope to offer this to our guests. Cakes & Ale is a small, chef-driven restaurant. Our food is made from scratch every day, and we cook with local, seasonal vegetables, freshly milled grains, humanely raised meats, and non-endangered fish species. These aren't just good practices–they taste better and are more nourishing, too. We hope you will come in and enjoy the experience.

Dunwoody Country Club
1600 Dunwoody Club Drive, Dunwoody, GA 30350
Patrick Gebrayel, 770.394.4492
www.dunwoodycc.org
We are a private club that strives to offer our members and their guests the best in seasonal, fresh foods.

Graveyard Tavern
1245 Glenwood Avenue SE, Atlanta, GA 30316
404.622.8686
philip@graveyardtavern.com
www.graveyardtavern.com
A sunny place for shady people, the Graveyard Tavern is a pub in the hip East Atlanta Village, featuring daily food specials based on local and seasonal ingredients, prepared by Chef Cristy Nolton. Check out our website for music, parties, and events.

Buy directly from a farmer, and eat low on the marketing chain.









DEKALB (CONTINUED)

Restaurants (continued)

Kasan Red
517 Flat Shoals Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30316
John McLaughlin, 404.549.9630
info@kasanred.com
www.kasanred.com
Kasan Red is committed to offering a healthy, seasonal menu. We directly source as many of our ingredients as possible, and choose with discrimination those products that we cannot source directly. We use organic milk, local honey and jams, cage-free eggs, local grassfed beef, local free-range chicken, local organic cheese, and fresh-baked preservative-free breads. Not only do these foods taste better–we truly believe that it's the right thing to do. Located in East Atlanta Village.

Parsley's Catering & The Gardens at Kennesaw
4343 Dunwoody Park Drive Suite C
Atlanta, GA 30338
Marc Sommers, 770.396.5361
catering@parsleys.com
www.parsleys.com
We are a full-service catering company featuring local and organic foods to highlight our "Fresh, Creative Cuisine."

Sawicki's Meat, Seafood and More
250 W. Ponce de Leon Avenue, Decatur, GA 30030
Lynne Sawicki, 404.377.0992
lynnesawicki@aol.com
www.sawickismeatseafoodandmore.com
We are a specialty foods store providing Decatur with fresh, local, and organic products of all kinds–fresh produce, dairy, meats, and seafood. We also bake from scratch, serve sandwiches, and cater.

"Shipping is a terrible thing to do to vegetables. They probably get jet-lagged, just like people."

- Elizabeth Berry

Terra Terroir
3974 Peachtree Road, Atlanta, GA 30319
Chris Driollet & Cynthia Dieges, 404.841.1032
info@terraterroir.com
www.terraterroir.com
We make a concerted effort to buy locally grown vegetables for our salad entrees, and locally raised meat products at our grill and wine patio. Serving lunch and dinner.

The Glenwood
1263 Glenwood Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30316
404.622.6066
theglenwood@comcast.net
www.theglenwood.net
Named one of the "Fifteen Best New Restarants in Atlanta" and "Best Gastro Pub" (2007) by Atlanta Magazine, The Glenwood has also been featured as one of the "Twenty Great Meals Under $25." Chef Ryan Stewart presents an eclectic, seasonally driven menu focusing on local and organic products. This neighborhood pub with a garden deck also offers a thoughtfully crafted wine list and a selection of over 150 beers.

Watershed
406 W. Ponce de Leon Avenue, Decatur, GA 30030
Scott Peacock, 404.378.4900
friends@watershedrestaurant.com
www.watershedrestaurant.com
Watershed is an award-winning restaurant in a converted gas station, specializing in seasonal, Southern-flared fare, fine wines, and old-fashioned, made-from-scratch desserts. Fine dining in a casual, neighborhood setting.

Improv'eat
2241 Perimeter Park Drive Suite #5
Atlanta, GA 30341
Leesa Wheeler, 404.214.9021
Leesa.Wheeler@Improveat.com
www.improveat.com
We source local, seasonal, and "beyond organic" food and prepare these blessings into convenient meals, snacks, and drinks. This is accomplished in a sustainable and environmentally responsible manner to ensure we have life-enhancing food for future generations.

Rainbow Natural Foods
2118 N. Decatur Road, Decatur, GA 30033
404.636.5553
lpallas@mac.com
www.rainbowgrocery.com
Rainbow Grocery, deli, and restaurant is an award-winning natural foods store serving the needs of the Decatur community since 1976. Stay healthy, eat nourishing foods, and use products that are both individually beneficial and ecologically safe.

Sevananda Natural Foods Market
467 Moreland Avenue NE, Atlanta, GA 30307
Steve Cooke, 404.681.2831
stevec@sevananda.coop
www.sevananda.coop
Sevananda Natural Foods Market is a member-owned co-op whose mission is to empower the community to improve its health and well-being. Specializing in fresh local organic produce, bulk herbs, supplements, and grocery items, with a hot-bar deli and salad bar.

The Cook's Warehouse
180 W. Ponce de Leon Avenue, Decatur, GA 30306
Mary Moore, 404.377.4005
mary@cookswarehouse.com
www.cookswarehouse.com
The Cook's Warehouse is Atlanta's premier gourmet store and cooking school, with over 14,000 culinary tools and 600 classes per year. Voted Best in Atlanta 2004–2007, it is Atlanta's culinary resource with three locations: Midtown, Brookhaven, and Decatur.

Whole Foods Market (Emory area)
2111 Briarcliff Road, Atlanta, GA 30329
404.634.7800
www.wholefoods.com
We strive to obtain products from local and regional suppliers to offer the highest quality, least processed, most flavorful and naturally preserved foods. Worldwide, we support organic and sustainable farming because the future of our food depends on it.

Take reusable bags with you on your shopping trips.

DOUGLAS

Farmers & Growers

A & J Farms
6800 Cowan Mill Road, Winston, GA 30187
Alex & Jonathan Szecsey, 770.489.7291
A_Jfarms@hotmail.com
Naturally grown produce without using petroleum-based fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides. We grow a large variety of heirloom vegetables and some fruits. CSA shares are provided a weekly harvest of fresh vegetables year-round. On-farm stand is open from 3-6pm on Wednesdays.

Love is Love Farm
3260 Highway 166, Douglasville, GA 30135
Judith Winfrey & Joseph Reynolds, 678.485.4941
loveislovefarm@gmail.com
www.loveislovefarm.com
A new farm on a historic farmstead, Love is Love Farm is owned and operated by Judith Winfrey and Joseph Reynolds. We grow seasonal produce on 5 acres, focusing on Slow Food Ark of Taste varieties. Visit our on-farm stand on Wednesday afternoons between 4-7pm, from spring to late fall.

FAYETTE

Farmers & Growers

Able 2 Farm
205 New Oak Ridge Trail, Fayetteville, GA 30214
Becky Douville, 770.460.7188
able2farm@gmail.com
www.able2farm.blogspot.com
Locally grown vegetables, herbs, flowers, and fruit. A joint project with North Fayette United Methodist with profits benefitting the World Missions of the United Methodist Church.

FORSYTH

Farmers & Growers

Cane Creek Farm
5110 Jekyll Road, Cumming, GA 30040
Lynn Pugh, 770.889.3793
lynn@canecreekfarm.net
www.canecreekfarm.net
Our small market farm produces vegetables, berries, flowers, and herbs. Field trips, food preservation, and farming and gardening classes are offered periodically. An on-farm market and CSA pickup is offered on Wednesday and Saturday mornings.

Hanson Farms
4701 Piney Grove Drive, Cumming, GA 30040
Boo Hanson & Paula Guilbeau, 770.844.1462
Hansonfarms@comcast.net
Hanson Farms is an 8-acre Certified Naturally Grown farm in Cumming, Georgia. We specialize in growing heirloom tomatoes, along with vegetables and cut flowers. We sell at the farm daily Monday-Saturday and at the Alpharetta and Peachtree Road Farmers Markets.

Sugar Tree Farm
Kieth Bridge Road, Gainesville, GA 30506
Gwen Hammond, 770.751.8635
sugartreefarmga@yahoo.com
www.riverstonespa.com/id35.html
We sell vegetables through a weekly email list showcasing each week's offering. Pick up is at Riverstone Organic Spa in Alpharetta on Tuesdays. Some special orders are also possible. We are not open to the public for on-farm sales.

Farmers' Markets

Vickery Green Market
Vickery Village on Post Road, Cumming, GA 30040
Sarah Reese
sareese@alum.emory.edu
http://vickerygreenmarket.com
The Vickery Green Market offers fresh and local flowers, herbs, fruits, produce, and baked goods. We operate from 8am until sell-out every Saturday morning in June, July, and August.

FULTON

Farmers & Growers

Fairywood Thicket Farm
4545 Cochran Mill Road, Fairburn, GA 30213
Kimberly Conner, 770.306.6187
fairywood2005@aol.com
www.fairywoodthicket.com

We raise elderberries on our sustainable farm and make specialty jellies and jams. We sell farm-fresh brown, white, and green eggs. We are learning about biodynamic gardening.

Hope's Gardens, LLC
1640 W. Wesley Road, Atlanta, GA 30327
Leslie & Dave Lennox, 404.367.1440
hopesgardens@mindspring.com
www.hopesgardens.com
Hope's Gardens makes fresh pesto from basil grown in our renovated greenhouse/garden. Our passion grew from a hobby to a business that caters to pesto enthusiasts at the Peachtree Road Farmers Market and retail stores around Atlanta.

"To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves."
-Ghandi

Keystone Organics
315 Augusta Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30315
Jake Egolf, 404.376.0768
jakeegolf@bellsouth.net
A garden design company offering fresh-cut micro greens, edible flowers, herbs, and live plants. Also residential and commercial design, installation, and maintenance of edible and ornamental gardens and containers.

Scharko Farms
17 Pine Street, Fairburn, GA 30213
Tony & Linda Scharko, 770.964.9074
scharkofarm@yahoo.com
www.scharkofarms.com
Nestled in the city limits of Fairburn are two ol' hippies who farm for pleasure and sustainability, growing veggies, flowers, and herbs. We sell on-farm, at the Fairburn Farmers' Market, East Atlanta Village Farmers Market, and have a CSA program.

CSA



FULTON (CONTINUED)

Farmers & Growers Cooperatives

Serenbe Farms
8457 Atlanta Newnan Road
Chattahoochee Hill Country, GA 30268
Paige Witherington, 770.463.9319
info@serenbefarms.com
www.serenbefarms.com
Located 35 miles south of Atlanta in the sustainable Serenbe community, we offer an extensive variety of organically produced vegetables, herbs, fruits, flowers, and eggs. We also have a CSA program and sell at our Serenbe Farmers' Market.

Truly Living Well Natural Urban Farms
P.O. Box 90841, East Point, GA 30364
K. Rashid Nuri, 404.520.8331
admin@trulylivingwell.com
www.trulylivingwell.com
CSA subscribers obtain full or half shares of produce grown at multiple locations in metro Atlanta, or purchase produce for cash on market days. Educational tours for schools and organizations. Volunteers and interns welcome. Call for nearest location and pickup times.

Village Farm
1015 Berne Street, Atlanta, GA 30316
Emeka Okona, 404.312.5434
A 7,500 square foot garden growing broccoli, beets, carrots, cabbage, lettuce, arugula, mizuna, red mustard, collards, kale, okra, basil, eggplant, squash, cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, sweet potatoes, potatoes, beans, and flowers. Usually selling at the Decatur and East Atlanta Farmers Markets.

Farmers' Markets

Alpharetta Farmers Market
City parking lot behind Smokejack Grill
Alpharetta, GA 30004
Paula Guilbeau, 770.844.1462
hansonfarms@comcast.net
www.alpharettafarmersmarket.com
Located under an old oak tree in historic downtown Alpharetta, this market is open Saturdays, 8am-1pm, starting in late April through October. Named "Best Saturday Morning Excursion" in 2007 by Atlanta Magazine.

College Park Health Center
1920 John Wesley Avenue, College Park, GA 30337
404.622.7778
hungercoalition@mindspring.com
This market operates Thursdays and Fridays from 10am-2pm starting in mid-June through the end of October. Located in front of the Willie J. Freeman College Park Regional Health Center, convenient to the College Park MARTA station. Operated by the Georgia Citizen's Coalition on Hunger.

Fairburn Farmers' Market
W. Broad Street, Fairburn, GA 30213
Linda & Tony Scharko, 770.964.9074
www.fairburn.com
The Fairburn Farmers Market is located at the Old Freight Depot, on West Broad Street in the historic part of Fairburn, at the intersection of Highway 92 and Highway 29. Open every Saturday from early May through October, 8am until noon.

Georgia Citizen's Coalition On Hunger
Lakewood Health Center
1853 Jonesboro Road SE, Atlanta, GA 30315
MLK
3699 Bakers Ferry Road, Atlanta, GA 30331
Southside Medical Center
1046 Ridge Avenue SW, Atlanta, GA 30315
Warren Street
Warren Street, Atlanta, GA 30317
404.622.7778
hungercoalition@mindspring.com
These markets are open to the general public, however, our primary customers are low-income families living in the neighborhoods surrounding the market. A variety of fresh fruits and vegetables at greatly reduced prices. Open June through November. Contact the Hunger Coalition for operating hours.

Green Market at Piedmont Park
1071 Piedmont Avenue NE, Atlanta, GA 30309
Holly Hollingsworth, 404.876.4024
hhollingsworth@piedmontpark.org
www.piedmontpark.org
Green Market is a local market located in Piedmont Park. Live band and two chef demonstrations every week. Produce, bakers, juice makers, gourmet sauces, pastas, cheeses, coffee and tea, artist-of-the-week, handmade crepes, free chair massages, and more.

Milton Community Market
15639 Birmingham Highway
Milton, GA 30004
Jan Waters, 770.777.5875
www.scottsdalefarms.com
Hosted by the Milton Garden Club, the Community Market at Scottsdale Farms Garden Center features local produce; vendors also sell herbal lotions and soaps, baked goods, hand-woven baskets, and local honey. Market operates from 9am-1pm on the last Saturday of the month, from June through September.

Morningside Farmers' Market
1393 N. Highland Avenue NE
Atlanta, GA 30306
Jonathan Tescher, 404.275.4064
contactus@morningsidemarket.com
www.morningsidemarket.com
The Morningside Farmers' Market features locally grown organic vegetables, herbs, flowers, and fruits, soaps, herbal products, pottery, furniture, and other crafts every Saturday, 8-11:30am. Cooking demonstrations at 9:30am by local chefs. Located in the parking lot across from Alon's Bakery.

North Fulton Tailgate Farmers' Market
11913 Wills Road, Alpharetta, GA 30004
Louise Estabrook, 404.613.7670
laesta@uga.edu
Fresh-picked fruits and vegetables, culinary herbs, berries, local honey, cut flowers, and plants. Open Saturdays 7am until sold out.

Peachtree Road Farmers Market
2744 Peachtree Road, Atlanta, GA 30305
Julie Bartholomew, 770.653.5141
manager@peachtreeroadfarmersmarket.com
www.peachtreeroadfarmersmarket.com
Offering fresh produce, herbs, eggs, meat, cheese, and honey from local Certified Organic and Certified Naturally Grown farms–plus artisanal breads, fresh pasta, and other delectables. Open Saturdays April through October, 8:30am until noon. Visit our website for details on special events and winter markets.



I think this is the best picture that's ever been taken of me...it's because I look *really* happy.

Becky Douville
Able 2 Farm
Fayetteville, Georgia

Organic growing has become a way of life for Becky Douville–for the joy of growing, for the challenge of working with nature, and to be a living example of a sustainable lifestyle for her suburban neighbors.

Where will Georgia's next generation of organic farmers come from? If they're like Becky, it might be from the suburbs.

A graduate of Georgia Organics' Fundamentals of Organic Farming class, Becky's first crop at Able 2 Farm was harvested in 2008.

FULTON (CONTINUED)

Riverside Farmers Market
Riverside Park, Roswell, GA 30050
Louise Estabrook, 404.613.7670
laesta@uga.edu
The Riverside Farmers Market brings together vendors and shoppers in a celebration of farming and wholesome Georgia-grown produce. Enjoy events such as music, cook's tours, chili cook-offs, watermelon eating contests, and a harvest festival! Open Saturdays 8am until noon, late May through October.

Serenbe Farmers' Artist Market
8457 Atlanta Newnan Road
Chattahoochee Hill Country, GA 30268
770.463.9319
info@serenbefarms.com
www.serenbefarms.com
Now in its second season, the Serenbe Farmers' Market features local farmers and artisans. Join us from 8:30am until noon. from mid-April through December, for a bustling market just south of Atlanta.

Spruill Green Market
4681 Ashford Dunwoody Road, Atlanta, GA 30338
Corinna Garmon, 770.214.8531
SpruillGreenMarket@yahoo.com
www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets/M12065
Spruill Green Market is a producer-only market, now in its sixth year. Open May through November, 8am until noon. Vendors are local, and sell seasonal vegetables, fruits, meats, eggs, handmade soaps, local honey, shea butter, baked goods, cheeses, spices, and more. Weekly eNewsletter and CSA available.

Studioplex Green Market
659 Auburn Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30312
Dillon Baynes, 404.733.6000
dbaynes@orindacorp.com
www.studioplexlofts.com
The Studioplex Green Market is held on Saturdays from 8am to noon in Atlanta's historic Old Fourth Ward. The market features produce from Sutton Mill Farm in Clarkesville. Leftover produce is donated to the Atlanta Community Food Bank.

UMOJA Farmers' Market
9 Gammon Avenue SW, Atlanta, GA 30315
404.622.7778
hungercoalition@mindspring.com
The UMOJA (Swahili for 'unity') Farmers' Market is a non-profit indoor market, primarily operated for low-income neighborhood families, that carries a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables at greatly reduced prices. Open year-round, six days a week.

39 percent of the U.S. population now uses organic products.

PIEDMONT PARK CONSERVANCY
GREEN MARKET
Presented by KAISER PERMANENTE
Saturdays, May - December 13th
9:00 am - 1:00 pm
Piedmont Park, 12th St. entrance
next to Willy's Mexicana Grill
404-876-4024
visit www.piedmontpark.org
Georgia-grown produce
baked goods
fresh flowers
herbs
cheeses
live music
cooking demonstrations

WORLD CLASS CUISINE
LOCALLY INSPIRED
AVALON
CATERING
2191 D BRIARCLIFF RD NE | ATLANTA GA 30329
PH 404.728.0770 | www.avaloncatering.com

Restaurants

5 Seasons Brewing
5600 Roswell Rd. NE #21, Atlanta, GA 30342
David Larkworthy, 404.255.5911
cchelmer5@gmail.com
www.5seasonsbrewing.com
The 5 Seasons is an award-winning, locally owned American restaurant and brewery. We purchase much of our produce and meats from many small, local, sustainable, and organic farms. From these wonderful ingredients we prepare 20 to 30 seasonal specials a day and pair them with our famous hand-crafted beer. Spent grain, a by-product from brewing our amazing beer, is used to make our fresh bread–the rest is delivered to local organic farms for composting.

5 Seasons Brewing North
3655 Old Milton Parkway, Alpharetta, GA 30005
David Larkworthy, 770.521.5551
event.5seasonsnorth@gmail.com
www.5seasonsbrewing.com
The 5 Seasons is an award-winning, locally owned American restaurant and brewery. We purchase much of our produce and meats from many small, local, sustainable, and organic farms. From these wonderful ingredients we prepare 20 to 30 seasonal specials a day and pair them with our famous hand-crafted beer. Spent grain, a by-product from brewing our amazing beer, is used to make our fresh bread–the rest is delivered to local organic farms for composting.

Bacchanalia
1198 Howell Mill Road, Atlanta, GA 30318
Anne Quatrano, 404.365.0410 ext 22
aquatrano@eatoutoften.net
www.starprovisions.com
Do you know where your food has been? For Atlanta chefs and restaurant owners Anne Quatrano and Clifford Harrison, the answer is yes, all the way from personally planting the seeds in the ground to cooking and garnishing your plate. Passionate purveyors of all things organic, husband and wife culinary team have for the past seventeen years been committed to bringing the local, the organic, and the seasonal to the diners of Atlanta.

A typical meal of meat, grains, fruit and vegetables bought from a supermarket chain takes 4 to 17 times more petroleum to transport.

Belly General Store
772 N. Highland Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30306
404.872.1003
storekeeper@bellystore.com
www.bellystore.com
Offering a combination of the freshest foods, everything is house-made and organic whenever possible: breakfast and lunch specials, sandwiches, salads, fresh mozzarella, organic preserves, hummus, mayonnaise, pesto. Our menu changes according to what's beautiful and in season.

Blue Eyed Daisy Bakeshop
9065 Selborne Lane
Chattahoochee Hill Country, GA 30268
770.463.8379
info@blueeyeddaisy.com
www.blueeyeddaisy.com
The Blue Eyed Daisy Bakeshop is a casual neighborhood eatery located in the heart of Serenbe, serving a variety of breakfast items, classic sandwiches, salads, and snacks. The bakeshop is stocked with scrumptious treats such as cupcakes, pies, cookies, and tarts. A full country breakfast is served on Saturday and Sunday.

City Grill
50 Hurt Plaza, Atlanta, GA 30303
David Gillespie, 404.524.2489
david@citygrillatlanta.com
www.CityGrillAtlanta.com
Our menu is updated daily with dishes made of the finest organic cuisine. Our wine list is enhanced monthly. Please check our menu and wine list online for your favorites, or to find something new to try.

Dailey's Restaurant & Bar
17 Andrew Young International Boulevard
Atlanta, GA 30303
Brad Register, 404.681.3303
brad@DaileysRestaurant.com
www.DaileysRestaurant.com
Comfortable American food featuring steaks, seafood, and pasta. Dailey's Downstairs does double-duty as a casual grill in the daytime and a lounge with live music in the evening.

Buy directly from a farmer, and eat low on the marketing chain.



We wanted a store that helps farmers keep the land that they have and turn it into something wholesome and viable.

Anissa & James Harris
Harris & Clark, Thoughtful Grocer & Cooking School
Chattahoochee Hill Country, Georgia

Purveyors James and Anissa Harris know that procuring handcrafted, one of a kind products creates a livelihood for Georgia's family farms. Customers delight in finding uncommon and delicious tastes that tease their palates and connect them with their local place.

Harris & Clark Thoughtful Grocery goes beyond the ordinary to support homegrown products that someone has put a lot of care and heart into.

James says, "Georgia Organics as a leader in this movement opens doors for people like Harris & Clark to walk through… and open the next door."

FULTON (CONTINUED)

Contemporary (continued)

Dynamic Dish
427 Edgewood Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30312
David Sweeney, 404.688.4344
dsweeney@dynamicdish.biz
Dynamic Dish serves local and organic vegetarian food with a new menu everyday. Meals are prepared in small batches in order to maintain freshness. You can find a daily soup, salad, sandwich, and special. Reservations recommended.

Ecco
40 7th Street, Atlanta, GA 30308
Andy Fox, 404.347.9555
afox@fifthgroup.com
www.fifthgroup.com
Ecco is a Fifth Group Restaurant® featuring a tailored yet casual atmosphere and a fresh seasonal, European-inspired menu. The restaurant combines old-world style with a contemporary setting that makes guests say "this is my kind of place." Boasting one of the most adventurous wine and cocktail lists in the city, along with a sophisticated late night menu, Ecco was named a "Best New Restaurant in America" by Esquire Magazine.

Floataway Café
1123 Zonolite Road Suite 15
Atlanta, GA 30306
Anne Quatrano, 404.892.1414
aquatrano@eatoutoften.net
www.starprovisions.com
Do you know where your food has been? For Atlanta chefs and restaurant owners Anne Quatrano and Clifford Harrison, the answer is yes, all the way from personally planting the seeds in the ground to cooking and garnishing your plate. Passionate purveyors of all things organic, husband and wife culinary team have for the past seventeen years been committed to bringing the local, the organic, and the seasonal to the diners of Atlanta.

Food 101 Morningside
1397 N. Highland Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30306
Ron Eyester, 404.347.9747
eyester@bellsouth.net
www.food101atlanta.com
Food 101 is a chef-driven, neighborhood eatery that features a seasonally focused menu of local produce, meats, and poultry. Food 101 offers lunch, brunch, and dinner.

Highland Bakery
655 Highland Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30312
404.586.0772
www.highlandbakery.com
Milling flour from chemical-free grain is the cornerstone to our bakery's success. With signature whole-grain breads, you can stop worrying about preservatives in your food while you dive into an egg-and-cheese breakfast sandwich, one of our tasty brunch items, or a selection from our many lunch sandwiches. Our grits, a comfort to any Southerner's heart, are stone-ground on the premises and can be bought to take home.

Holeman and Finch Public House
2277 Peachtree Road, Atlanta, GA 30309
Gina Hopkins, 404.948.1175
gina@restauranteugene.com
www.holeman-finch.com
A team of five, including renowned chef Linton Hopkins and mixologist Greg Best, recently opened this gastro-pub. The seasonal small plate menu celebrates Linton's passion for artisanal, whole-animal preparations and locally grown produce. Each detail, from the pimento cheese to the hearth-baked bread is made in-house. The cocktail list, one of the most inventive in the country, highlights unique flavors from local ingredients.

"Strawberries are the angels of the earth, innocent and sweet with green leafy wings reaching heavenward."

-Jasmine Heiler

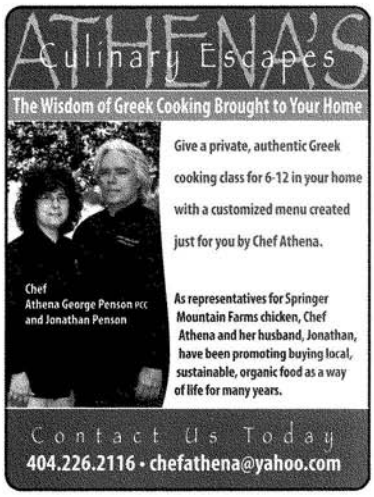
JCT Kitchen & Bar
1198 Howell Mill Road #18, Atlanta, GA 30318
Ford Fry, 404.355.2252
info@jctkitchen.com
www.jctkitchen.com
JCT Kitchen & Bar is a locally owned and operated restaurant serving "Southern farmstead cooking." Our menu changes regularly along with the season and local farmers' availability. JCT Bar is an addition to the restaurant that serves small plates and features lovely local music and Midtown skyline views.

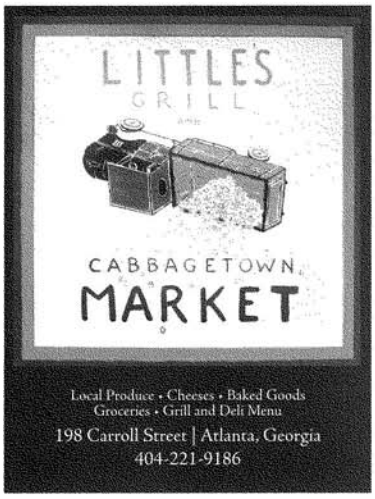
La Tavola Trattoria
992 Virginia Avenue NE, Atlanta, GA 30309
Craig Richards, 404.873.5430
latavola@fifthgroup.com
www.fifthgroup.com
In Italian, "la tavola" means "the table." In Atlanta, La Tavola means a cozy gathering place where friends can enjoy fresh, seasonal, classic Italian cuisine in a comfortable setting. The menu includes traditional pastas and sauces, as well as dishes that evoke the true taste of Italy's premier ingredients. Exposed brick, dark wood floors, and rustic colors frame the 65-seat dining room that overlooks the open kitchen in this neighborhood trattoria. Situated in the Virginia-Highland area.

Lobby at TWELVE
361 17th Street, Atlanta, GA 30363
Chef Gregory Vivier, 404.961.7370
gvivier@ctrxhs.com
www.lobbyattwelve.com
Recognized on Conde Nast Traveler's *"Hot List" and named one of the "Top 50 Restaurants in Atlanta" by the* Atlanta Journal-Constitution, *Lobby at TWELVE is a stylish yet casual modern American bistro that boasts seasonal ingredient-driven food with an emphasis on simplicity. Located in one of Atlanta's hippest boutique hotels, Lobby is open seven days a week for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.*

GEORGIA ORGANICS

Visit the Organic Directory at www.georgiaorganics.org for the latest, up-to-date listings.





FULTON (CONTINUED)

Murphy's
997 Virginia Avenue NE, Atlanta, GA 30306
Chef Gregg McCarthy, 404.872.0904
chef@murphysvh.com
www.murphysvh.com
Murphy's is an American neighborhood bistro serving upscale comfort food that changes with the season, served in a warm, friendly environment. We use a variety of local, organic products and we are committed to the local/organic farmers. Named "Best Brunch in Atlanta" by Airtran's GO Magazine, *the AOL* City Guide, *and one of the "best restaurants for traditional American fare" by* ZAGAT, *Murphy's celebrates 27 years of service as one of Atlanta's best-loved restaurants.*

ONE.midtown kitchen
559 Dutch Valley Road, Atlanta, GA 30324
Chef Tom Harvey, 404.892.4111
tharvey@ctrxha.com
www.onemidtownkitchen.com
One of Atlanta's premier dining hotspots, ONE. midtown kitchen led a restaurant resurgence in Midtown that helped elevate Atlanta's culinary scene to national recognition. One of Bon Appetit's *"Hot Tables" and a "Neighborhood Gem" according to* Gourmet Magazine, *ONE is a one-of-a-kind concept located in a renovated urban warehouse offering approachable, seasonal, high-energy American cuisine. Whether it is small plates or a three-course meal, ONE adds gourmet flair utilizing the freshest local ingredients.*

PARISH
240 N. Highland Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30307
Chef Timothy Magee, 404.681.4434
tmagee@ctrxhs.com
www.parishatl.com
A historic two-story space in an 1890 factory terminal building, PARISH is defined by three concepts: PARISH Restaurant, The Market at PARISH, and To-Go at PARISH. PARISH is committed to environmental responsibility. As a restaurant and market we have the opportunity to promote the sustainable use of the Earth's resources in a variety of ways. We pledge responsibility, from our management and operational practices to organic and fair trade sourcing.

Pizza Fusion
2233 Peachtree Road Suite M, Atlanta, GA 30309
Jeffery Melnick, 404.351.9334
j.melnick@pizzafusion.com
www.pizzafusion.com
The health of our environment is a reflection of the choices we make. At Pizza Fusion we care about the health of our planet and our customers. Buying local when we can, we are committed to and conscious of our impact on the environment and the consumer.

Pura Vida
656 N. Highland Avenue NE, Atlanta, GA 30306
Chef Hector Santiago & Leslie Santiago
404.870.9797
info@puravidatapas.com
www.puravidatapas.com
The menu at Pura Vida reflects the flavors, ingredients, and traditions of Latin America. One of the biggest traditions in our cuisine is the daily trip to the market. As we try to recreate these traditions, it is only natural that we purchase from our local market and farmers, as if we were in Latin America. Our menu features Berkshire pork, farm-fresh eggs, specialty herbs, and vegetables that are the fruit of our relationship with local farmers.

Quinones at Bacchanalia
1198 Howell Mill Road, Atlanta, GA 30318
Anne Quatrano, 404.365.0410
aquatrano@eatoutoften.net
www.starprovisions.com
Do you know where your food has been? For Atlanta chefs and restaurant owners Anne Quatrano and Clifford Harrison, the answer is yes, all the way from personally planting the seeds in the ground to cooking and garnishing your plate. Passionate purveyors of all things organic, husband and wife culinary team have for the past seventeen years been committed to bringing the local, the organic, and the seasonal to the diners of Atlanta.

R. Thomas Deluxe Grill
1812 Peachtree Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30309
Jim Thomas, 404.872.2942
rthomasdeluxegrill@comcast.net
www.rthomasdeluxegrill.com
Our menu is an eclectic celebration for both vegetarians and carnivores of all kinds. R. Thomas features nearly two dozen vegan selections which are always available 24 hours a day. Richard Thomas and his son Jim want to provide you with educated and enlightened food choices to help you be healthy and vibrant. We buy local produce when available, as well as other organic and sustainable agricultural products from various regions of the world.

Repast
620 Glen Iris Drive NE, Atlanta, GA 30308
Joe Truex, 404.870.8707
jtruex@repastrestaurant.com
www.repastrestaurant.com
A husband and wife team operate this French-Japanese bistro with an emphasis on local, sustainable farming. Organic whenever possible.

Restaurant Eugene
2277 Peachtree Road, Atlanta, GA 30309
Gina Hopkins, 404.355.0321
gina@restauranteugene.com
www.restauranteugene.com
Award-winning Chef Linton Hopkins and wife Gina welcome diners to savor an ever-changing menu that highlights Georgia's purest, locally grown produce and naturally raised meats. From hearth-baked bread to seasonal ice cream, the inspired New American cuisine is lovingly prepared with a Southern accent and served with gracious hospitality. Indulge in a bottle from the meticulously selected wine list, or join us at the bar for a hand-crafted libation from our nationally recognized cocktail menu.

The number of farms run by women has increased 86 percent, according to the USDA. Women account for more than 20 percent of organic farmers today, according to the Organic Farming Research Foundation.

Planning a catered event? Ask your caterer to provide local and organic foods, beer, and wine, and fair trade coffee or tea.

FULTON (CONTINUED)

Restaurants (continued)

ROOM at TWELVE
400 W. Peachtree, Atlanta, GA 30308
Terry Koval, 404.418.1250
rkoval@ctrxhs.com
www.concentricsrestaurants.com
One of the Top Ten New Restaurants of 2007 on Atlanta's CitySearch.com, ROOM at TWELVE, a modern American steakhouse, is the ultimate hot spot for drinks, steaks, and sushi. Among its accolades, ROOM received a 3-star review by both the Atlanta Journal-Constitution *and Atlanta's* Creative Loafing, *who stated ROOM is "the perfect modern hotel restaurant." ROOM is known for ingredient-driven cuisine, and is located in one of Atlanta's hippest boutique hotels.*

South City Kitchen Midtown
1144 Crescent Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30309
Dean Dupuis, 404.873.7358
southcitykitchen@fifthgroup.com
www.fifthgroup.com
Southern smiles and sophisticated tastes come together at the Midtown and Vinings locations of South City Kitchen, a hotspot that has earned popular and critical acclaim since 1993 for merging traditional, regional ingredients with contemporary style. The sophisticated atmosphere conveys the energy of a big city with the warmth of a neighborhood soul food kitchen.



STATS
300 Marietta Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30313
Shireen Herrington, 404.885.1472
sherrington@ctrxhs.com
www.statsatl.com
STATS is an upscale sports restaurant serving classic American cuisine featuring local produce wherever possible. Boasting serious food and serious sports, STATS, the biggest and busiest sports bar in Atlanta, introduced the city to a premium food-focused, sports-centered, draught-direct eatery with a high-energy vibe. STATS has become the go-to hang out and event space for sports lovers and the top sports franchises in the city. STATS serves lunch and dinner seven days a week.

Sweet Auburn Bread Company
234 Auburn Avenue NE, Atlanta, GA 30303
Sonya Jones, 404.221.1157
eat@sweetauburnbread.com
www.sweetauburnbread.com
Small bakery specializing in Southern-inspired desserts and breads baked with local, seasonal, and sometimes organic produce.

GEORGIA ORGANICS
Visit us online at www.georgiaorganics.org

"All carrots are not created equal. Some of them are actually more nutritious than others. How the animals were raised has not just a bearing on their health, but on your health."

- Michael Pollan, author of *Omnivore's Dilemma* and *In Defense of Food*

TAP
1180 Peachtree Street, Atlanta, GA 30309
Chef Todd Ginsberg, 404.347.2220
todd@tapat1180.com
www.tapat1180.com
Recognized as "Atlanta's Best Gastropub" by Atlanta Magazine, *TAP is a standout spot for seasonally driven, innovative comfort food courtesy of Chef Todd Ginsberg. An extensive international beer list and innovative barrel wine program makes TAP a convivial place to have a pint. TAP serves supper seven nights a week, lunch Monday through Friday, and weekend brunch.*

The Farmhouse at Serenbe
10950 Hutcheson Ferry Road
Chattahoochee Hill Country, GA 30268
770.463.2622
info@SerenbeFarmhouse.com
www.serenbefarmhouse.com
The Farmhouse features a prix fixe, weekly-changing chef's choice menu. Dishes are seasonal and based on ingredients from Serenbe Organic Farms. Reservations are highly recommended. The Farmhouse serves beer and wine. Located in The Inn at Serenbe.

Member | Certified Naturally Grown | Certified Organic | Produce | Dairy | Eggs | Meat/ Seafood | Agritourism | CSA | On-Farm Market | U-Pick | Bed & Breakfast

Parsley's
Custom Catering

A full service catering company focusing on "fresh, creative cuisine" and custom catering. We are committed to local vendors and organic/sustainable farming in an effort to promote healthy and distinctive cuisine.

Seasonal & Organic
-From Farm to Table

4343 Dunwoody Park | Suite C | Dunwoody, Georgia
770.396.5361 | 770.396.9479 fax
www.parsleys.com

On Urban Agriculture



> "Seeing the children learning practical skills brings joy to me and the families in our community."
>
> *Virgie Sanyang*
> *Director, Pearl Academy*
> *Atlanta, Georgia*

Pearl Academy uses their grounds and greenhouses to teach entrepreneurial and farming skills in addition to the basics on their curriculum. One tangible result is the landscaping business that a group of Pearl's 9-year-olds started in order to work on a restaurant garden. Engaging children in the natural world activates their imaginations, and provides all the encouragement they need to eat fresh and wholesome food.

Environmental awareness, good nutrition, and community investment–helping others learn how to grow their own food–are all integral to Pearl Academy's mission.

Virgie says, "Our students have learned about hydroponics, vermiculture, and chickens at the Georgia Organics annual conference–it's a learning experience, and a vacation."

Urban Agriculture Today, Today

On their first day back at school, Cascade Elementary's students are picking tomatoes. Urban agriculture programs like the third grade's garden are blooming throughout the city, delivering tangible, and tasty rewards. Sample these programs, each examples of how sustainable, organic food production is cropping up in sustainability plans for the future. Visit www.georgiaorganics.org to learn how you can get involved, or, if you live in Atlanta, check out the Atlanta Local Food Initiative's plan for sustainable local food at www.atlantalocalfood.org.

FARM TO SCHOOL

To improve child nutrition and establish the healthy eating habits kids will rely on throughout their entire life, schools are integrating farm to school programming into their curriculum and cafeterias. Lesson plans based on school gardens get kids involved and active–and studies show that kids love eating fresh vegetables that they grow themselves! Farm to school programs also connect Georgia's organic and sustainable farms with school lunch programs, integrating healthy and fresh food into school cafeterias.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

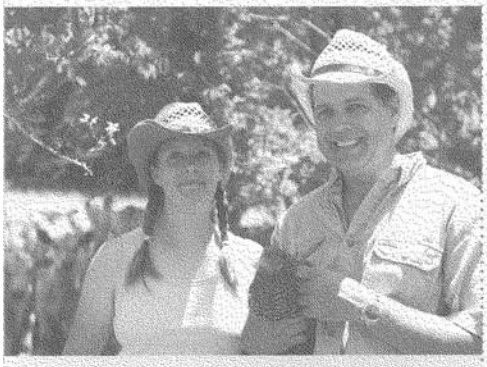
Community gardens bring people with common interests together while offering the benefits of nutritious food and beautiful landscapes. Some cities, such as Atlanta, have created programs that allow neighborhoods to adopt city-owned parkland to establish new organic community gardens. According to the Georgia Department of Agriculture, $600 in fresh food can be harvested from a single 10 foot by 20 foot plot each year. Community gardens aren't only about fresh food; they serve as fertile ground for social interaction, physical exercise, and economic development.

URBAN FARMS

Bringing food production into the city is one of the most effective ways of improving access to health-giving, fresh food, especially needed inside inner-city food 'deserts' where processed and fast foods are the only choice. Community food projects and urban farming enterprises capitalize on the assets found within neighborhoods to connect citizens with land, supplies, and the know-how needed to transform diets, lives, and neighborhoods.

FAITH, FARMS, & FOODS

The faith community is an important piece of the urban agriculture movement. As landowners, churches are developing ministry gardens that serve a dual purpose: provide harvests to food pantry programs, as well as hosting community gardening space for the congregation and surrounding neighborhood. Churches are proving convenient locations for farmers' Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) drop points, and are integrating sustainable agriculture into their environmental stewardship missions.



"We decided to become an active part of the solution."

Tim Young
Nature's Harmony Farm
Elberton, Georgia

Tim and Liz Young know that raising animals in a sustainable and humane way takes time, patience, and heart. Georgia's small-scale, pastured meat and grassfed dairy producers embrace the daily ritual required to give their livestock the best life possible–with no time off for vacations or holidays. The resulting meat and dairy products taste better, and are better for you.

The cows, pigs, and chickens at Nature's Harmony Farm are raised on pasture where they can express their natural characteristics.

Tim says, "Georgia Organics is a momentum-builder that keeps people involved and active to advance issues we care about."

FULTON (CONTINUED)

(continued)

The Hil
9110 Selborne Lane
Chattahoochee Hill Country, GA 30268
Hilary White, 770.463.6040
info@the-hil.com
www.the-hil.com
The Hil features a seasonal, classic American menu created by executive chef/owner Hilary White. A variety of appetizers, gourmet pizzas, entrees, farm-fresh vegetables, and desserts are offered, with many ingredients coming from Serenbe Organic Farms. Reservations accepted. The Hil has a full bar and wine list. Located in the heart of Serenbe.

TROIS
1180 Peachtree Street, Atlanta, GA 30309
Jeremy Lieb & Matt Harris, 404.815.3337
jlieb@ctrxhs.com
www.trois3.com
Recognized as one of the country's Best New Restaurants of 2007 by Esquire *magazine, a member of* Conde Nast Traveler's *"Hot List," and a four-star recipient from the* Atlanta Journal Constitution, *TROIS is a culinary sanctuary featuring flavorful, modern French cuisine. We are committed to the use of local and organic products, consistent with our philosophy of serving high quality French-inspired food. Purchasing from purveyors that have sustainable operations is of the utmost importance.*

TWO urban licks
820 Ralph McGill Boulevard NE Suite B
Atlanta, GA 30306
Chef Cameron Thompson, 404.522.4622
agunderson@ctrxhs.com
www.twourbanlicks.com
TWO is committed to using local and sustainable products whenever we can. It not only provides us with the freshest ingredients, but lowers our carbon footprint and allows our local economy to flourish. TWO also utilizes our own "urban garden" that provides us with tomatoes, chili peppers, and herbs that we use in our everyday cooking.

Woodfire Grill
1782 Cheshire Bridge Road, Atlanta, GA 30324
404.347.9055
gm@woodfiregrill.com
www.woodfiregrill.com
Woodfire Grill indulges Atlantans with seasonally influenced, ingredient-focused Northern California cuisine. The menu changes daily, and features fresh organic ingredients sourced from local farmers. Acclaimed by local and national press, including Food & Wine *magazine,* Gourmet, *and* Wine Spectator.

World Peace Café Atlanta
220 Hammond Drive Suite 302
Sandy Springs, GA 30328
Mayra Cuevas & Chris Bryne, 404.256.2100
info@WorldPeaceCafeAtlanta.com
www.WorldPeaceCafeAtlanta.com
The vision of the World Peace Café is to serve nutritious and tasteful vegetarian food in a peaceful, warm, and gracious environment that is reflective of the Buddhist principles of loving kindness and respect for all living beings. The café uses natural food products and organic, locally grown produce and other foods whenever possible. We also serve a variety of specialty organic teas.

Bella Cucina Artful Food
1050 N. Highland Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30306
Alisa Barry, 800.580.5674
customerassistance@bellacucina.com
www.bellacucina.com
Bella Cucina is an award-winning artisanal producer of Italian-inspired food and gifts. Chef/Owner Alisa Barry creates the recipes, which are made by hand in Atlanta and sold in specialty shops and at the store in the Virginia-Highland shopping district.

Harris & Clark Thoughtful Grocery & Food School
Seiborne Lane
Chattahoochee Hill Country, GA 30268
James & Anissa Clark, 770.463.6000
http://harrisclarkblog.wordpress.com/
Harris & Clark is the grocery and general store for the Serenbe community, featuring prepared foods made from locally grown, organic food. We host cooking classes and tastings that celebrate the province of food from our area.

Harry's Farmers Market (Alpharetta)
1180 Upper Hembree Road
Roswell, GA 30076
770.664.6300
www.wholefoods.com
We strive to obtain products from local and regional suppliers to offer the highest quality, least processed, most flavorful, naturally preserved foods. Worldwide, we support organic and sustainable farming because the future of our food depends on it.

Jack's Harvest
Atlanta, GA
Connie Pope, 404.551.5322
info@jacksharvest.com
www.jacksharvest.com
Mom-owned and operated, Jack's Harvest frozen organic baby food is gently prepared and quickly frozen to capture nature's fresh flavor, vibrant color, rich texture, and essential nutrients. USDA certified 100% organic. Jack's Harvest–because your baby has good taste!

K Chocolat
312C Elizabeth Street, Atlanta, GA 30307
Kristin Hard, 404.437.8585
kchocolat@kchocolat.com
www.kchocolat.com
We are a sustainable company obsessed with chocolate. Our collections are conscious and healthy!

Visit the CSAs and Delivery Services section that starts on page 70 for a complete listing of farm CSA programs and other delivery services

Organic farming uses less water and emits about 60 percent less carbon into the atmosphere

FULTON (CONTINUED)

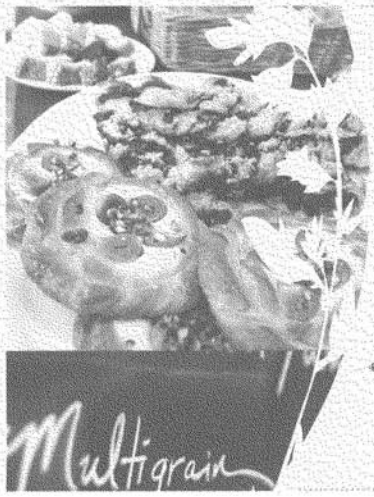
Little's Grill Cabbagetown Market
198 Carroll Street, Atlanta, GA 30312
Lisa Hanson, 404.221.9186
cabbagetown@bellsouth.net
Located in the heart of Cabbagetown, the market features produce from local farmers along with bread, cheese, eggs, and flowers. Prepared foods available at the lunch counter, including hamburgers made with locally raised, grassfed beef!

Return to Eden
2335 Cheshire Bridge Road, Atlanta, GA 30324
Jodi Wittenberg, 404.320.3336
jodi@return2eden.com
www.return2eden.com
Your neighborhood organic market, offers an abundance of locally grown produce, gluten-free foods, vegetarian and vegan groceries, vitamins, herbs, health/beauty needs, natural cleaning supplies, pet products, grab 'n go meals, and more.

Star Provisions
1198 Howell Mill Road, Atlanta, GA 30318
Anne Quatrano, 404.365.0410
aquatrano@eatoutoften.net
www.starprovisions.com
A shop offering specialty provisions including a selection of Southern cheeses and eggs from our chickens. We sell organic local honey, house-cured charcuterie handcrafted from local pigs, and bakery items using grains from Lindley Mills in Graham, NC.

GEORGIA ORGANICS

Support Georgia's sustainable farming community by becoming a member of Georgia Organics today at www.georgiaorganics.org/join.



RESTAURANT EUGENE &
HOLEMAN AND FINCH PUBLIC HOUSE

are happy to announce the opening of

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CROISSANTS | SWEET PASTRIES | HOUSE MADE BAGELS | CIABATTA | MULTIGRAIN BOULES
WHOLE WHEAT LOAVES AND MUCH, MUCH MORE

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404-350-8877

H&F BREAD CO

The Cook's Warehouse
Midtown
549-1 Amsterdam Avenue NE, Atlanta, GA 30306
404.815.4993
Brookhaven
4062 Peachtree Road, Atlanta, GA 30319
404.949.9945
Mary Moore
mary@cookswarehouse.com
www.cookswarehouse.com
The Cook's Warehouse is Atlanta's premier gourmet store and cooking school, with over 14,000 culinary tools and 600 classes per year. Voted Best in Atlanta 2004–2007, it is Atlanta's culinary resource with three locations: Midtown, Brookhaven, and Decatur.

The Local Farmstand
1198 Howell Mill Road, Atlanta, GA 30318
Judith Winfrey, 404.423.8639
loveislovefarm@gmail.com
www.loveislovefarm.com
The Local Farmstand is open year-round Thursday through Saturday. All produce and fruits are seasonal and grown by some of Atlanta's best local and organic farmers. We are farmer-owned and operated!

Via Elisa Fresh Pasta
1750 C Howell Mill Road NW, Atlanta, GA 30318
Elisa Gambino, 404.605.0668
elisa@viaelisa.com
www.viaelisa.com
Specialty cheeses, extra-virgin olive oils, fresh pasta, and ravioli made from local organic flour and free-range eggs. In addition to the store, we also sell at the Peachtree Road Farmers Market. Walk-in customers can purchase gnocchi on Thursdays, and cannelloni on Saturdays.

Whole Foods Market
Buckhead
77 W. Paces Ferry Road, Atlanta, GA 30305
404.324.4100
Midtown
650 Ponce de Leon Avenue NE, Atlanta, GA 30308
404.853.1681
Sandy Springs
5930 Roswell Road, Atlanta, GA 30328
404.236.0810
www.wholefoods.com
We strive to obtain products from local and regional suppliers to offer the highest quality, least processed, most flavorful and naturally preserved foods. Worldwide, we support organic and sustainable farming because the future of our food depends on it.

GWINNETT

Bountiful Bohemian Farms
21 Lester Road, Lawrenceville, GA 30044
Jeannie Wrightson, 770.309.1232
jeanniela11@hotmail.com
Fruit and berries that should be producing well in summer 2009.

Dillwood Farms
4000 Brushy Fork Road, Loganville, GA 30052
Doug Dillard, 404.965.3683
georgiaproduce@dillwoodfarms.com
www.dillwoodfarms.com
Dillwood Farms is oriented to achieve organic certification. While chemical-free, we do not yet have certification, but produce only naturally grown fruits and vegetables.

Okie Dokie Farm
4020 Westbrook Road, Suwanee, GA 30024
Sharon Strube, 770.945.8003
okiedokiefarm@hotmail.com
www.localharvest.org/farms/M608
Small, quality farm specializing in potatoes, tomatoes, blueberries, bay leaves, and more. We market May through August at the Saturday Suwanee Farmers' Market. We grow our veggies with a smile.

Phoenix Gardens, LLC
1180 Hiram Davis Road, Lawrenceville, GA 30045
Brennan & Gwendolyn Washington, 770.513.1563
info@phoenixgardens.net
www.phoenixgardens.net
Phoenix Gardens is a naturally sustainable grower of heirloom tomatoes, peppers, specialty melons, cucumbers, onions, and other crops. In the fall, we carry all types of winter crops such as collards, kale, mustard, and turnip greens.

GWINNETT (CONTINUED)

Lawrenceville Farmers Market
On the Square, Lawrenceville, GA 30046
Brennan Washington, 678.318.4092
bwashington@touchstonehomes.com
Open every Saturday from summer solstice through fall equinox, 8am until noon. On the Square across from the courthouse.

Suwanee Farmers' Market
373 Highway 23, Suwanee, GA 30024
Amy Doherty, 770.945.8996 ext 335
adoherty@suwanee.com
www.suwanee.com
Our farmers provide fresh, locally grown produce, herbs, honey, plants, bread, and meat. The market is open May through October on Saturday mornings, from 8am until noon, culminating with the Suwanee Day Festival. Located in Town Center Park across from City Hall.

L'Thai Fine Organic Cuisine & Wine Bar
4880 Lawrenceville Highway Suite 14-16
Tucker, GA 30084
Pithya Kongthavorn, 770.491.9948
pithya@lethai.com
www.lethai.com
L'Thai is committed to serving authentic Thai food prepared with the finest ingredients, spices, and herbs. We believe each morsel of food impacts who we are and how we process our thoughts. Inner peace is likely when the body is properly nurtured.

The Bleu House Café
108 Cemetery Street, Norcross, GA 30071
Maureen Adams, 770.209.0016
adams55@comcast.com
www.bleuhousecafe.com
We are a small café that serves sandwiches, salads and soups. We have been incorporating organic items into our menu, and have talked to some local farmers about becoming suppliers. We plan to start a market that offers local produce, meats, and cheeses in spring-summer 2009.

Whole Foods Market (Duluth)
5945 State Bridge Road, Duluth, GA 30097
678.514.2400
www.wholefoods.com
We strive to obtain products from local and regional suppliers to offer the highest quality, least processed, most flavorful and naturally preserved foods. Worldwide, we support organic and sustainable farming because the future of our food depends on it.

HENRY

Garden of Eatin' of Henry County
950 Eagles Landing Parkway #316
Stockbridge, GA 30281
Tracy Everitt & Adrian Moore, 678.575.9891
gardenofeatinatl@gmail.com
Reduce fossil fuel use by joining our farm's Eat Local members. Henry County-grown veggies and fresh herbs, often harvested the same day from our farm in McDonough, are available through CSA full and half shares for pick-up/delivery in May-October 2009. Email for details and membership options.

CSA

Green Acres Naturally Grown Farms, Inc.
P.O. Box 2686, Stockbridge, GA 30281
Jennifer Brooks, 404.680.2394
jrbrook1@bellsouth.net
Green Acres Naturally Grown Farms, Inc. is a teaching, demonstration, and research farm which provides students and community exposure to basic farming, gardening, horticultural, and conservation practices. Our products include fruits, vegetables, nuts, herbs, native plants, and specialty crops.

NEWTON

Crystal Organic Farm
425 N. Johnson Street, Newborn, GA 30056
Nicolas Donck, 770.784.6571
madnic@mindspring.com
Crystal Organic Farm is a 13-year old Certified Organic farm located one hour east of Atlanta. We grow fruits, flowers, and vegetables year-round in

high tunnels. Our mission is to be a successful farm providing fresh, clean food.

Double B Farm
915 Lake Stone Lea Drive, Oxford, GA 30054
Brady Bala, 404.456.4333
doublebeefarm@gmail.com
www.conyers.locallygrown.net
We are a small farm dedicated to quality. We have a great passion for honeybees that we enjoy sharing every chance we can. Come grow with us as we continue to build a strong sustainable operation.
CSA

SPALDING

Farmer Jeff's Produce
P.O. Box 213, Orchard Hill, GA 30266
Jeffrey Collins, 404.895.6422
farmerjeff@mindspring.com
www.farmerjeff.com
Farmer Jeff grows heirloom vegetables, herbs, and small fruit. The goal of the farm is to develop a system that blends organics, permaculture, and biodynamics into a productive sustainable enterprise. You can find Farmer Jeff at the Peachtree Road Farmers Market.
CSA

"Your health is inseparable from the health of the whole food chain that you're a part of ... there's a direct connection between the health of the soil, the health of the plants, the health of the animals, and you as eater. We're not just eating piles of chemicals that we can get from anywhere. All carrots are not created equal. Some of them are actually more nutritious than others. How the animals were raised has not just a bearing on their health, but on your health."

Michael Pollan, author of *Omnivore's Dilemma* and *In Defense of Food*.





piedmont



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Nestled into the rolling hills of the Piedmont, you'll find a thriving local food scene focused on building local economies and rural-urban connections. Use this section to find sustainable and organic farms in the Piedmont, the farmers' markets they sell at, and the restaurants and businesses that feature their products. Listings are organized by county, with special symbols for the products and services available at each farm.



BIBB

Farmers' Markets

City Market on the Green
Poplar & MLK Boulevard, Macon, GA 31201
Naomi Davis, 478.836.4564
davisfarmscsa@aol.com
http://maconmarket.blogspot.com
City Market on the Green is Macon's downtown market for locally grown produce, plants, herbs, crafts, handmade soups and lotions, breads, and local entertainment. Open Saturdays 8am until noon, rain or shine, April to December.

Restaurants & Businesses

Mia's Health Foods
3105 Vineville Avenue, Macon, GA 31204
Anabel Cunningham, 478.742.0624
mias3107@cbi.mgacoxmail.com
www.miashealthfood.com
We strive to educate people in good eating habits, supplementation, exercise, and spiritual health. Along with providing knowledgeable and friendly service, Mia's sells organic produce, meats, and dry foods as well as high quality vitamins, minerals, and supplements.

CARROLL

Farmers & Growers

Crager-Hager Farm
2314 Pleasant Ridge Road, Bremen, GA 30110
Wendy Crager, 770.537.3720
wcrager@yahoo.com
www.gonzogourmet.com
Diverse vegetables and fruit grown on 3 acres and in unheated greenhouses. Specialties: garlic, shiitake mushrooms, spinach, lettuce, arugula, strawberries, blueberries, tomatoes, basil. Vendor at Cotton Mill Farmers Market in Carrollton. Member Farmers' Fresh Food Network.

CSA

Garmon Family Farm
337 Old Four Notch Road, Whitesburg, GA 30185
Larry & Corinna Garmon, 770.214.8531
garmonfamilyfarm@earthlink.net
www.localharvest.org/farms/M7513
Best known for our blueberries, we are a small family farm located approximately one hour west of Atlanta. We have blueberries, muscadines, scuppernongs, pears, apples, seasonal garden produce, herbs, free-range eggs, and flowers. We grow mostly heirloom and specialty vegetables.

CSA U

CARROLL (CONTINUED)

Farmers & Growers (continued)

Hodge Ranch, LLC
3267 Tyus Carrollton Road, Carrollton, GA 30117
Bill & Di Hodge, 770.854.5614
bill@hodgeranch.com
www.hodgeranch.com
Hodge Ranch is a sustainable livestock operation producing forage-finished beef, breeding stock, frozen embryos and bovine semen, pastured eggs, and meat goats.

Farmers' Markets

Cotton Mill Farmers' Market
Downtown on Bradley Street, Carrollton, GA 30117
Janet Holbrook, 770.258.8865
cottonmillfm@yahoo.com
www.cottonmillfarmersmarket.org
All locally grown vegetables, fruit, eggs, honey, plants, flowers, pasture-raised meats. Also cheese, homemade bread and pastries, coffee, goat milk soap, crafts, and art. Open Saturdays late April through October, 8am until noon, rain or shine.

CLARKE

Farmers & Growers

Full Moon Farms
1095 Spring Valley Road, Athens, GA 30605
Jason Mann, 706.247.2100
info@fullmooncoop.org
www.fullmooncoop.org
Full Moon Farms is a biodynamic education and research farm that, with its sister restaurant, Farm 255, provides the citizens of Athens with local food and culture.
CSA A

Woodland Gardens
1355 Athens Road, Winterville, GA 30683
Celia Barss, 706.227.1944
farm@woodlandgardens.org
www.woodlandgardens.org
We farm year-round on 5 acres and in unheated hoophouses and heated greenhouses. We sell at the Morningside Farmers' Market in Atlanta, to restaurants in Atlanta and Athens, and through our subscription box program in Athens.
CSA

Farmers' Markets

Athens Farmers Market
Bishop Park at 705 Sunset Drive, Athens, GA 30601
Jay Payne, 706.759.3710
jay.payne@athensfarmersmarket.net
www.athensfarmersmarket.net
Sustainable, organic, and Certified Naturally Grown vegetables, flowers, herbs, grits, eggs, and more. Open every Saturday from May to November, 8am until noon.

Restaurants & Businesses

Daily Groceries Co-op
523 Prince Avenue, Athens, GA 30601
Walter Swanson, 706.548.1732
dailygroceriescoop@gmail.com
www.dailygroceries.org
Daily Groceries Co-op is open to the public and serves as a membership-based food cooperative. The Co-op has been in Athens for fourteen years and is committed to offering as many organically grown, minimally packaged products as possible.

Earth Fare
1689 S. Lumpkin Street, Athens, GA 30606
Michael Perkins, 706.227.1717
athens300@earthfare.com
www.earthfare.com
Earth Fare's roots go back to 1975 as the first natural food store in Asheville, NC. Today Earth Fare continues as a multi-store operation, providing quality natural and organic products, top-notch customer service, and a quality work environment.

Farm 255
255 W. Washington Street, Athens, GA 30601
706.549.4660
info@farm255.com
www.farm255.com
Farm 255 is a downtown Athens restaurant serving local, seasonal, and sustainable food. We also run Full Moon Farms, a 5-acre organic/biodynamic farm here in town. We supplement our harvests with those of other local and sustainable growers in the region. We serve pasture-raised cow, pig, and chicken and raise all our own meat. Our menu changes daily to reflect our harvests. We are also a full bar and music venue with outdoor dining. Dig in.

Five & Ten
1653 S. Lumpkin Street
Athens, GA 30606
Hugh Acheson, 706.546.7300
5and10restaurant@gmail.com
www.fiveandten.com
The Five & Ten is a little restaurant that thinks big. Great food, 84 seats, great cooks, great wine--a very personal place where food is made without pretense, pomp, or circumstance. The creative menu changes seasonally to match the harvest.

COLUMBIA

Restaurants & Businesses

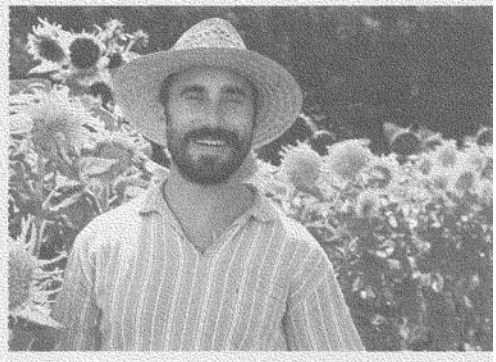
Earth Fare
368 Furys Ferry Road
Martinez, GA 30907
706.288.3042
Augusta310@earthfare.com
www.earthfare.com
Earth Fare's roots go back to 1975 as the first natural food store in Asheville, NC. Today Earth Fare continues as a multi-store operation, providing quality natural and organic products, top-notch customer service, and a quality work environment.

COWETA

Farmers & Growers

Country Gardens Farm and Nursery

3728 Lower Fayetteville Road
Newnan, GA 30265
Mike Cunningham, 770.251.2673
mikec@countrygardensfarm.com
www.countrygardensfarm.com
Come buy direct from our farm in Newnan. We grow pastured poultry, eggs, grassfed beef, produce, and flowers, and sell organic fertilizers. Our website has a complete list of our farm products and special events through the year.



The act of farming is a privilege of great purpose and patience.

Jason Mann
Full Moon Farms
Athens, Georgia

Jason Mann believes there is a farmer asleep in all of us, lying in wait for the spark of one great teacher, one beautiful meal, one sun-soaked tomato. As one of the most powerful forms of human expression, farming is art—one that brings great pleasure and joy to the table.

A model of farm-to-restaurant integration, Full Moon Farms' meats and produce supply the Athens restaurant Farm 255. But it's the creation of young farmers, through their collaboration with the University of Georgia, that's their most important crop.

Farmers & Growers

Flatwoods Farm
2539 Col. Dixon Road, Elberton, GA 30635
Tim Heil, 706.283.6270
flatwoodsfarm@bellsouth.net
www.flatwoodsfarm.com
We are an organic farm specializing in heirloom organic produce. We have our own greenhouse and also sell organic seedlings for all seasons. Please see our website for a more complete description of our operation.

Nature's Harmony Farm
1978 Bakers Ferry Road, Elberton, GA 30635
Tim Young, 770.842.8983
tim@naturesharmonyfarm.com
www.naturesharmonyfarm.com
Nature's Harmony is a pasture-based, sustainable family farm where animals are treated with love and respect and are free to naturally express their characteristics. We offer grassfed beef, pastured poultry and eggs, free-foraging pork, and heritage turkeys.

CSA

FRANKLIN

Farmers & Growers

Boann's Banks
310 Woody Road, Royston, GA 30662
Eric & Christina Wagoner, 706.248.1860
farm@boannsbanks.com
www.boannsbanks.com
Certified Naturally Grown farm specializing in growing heirloom and open-pollinated vegetables and herbs. Eggs from day-range poultry. We practice sustainable agriculture, which results in food as nature intended: fresh, full of nutrients, and produced without harm.

"Food and nourishment are right at the point where human rights and the environment intersect."

-Alice Waters



GREENE

Farmers & Growers

10 Signs Garden & Gourmet
1110 Dogwood Road North, Woodville, GA 30669
Jamie Swedberg, 706.486.2276
jlswedberg@yahoo.com
We are a small, sustainable market garden specializing in vegetables, flowers, herbs, and fresh eggs. We also sell preserves and baked goods with an emphasis on local ingredients. Selling exclusively at the Oconee Farmers' Market and Athens Locally Grown.

HALL

Farmers & Growers

Cook Family Farm
6539 Ransom Free Road, Clermont, GA 30527
Kim Cook, 770.983.7785
kacook3@netzero.net
We use sustainable methods to grow a variety of vegetables, herbs, mushrooms, and flowers. We sell at the Peachtree Road Farmers Market, direct from the farm on Mondays, and to restaurants and natural food stores.

Farmers' Markets

Hall County Farmers Market
Corner of E. Crescent Drive & Jesse Jewel Parkway
Gainesville, GA 30501
770.535.8293
www.hallcounty.org
In addition to traditional fruit and veggie favorites, you can also find a nice selection of potted plants, cut flowers, shrubs, homemade bread, local honey, and eggs. Open Tuesdays and Saturdays, 6am until sell-out.

HANCOCK

Farmers & Growers

Deerwood Farm
951 Tucker Road, Sparta, GA 31087
Sid Cox, 706.444.9555
johncox70@bellsouth.net
www.spartahancockgrowers.com
Deerwood Farm is a member of the Sparta/Hancock Produce Growers Cooperative and offers a wide variety of produce. We sell through our CSA and local farmers' markets.
CSA

Fort Creek Farm
1664 Rives Road, Sparta, GA 30002
Susan & Bob Woodall, 706.444.5464
woodall@fortcreekfarm.com
Our grass finished beef is humanely raised on fresh nutritious pasture on our historic family farm, without grain, hormone implants, or antibiotics. Halves and quarters available summer and fall. Pick up in Atlanta, Athens, or on-farm.

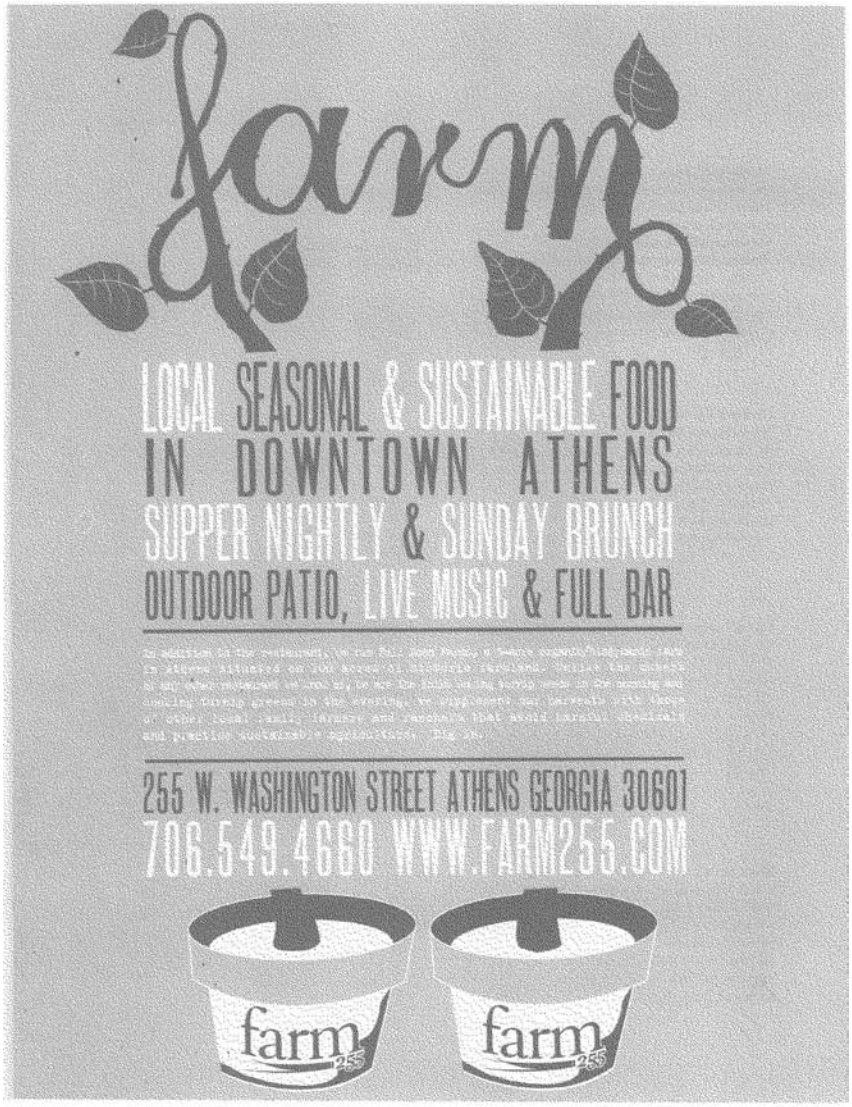
HARRIS

Farmers & Growers

Harmony Hill Farm
280 West C Street, Pine Mountain Valley, GA 31823
Nathan & Cynthia Chapman, 706.628.9718
uschapmans@aol.com
We grow a variety of vegetables, herbs, fruits, and flowers on our family-run farm. We are Certified Naturally Grown. We sell on-site, through a CSA, and at the Market on Broadway in downtown Columbus on Saturday mornings.
CSA

Jenny-Jack Sun Farm
707 White Cemetery Road
Pine Mountain, GA 31822
Jenny & Chris Jackson, 706.333.4479
jennyjackfarm@hotmail.com
Our small, diverse family farm grows chemical-free produce, herbs, and cut flowers with an emphasis on heirloom varieties, in addition to raw honey, fresh eggs, and stone-ground grits. We sell through Small Farms CSA managed by Love is Love Farm, and at the farmers' market in Columbus.
CSA

Leaning Tree Farm
1449 Old Chipley Road, Pine Mountain, GA 31822
Alan Barrett, 706.663.9759
ltreefarms@aol.com
Small farm that breeds goats (Boer and some Kiko), Katahdin hair sheep, and Great Pyrenees guard dogs. We sell single animals or small-scale, direct to customers.


farm
LOCAL SEASONAL & SUSTAINABLE FOOD
IN DOWNTOWN ATHENS
SUPPER NIGHTLY & SUNDAY BRUNCH
OUTDOOR PATIO, LIVE MUSIC & FULL BAR
255 W. WASHINGTON STREET ATHENS GEORGIA 30601
706.549.4660 WWW.FARM255.COM
farm
255
farm
255

HART

Farmers & Growers

McMullan Family Farm
199 Welcome Road, Hartwell, GA 30643
Michael McMullan, 706.988.8008
m.mcmullan1@gmail.com
www.mcmullanfarm.com
We are a fifth-generation family farm. We are Certified Naturally Grown. The farm grows food all year, not just seasonally. We sell direct from the farm through our CSA, through Athens Locally Grown, and at the new Athens Farmers Market.

CSA

Farmers' Markets

Hartwell Farmers Market
500 E. Howell Street, Hartwell, GA 30643
RC Davis, 706.436.0332
Local market for Hart and adjoining counties. Saturdays starting in late April through mid-November, 8am until noon. All produce is locally grown; no crafts or processed foods. Members only; membership is $7.00 per year or $1.00 per Saturday.

HEARD

Farmers & Growers

Ups & Downs Farm
388 Ridge Way Road, Franklin, GA 30217
Whit Abel, 256.343.6295
whitskey@hotmail.com
Growing on 3.5 acres: fruit trees (persimmons), peppers, Roma tomatoes, watermelons, lots of ground cherries, sun gold tomatoes. We have a table at the East Atlanta Village Farmers Market on Thursdays.

JACKSON

Farmers & Growers

Black Farms
930 B. Wilson Road, Commerce, GA 30529
Ward & Gary Black, 706.335.9516
bfarms@alltel.net
Offering Angus-based beef animals born in Jackson County and raised on pastures with diet supplemented by other locally grown feed: no growth hormones. Animals delivered to approved processor of your choice. Customer references available; would love to earn your trust.

LAMAR

Farmers & Growers

Greenleaf Farms
201 Highway 36 Bypass, Barnesville, GA 30204
Greg & Maeda Brown, 678.596.6803
Greenleaf201@aol.com
We are a Certified Naturally Grown farm in Barnesville, Georgia. We sell our produce at the Decatur Farmers' Market Wednesday from 4-7pm, East Atlanta Village Market on Thursday from 4pm-dusk, and Piedmont Green Market on Saturday from 9am-1pm.

CSA

Lee Farms/Epicuristic Products
1054 McCollum Road, Barnesville, GA 30204
Elliott Shimley, 770.412.0336
epicuristic@comcast.net
Grassfed, milk-fed, Southern veal and young, tender, dry-aged, grassfed beef.

MADISON

Farmers & Growers

Shady Brook Farm, LLC
1645 Lem Edwards Road, Colbert, GA 30628
Jennif Chandler, 706.248.3745
shadybrook@fastmail.fm
www.shadybrooksheep.com
Humane and natural: the best, mild, tender lamb available, raised on pasture with shade trees and shelter. No hormones or antibiotics ever added to feed. Processed under inspection. Cuts available seasonally at www.athens.locallygrown.net, and from the farm by appointment. Whole, splits, and quarters sold wholesale to restaurants.

"A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself."

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

MADISON (CONTINUED)

Farmers' Markets

Comer Farmers' Market
Madison Street, Comer, GA 30629
Karen Newcomb, 706.783.4794
comerfarmersmarket@gmail.com
Open from Spring Festival until late fall. Located in downtown Comer next to Saving Grace restaurant. Saturdays 8am until noon. Featuring products grown or hand-crafted by vendors living in the Broad River watershed: artisanal bread, honey, herbal soaps, and sustainably grown blueberries, vegetables, herbs, flowers, and sometimes plants.

Restaurants & Businesses

Wolf Creek Soaps
74 Wolf Creek Trail, Hull, GA 30646
Mark Davis, 706.543.9175
wolfcreeksoaps@bellsouth.net
Our products are for people, plants, and pets. We offer a variety of soaps and shampoos for people and a liquid shampoo for pets. We also offer a plant spray that serves as a natural deterrent to insects and animals.

MORGAN

Farmers & Growers

Doe Creek Farm
1141 Cleveland Avenue, Buckhead, GA 30625
W. A. & Rachel Robinson, 706.342.9279
doecreek@bellsouth.net
Third year growing Doe Creek sweet onions, garlic, peppers, cucumbers, Indian okra, etc. It's a growing business! Selling on Saturdays, April-September, at the Harmony Crossing Shopping Center in Greensboro. Will have U-pick and on-farm market in 2009.
CSA

MUSCOGEE

Farmers' Markets

Market on Broadway
1000 Block of Broadway, Columbus, GA 31901
Judy Ferrall, 706.957.6256
www.uptowncolumbusga.com
Located in historic downtown Columbus, this Saturday market features sustainable farmers, and is open Saturdays, 8am until noon, spring through fall growing seasons.

Restaurants & Businesses

Country Life Vegetarian Café and Natural Food Store
1217 Eberhart Avenue, Columbus, GA 31906
Jay Thomas, 706.323.9194
countrylife@ucheepines.org
Country Life Natural Foods is the first and premier vegetarian restaurant in Columbus, Georgia. It carries an ample volume of bulk foods and health items, serving America with a mail order service for all items in stock. A lifestyle counselor is available daily to counsel people in health matters.

OCONEE

Farmers' Markets

Oconee Farmers Market
26 N. Main Street, Watkinsville, GA 30677
Debbie Beese
oconeefm@yahoo.com
www.oconeefarmersmarket.org
Join us on Saturday mornings from 7:30am-12:30pm (or later) for fresh and locally grown produce, homemade goods, fresh-brewed coffee, and many other items. On Main Street at the Eagle Tavern.

OGLETHORPE

Farmers & Growers

Camoston Farm
114 Sandy Cross Road, Lexington, GA 30648
Mia & Patrice Camoston, 706.743.8469
Committed to conservation of natural resources and preservation of food traditions, we use organic growing principles to grow traditional Southern foods, including heirloom vegetables and heritage livestock. Willing to grow specifically for communities who make a commitment to the farm.

Cedar Grove Farm
372 Oconee Forest Road, Stephens, GA 30667
Jay Payne, 706.759.3710
jay.payne@athensfarmersmarket.net
Cedar Grove Farm, located in Oglethorpe county, is family-owned and run. Three acres, cultivated using sustainable methods, produce a variety of natural,

healthy, great-tasting fruits and vegetables for the good people in the Athens area.

Roots Farm
46 Beaver Trail, Winterville, GA 30683
Sara Callaway, 706.742.0010
rootsfarm@hotmail.com
www.rootsfarm.org
At Roots Farm, we strive to sustainably cultivate community, quality food, and education. Harvests from our annual and perennial crops are available at on-farm CSA pickups, the Athens Farmers' Market, and online through Athens Locally Grown. Workshops cover various topics.

CSA

Veribest Farm
1192 Veribest Road, Carlton, GA 30627
Todd Lister, 706.202.7680
toddlister1@gmail.com
Local, sustainable, organic farm becoming biodynamic. Selling produce through Athens Locally Grown and the Athens Farmers Market at Bishop Park on Saturday mornings. Arugula, basil, beets, beans, carrots, garlic, broccoli, corn, cantaloupe, kale, eggplant, peppers, squash ... the list goes on.

Farmers & Growers

White Rock Farm
407 Compton Road, Rockmart, GA 30153
Mike & Lisa Mason, 678.363.5653
mimason20@bellsouth.net
www.freshfarming.com
The mission of White Rock Farm is to provide farm-fresh eggs from pastured hens and high quality, locally grown produce without using herbicides or pesticides.

U

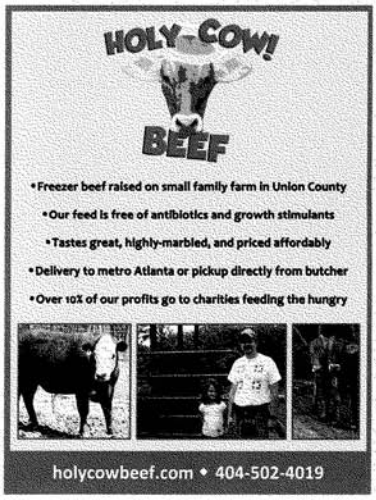
Farmers' Markets

Dallas Farmers Market
120 E. Memorial Drive, Dallas, GA 30132
Susan Breen, 770.443.4349
www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets/M22261
Come visit us on the historic Downtown Dallas Courthouse Square. Open 7am until noon every Saturday, June through October. Vendors are from Paulding and surrounding counties, and sell a wide variety of producer-grown produce such as corn, beans, peas, heirloom tomatoes, and berries.

Farmers & Growers

D & A Farm
19556 Highway 18 East, Zebulon, GA 30295
Dave Bentoski, 404.392.6364
DandAfarm@wildblue.net
www.dandafarm.com
We are a first-generation family farm operated primarily by Amy, Alan, and Dave Bentoski. We grow seasonal produce, vegetable transplants, and USDA-processed pastured chicken. We have a growing CSA and can be found at Morningside Farmers' Market weekly.

CSA



Farmers & Growers (continued)

J & J Farm
2393 Williams Mill Road, Zebulon, GA 30295
Jim Formby & Jayne Midura, 770.567.3919
j2farm@bellsouth.net
We are a family-owned farm producing a variety of heirloom vegetables and pastured eggs. Our produce is available at the farmers' markets in Zebulon (Saturday) and Decatur (Wednesday).

Redland Farms
P.O. Box 877, Zebulon, GA 30295
Allie & Butch Armistead, 770.468.4995
alliearmistead@gmail.com
We raise grassfed Chiangus cattle. Our bull, "Lucky," is a registered Chianina–one of the oldest breeds and preferred by many European chefs. You may purchase a whole or half steer. Call for information or to arrange a farm visit.

Farmers' Markets

Market on the Square
Southeast Corner of the Zebulon Courthouse Square
Zebulon, GA 30295
Gwen Roland, 770.412.4786
groland@gsu.edu
Located in a pecan grove alongside Zebulon's post office on Highway 19. Fresh produce, plants, baked goods, soaps, quilts, and other heirloom crafts in a beautiful location that compels customers to linger and visit. Open Saturdays 8am until noon, April through October.

Farmers & Growers

Carlton Farms
1274 Highway 113, Rockmart, GA 30153
Bobby Carlton, 770.546.6229
carltonfarm@gmail.com
www.carltonfarm.com
A family dairy farm since 1919. We produce raw cows' milk for pets, free-range eggs, pastured poultry and grassfed beef. Our products are grassfed without hormones or antibiotics. Check our website for Atlanta deliveries, or visit our on-farm store.

Featherwise Farms
644 Live Oak Road, Aragon, GA 30104
Chad & Julie Carlton, 770.655.1503
carltonfarm@gmail.com
We are an all-natural, free-range egg business where the birds are rotated on fresh pasture and fed locally grown grain. Eggs available with delivery from Carlton Farms and through wholesale accounts.

SUTTON

Farmers & Growers

Omar's Lake Oconee Garden, Inc.
237 Riverlake Drive, Eatonton, GA 31024
Omar Rasheed, 404.377.0104
oconee@earthlink.net
We grow tomatoes, greens, broccoli, peppers, squash, herbs, lettuce, garlic, onions, and fruit using compost to supplement soil fertility. We sell at the Decatur Farmers' Market and the Green Market at Piedmont Park. Visitors welcome, but please call first.

Farmers' Markets

Sparta/Hancock Cooperative Market
Harmony Crossing Shopping Center
Eatonton, GA 31024
Sid Cox, 706.444.9555
johncox70@bellsouth.net
www.spartahancockgrowers.com
Saturday market operated by the Produce Growers Cooperative from 8:30am-12:30pm. At the Harmony Crossing Shopping Center.

HARMONY

Restaurants & Business

La Maison on Telfair
404 Telfair Street, Augusta, GA 30901
Chef Heinz Sowinski, 706.722.4805
lamaison1@comcast.net
www.lamaisontelfair.com
International cuisine served with expert wine pairings, La Maison on Telfair offers an exceptional experience in fine dining lauded by Food & Wine *magazine for eight years in a row. Located in a*

historic 150-year old Victorian house. We put forth the effort to bring you the best that is available in natural, organic foods from nearby farmers in Georgia and South Carolina. A wine and tapas lounge, Veritas, is housed under the same roof.

Farmers' Markets

Stephens County Farmers Market
Big A Road, Toccoa, GA 30577
Nell Anderson, 706.886.8009
forrestc@uga.edu
Open Tuesday and Friday mornings from 7am-noon, from May through October, with locally grown fruit and vegetables from Stephens and adjacent counties.

Produce & Growers

Sim's Garden Patch
301 College Street, Historic Mountville Community
LaGrange, GA 30241
Sim Blitch & Caroline Nelson, 678.575.1063
simblitch@charter.net
We grow tomatoes, sweet corn, lettuce, cabbage, mixed greens, cucumbers, eggplant, rattlesnake beans, carrots, garlic, broccoli, okra, blueberries, and melons. We sell at the Garden Patch at our on-farm market on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and deliver into LaGrange.

Member | Certified Naturally Grown | Certified Organic | Produce | Dairy | Eggs | Meat/ Seafood | Agritourism | CSA | On-Farm Market | U-Pick | Bed & Breakfast



Farmers & Growers

Denton Flower Farm, Inc.
4367 H. D. Atha Road, Covington, GA 30014
Mary Denton, 770.464.3900
dentonfarm@aol.com
Denton Flower Farm grows Certified Organic cut flowers, vegetables, and berries. These are available at Morningside and Decatur Farmers' markets. CSA with Tuesday pickup for local area only, drop points at farm and Covington. No on-farm sales.
CSA

Whippoorwill Hollow Organic Farm
3905 Highway 138, Covington, GA 30014
Andy & Hilda Byrd, 678.625.3272
whippoorwillholf@bellsouth.net
www.whippoorwillhollowfarm.com
We are a Certified Organic farm that produces fruits, berries, vegetables, and free-range eggs for sale on-farm and at the Morningside and Decatur Farmers' Markets. Countryside organic livestock feed, soil, and amendments, and Nature Safe fertilizer available. Check our website for agritourism opportunities and events.
O U A

Farmers & Growers

Tink's Grassfed Beef
965 Roberson Campbell Road
Washington, GA 30673
Etwenda Wade, 706.318.1515
info@tinksbeef.com
www.tinksbeef.com
Tink's Beef is finished out on the highest quality forages Mother Earth can provide. Grassfed beef is healthier because it is higher in Omega 3 fatty acids, CLAs, Vitamin E, beta carotene, and nutrients. No growth hormones, antibiotics, grain, or by-products.

Farmers' Markets

Washington Farmers Market
111 N. Allison Street, Washington, GA 30673
Katherine Stolz Barber, 706.678.6256
washingtonfarmersmarket@yahoo.com
www.washingtonwilkes.org
Bringing you locally grown goodness year-round! Our indoor/outdoor market features a variety of local growers, grassfed beef, flowers, and handmade products. Join us for free live local music every Thursday night (April-October) and our Annual Street Festival every October!

Farmers & Growers

Hollyholm Farm
2026 County Road 297, Five Points, AL 36855
Horace & Linda Holderfield, 334.864.7096
holderfieldh1L2@msn.com
We produce hormone- and antibiotic-free grassfed beef from South Poll/Angus X, selected for multiple generations for efficient foraging and tender meat. We sell cattle from the farm for herd development, and meat from our cows and goats.

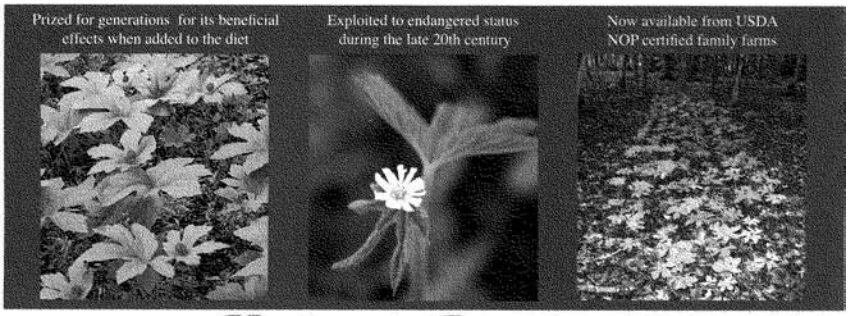
Moore Farms
239 County Road 561, Woodland, AL 36280
Will & Laurie Moore, 256.449.9417
moorefarmsandfriends@yahoo.com
www.moorefarmsandfriends.com
Moore Farms has been growing a wide variety of Certified Naturally Grown specialty produce since 1999 in Woodland, AL. Our sixth generation farm is three miles over the Georgia state line, only 90 miles from Atlanta!

Restaurants & Businesses

Anson Mills
1922-C Gervais Street, Columbia, SC 29201
Glenn Roberts
sales@AnsonMills.com
www.ansonmills.com
Anson Mills specializes in organically grown heirloom grains including "Red May," the first named American wheat. Also known for Carolina Gold Rice and an extraordinary line of polentas, cornmeals, and grits, Anson Mills grains are milled and shipped the same day.

It Just Makes You FEEL GOOD!!

Hydrastis canadensis (Goldenseal)
The Traditional Appalachian Bitter



Hydrastis Complete™

USDA ORGANIC

Concentrated Liquid Dietary Supplement

Everything You Always Hoped Goldenseal Would Be… and More!
Sustainable Production, Reliable Potency, Uncompromising Purity

OTCO

Hydrastis Complete™ is a whole plant combination of the berberine rich root and rhizome of Hydrastis canadensis plus the myriad of synergistic compounds found in the leaf.

Scientifically blended for optimal potency, Hydrastis Complete™ may:

- Improve digestion*
- Restore Tone and Regulate Mucosal Linings*
- Enhance Glucose Uptake and Metabolism*
- Help Maintain Normal Cholesterol Levels*
- Strengthen the Cardio-Vascular System*

As one happy customer said,
"It just makes you FEEL GOOD!!"

*These statements have not been evaluated by the FDA. This product is not intended to treat, prevent, cure or mitigate any disease.



Hydrastis Complete™ Digestive Blend

Hydrastis Complete™ with Echinacea

Hydrastis Complete™ with Elder Berry

Available:
- Locally direct from growers (See website for locations)
- Secure Website: www.organipharm.com
- E-Mail: info@organipharm.com
- Mail: 1421 Boyles Mill Rd. Dalton, GA 30721
- Call: 706-259-7647
- Ask your local retailer to stock Hydrastis Complete™

Wholesale Inquires Invited

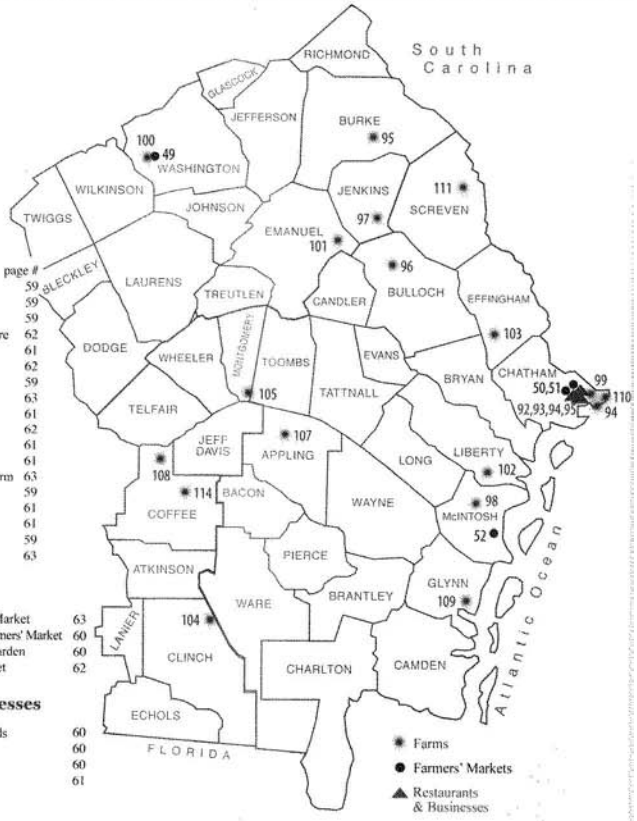
OrganiPharm

OrganiPharm, LLC is 100% owned by small family farmers.
Your purchase of this product supports them and their work to conserve and protect Hydrastis.
Thank You for Caring!!!

east coastal plain

From below the "fall line" that traverses Georgia, the sandy soils of the Coastal Plain stretch south all the way to the Atlantic coast. Use this section to find sustainable and organic farms in the East Coastal Plain, the farmers' markets they sell at, and the restaurants and businesses that feature their products. Listings are organized by county, with special symbols for the products and services available at each farm.





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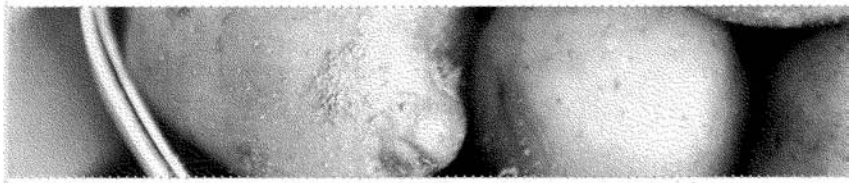


APPLING

Farmers & Growers

Miles Berry Farm
1821 MLK Avenue, Baxley, GA 31513
Allen Miles, 912.367.0651
jallenmiles@bellsouth.net
Blueberries, corn, potatoes, beans, squash, peppers (hot, sweet, and bell types), and melons. Call our farm for directions and information.

BULLOCH

Farmers & Growers

Clark & Sons Organics
526 Clark Farm Road, Twin City, GA 30471
Al, John, & A.R. Clark, 912.531.3746
adclark@bulloch.net
Our sustainable family farm grows strawberries, watermelons, sweet corn, peas, butterbeans, squash, okra, and pumpkins. We provide hayrides for groups by appointment.

BURKE

Farmers & Growers

Byne Blueberry Farms
537 Jones Avenue, Waynesboro, GA 30830
Richard Byne, 706.554.6244
dick.byne@gmail.com
www.bynebluebeerries.com
We grow blueberries. We started in 1980 and may be the oldest commercial blueberry operation in the Southeast. Our season starts in June and ends in July. We also have blueberry products: salsa, butter, syrup, jelly, jam, preserves, pecan, walnut chutney, chow-chow, and jalapeño.

CHATHAM

Farmers & Growers

Ambos Seafoods, LLC
P.O. Box 15242, Savannah, GA 31416
Drew & Hal Ambos, 912.920.3474
dambos@bellsouth.net
www.ambosseafoods.com
We are a fifth-generation family business specializing in seafood, particularly shrimp. Our domestic shrimp are wild-caught off the Carolina and Georgia coasts, and are additive, chemical, and antibiotic-free. We offer a line of shrimp that are Certified Organic (which is not currently part of the USDA National Organic Program) by Natureland, from Germany.

Dubberly's Seafood
214 Vernonburg Avenue, Savannah, GA 31419
Frank & Linda Dubberly, 912.925.6433
NIKI702@aol.com
Family-owned and operated harvester and distributor of certified Wild Georgia Shrimp. In business over 30 years. Fresh shrimp available in season; Individual Quick Frozen (IQF) shrimp are available year-round. Members of the Georgia Shrimp Association.

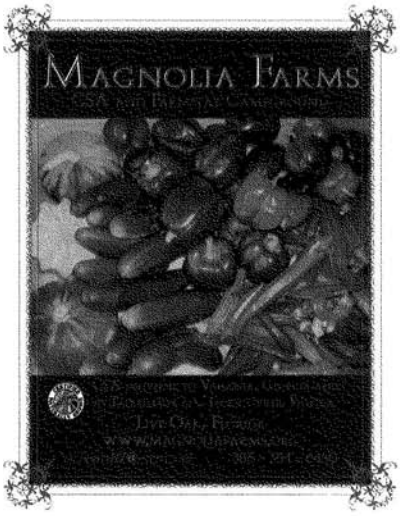
Trustees Garden
88 Randolph Street, Savannah, GA 31401
Daron "Farmer D" Joffe, 912.443.3277
tate@trusteesgarden.com
www.trusteesgarden.com
Established on the site of the first experimental garden in America, this garden is an urban agricultural center designed to educate citizens on growing, with classes, garden tours, volunteer, and internship opportunities.

CHATHAM (CONTINUED)

Farmers' Markets

The Savannah Starland Farmers' Market
Whittaker & W. 40th Streets, Savannah, GA 31401
Jenny Weldy, 912.443.5355
www.starlandfarmersmarket.com
A lively and entertaining setting where people can buy and sell local products, this market operates every Saturday from March through October. Doors open at 9am. Currently seeking farmers, artists, food vendors, craftspeople, musicians, street performers, storytellers, and volunteers.

The Market at Trustees Garden
88 Randolph Street, Savannah, GA 31401
Tate Hudson, 912.443.3277
tate@trusteesgarden.com
www.trusteesgarden.com
The Market at Trustees Garden provides fertile ground for Savannah's gathering of a growing community of producers and consumers. Operating on Wednesdays year-round, featuring local organic farmers, eco-artists, live music, kids' activities, local green cuisine, and garden tours.



Restaurants & Eateries

Brighter Day Natural Foods
1102 Bull Street, Savannah, GA 31401
Marsha Weston, 912.236.4703
jabday@hotmail.com
www.brighterdayfoods.com
Brighter Day is a full-service natural foods grocery store featuring a deli and fresh organic produce. We have a certified nutritionist on staff and offer friendly, caring service. We have been an independent, family-run business since 1978.

Cha Bella
102 E. Broad Street, Savannah, GA 31401
Matthew J. Roher, 912.790.7888
matthew@cha-bella.com
www.cha-bella.com
Cha Bella is an organic, "Sophisticated Soureru" Savannah restaurant. We are committed to supporting our local food providers and use only the freshest seasonal food.

The Sentient Bean
13 E. Park Avenue, Savannah, GA 31401
Kristin Russell, 912.232.4447
coffee@sentientbean.com
www.sentientbean.com
Since its inception in 2001, The Sentient Bean coffee house has been offering consumers in Savannah a more sustainable choice for dining out. We use organic milk in our specialty drinks and organic produce in our fresh-made food. Our vegetarian menu changes daily. We recycle, compost, and are always trying to figure out ways to waste less. Our organic coffee is 100% fair trade, and most of our baked goods are made in house with organic flour, butter, sugar, soy, and more.

"To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves."

-Ghandi

Thrive: A Carryout Café
4700 E. Highway 80 East, Savannah, GA 31410
Wendy Armstrong & Sarah Dudys, 912.898.2131
thrivetogo@aol.com
Simply put, Thrive offers freshly prepared carry-out dishes using as many local and organic ingredients as possible. Convenient, healthy, and gourmet!

CLINCH

Farmers & Growers

Horners Farm, Inc.
124 Horner Drive, Homerville, GA 31634
Ray & Connie Horner, 912.487.3049
horners@dishmail.net
Eight acres of Certified Organic blueberries. Adding blackberries and will have some other produce in winter 2009. U-pick blueberries start in June through the end of the season; closed Sundays.

COFFEE

Farmers & Growers

Deep South Growers
1535 Harvey Vickers Road, Douglas, GA 31535
Rick Reed, 912.384.5450
farmfreshtoyou@deepsouthgrowers.com
Field grown fruits and vegetables, including lettuce, squash, cucumber, peppers, eggplant, chard, spinach, strawberries, blueberries, and more! Incorporating eggs into production in mid-2009.

Riley Farms
P.O. Box 351, Broxton, GA 31519
Charlie & Darquitta Riley, 912.359.2443
driley@alltel.net
Our vegetables, watermelons, and sweet corn are organically grown. We sell direct from the field and market.

EFFINGHAM

Farmers & Growers

Heritage Organic Farm
485 Scuffletown Road, Guyton, GA 31312
Shirley Daughtry, 912.728.3708
heritageorganicfarms@comcast.net
www.heritageorganicfarm.com
The first farm in Georgia to be Certified Organic, Heritage has been and continues to be a leader in the field. To provide a market for other organic growers and to provide the freshest organic produce for its customers, Heritage works with a network of local and regional growers.

EMANUEL

Farmers & Growers

Flat Creek Lodge
367 Bishop Chapel Church Road
Swainsboro, GA 30401
Caroline Harless, 866.237.3474
charless@flatcreeklodge.com
www.flatcreeklodge.com
Flat Creek Lodge offers artisanal, farmstead cheeses, fresh eggs, and produce in keeping with the Lodge's mission–grow the local economy and provide an eco-friendly environment. Products are available at Atlanta and Savannah restaurants, Whole Foods, and other locations.

GLYNN

Farmers & Growers

Sapelo Farms
331 Canal Road, Brunswick, GA 31520
Betty Anne Lewis, 912.264.8535
ba@sapelofarms.com
www.sapelofarms.com
Sapelo Farms offers a CSA program, regular produce ordering, and pasture-fed beef. For more information, please visit our website.

GEORGIA ORGANICS
Support Georgia's sustainable farming community by becoming a member of Georgia Organics today at www.georgiaorganics.org/join.

Crystal Ponds Aquaculture
5476 Old Aycock Road, Garfield, GA 30425
Sandy Miller, 478.982.0939
crystalponds@gmail.com
Pond-raised catfish fed a corn/soybean-based feed– no chemicals, no drugs. Customers can call to place orders, or come to the farm and fish by appointment– we do the cleaning!

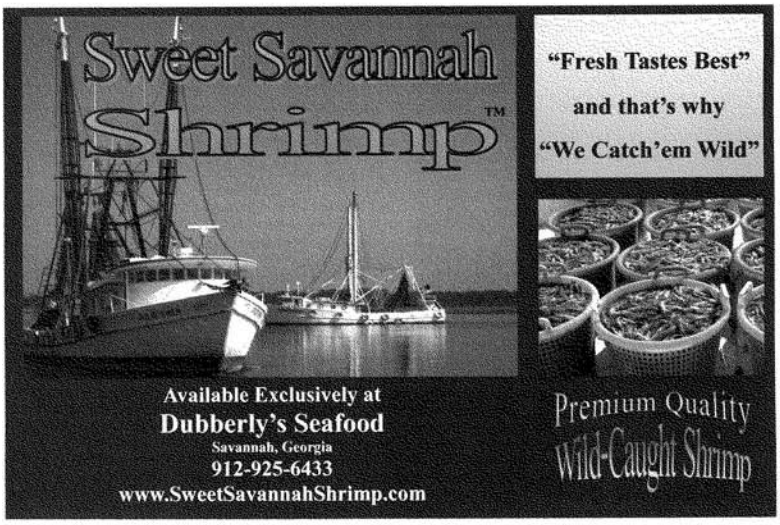
U A

Harvest Lake Farm at Hampton Island
1300 Retreat Road, Riceboro, GA 31323
Daron 'Farmer D' Joffe, 912.880.8838
djoffe@hamptonisland.com
www.hamptonisland.com
The farm is located within the Hampton Island Preservation, 35 miles south of Savannah. The farm produces a wide variety of vegetables, herbs, flowers, grains, and fruits for the members of Hampton Island Preservation.

Do Tell Farm
5690 Cox Road SW, Townsend, GA 31331
Ron & Cheryl Popiel, 912.437.4137
dotellfarm@darientel.net
Applying for organic certification in the near future. We have begun a CSA program and sell a variety of produce at the Waterfront Market in Darien on Fridays. Our greenhouse will assist in growing vegetables year-round.

CSA

Waterfront Farmers Market
Broad Street, Darien, GA 31305
912.437.3410
Located on Broad Street in downtown Darien,



this year-round market operates on Fridays and Saturdays, from 9am to 3pm. Featuring local farmers, and organic baked goods and breads from Brunswick.

MONTGOMERY

Farmers & Growers

Live River Lodge and Farm
P.O. Box 155, Uvalda, GA 30473
Rod Elkins, 912.594.6671
rdelkins@windstream.net
www.liveriverlodge.com
The Live River Lodge and Farm offers raw goat milk for pets. We also sell small, lactating does for backyard milking. With a weekend stay, the lodge provides an opportunity to learn about goats and select just the right animal.

SCREVEN

Farmers & Growers

Walker Farms
6810 Savannah Highway
Sylvania, GA 30467
Relinda Walker, 912.481.2263
recarwalk@aol.com
www.walkerorganicfarm.com
Walker Farms is a Certified Organic farm with 40 acres of vegetables, grain, and cover crops. Specialties include Vidalia onions, sweet corn, watermelons, cantaloupes, and canary melons. Also, peanuts, soy beans, and Abruzzi rye cover crop seed.

WASHINGTON

Farmers & Growers

Eden Farms
613 Linton Road
Sandersville, GA 31082
Marvin & Joanna Alston, 478.552.2322
m_alston@bellsouth.net
Eden Farms produces naturally grown vegetables and fruit. We sell our produce on the Square in downtown Sandersville on Wednesday and Saturday mornings during spring and summer.

Farmers' Markets

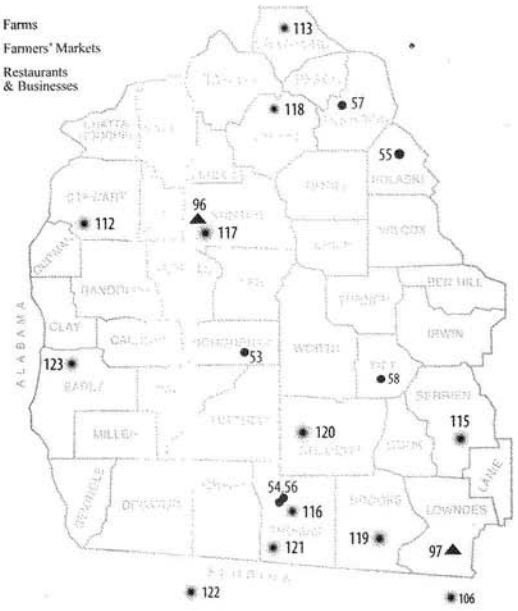
Downtown Sandersville Market
On the Courthouse Square, Sandersville, GA 31082
Marvin Alston, 478.552.2322
Year-round market features fruit and vegetables–many locally grown, including Washington County peaches–and some produce grown using sustainable/organic methods. Locally produced handcrafted items and prepared foods also available. Open Wednesdays and Saturdays, 7am until noon.



west coastal plain

Some of Georgia's largest and most well-known sustainable producers find their home in the sandy soils of the western half of Georgia's Coastal Plain. Use this section to find sustainable and organic farms in the West Coastal Plain, the farmers' markets they sell at, and the restaurants and businesses that feature their products. Listings are organized by county, with special symbols for the products and services available at each farm.





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BERRIEN

Dorsey Farms
725 Sandy Bluff Road, Nashville, GA 31639
Jeff & Allen Dorsey, 229.686.3374
jeffbdorsey@yahoo.com
We are currently converting our farm to an all-natural operation. We grow pecans, natural produce, pasture-raised chicken, and grassfed beef and sell gift baskets. Coming soon: satsuma oranges, lemons, and wine from our Horse Creek Winery.

BROOKS

Pebble Hill Grove, LLC
9047 Moultrie Highway, Quitman, GA 31643
Frank & Teresa Bibin, 229.775.3347
bibin@batfarm.com
We are a Certified Organic pecan grower and offer our pecans in the shell. We also build quality bat homes and accessories, and help farmers and gardeners establish their own bat colonies for safe and effective insect control.

COLQUITT

Sparkman's Cream Valley
1263 Rossman Dairy Road, Moultrie, GA 31768
Kelvin Spurlock, 229.941.4082
sparkysfinest@alltel.net
www.sparkmanscreamvalley.com
Sparkman's dairy products come from an all-Jersey herd producing the freshest tasting milk and ice cream you've ever had. Available at retail stores around Georgia and on the Internet. No artificial hormones, longer shelf life, and higher in solids than fat content.

CRAWFORD

Davis Farms Community Supported Agriculture
701 Hortman Mill Road, Roberta, GA 31078
Naomi & Bennie Davis, 478.836.4564
davisfarmscsa@aol.com
www.freewebs.com/davisfarmscsa
Davis Farms grows vegetables and strawberries using sustainable methods. We are educationally oriented and welcome farm visits. We host workshops on growing, canning, permaculture, etc. We sell through our CSA and at The City Market on the Green in Macon.

CSA

"Your health is inseparable from the health of the whole food chain that you're a part of .... there's a direct connection between the health of the soil, the health of the plants, the health of the animals, and you as eater. We're not just eating piles of chemicals that we can get from anywhere."

- Michael Pollan, author of *Omnivore's Dilemma* and *In Defense of Food*



"I love that our land is captured and reflected in every bottle. Everything we do is a taste of our place."

Mary Ann Hardman
Persimmon Creek Vineyard
Clayton, Georgia

To create wine is to enter into a dance with Mother Nature, or as Mary Ann Hardman puts it, the "chief chick in charge." Georgia's growing cadre of estate-bottled vintages and independent brewers contribute to local economies, and make the perfect accompaniment to local food.

Persimmon Creek Vineyard's award-winning wines can be found at fine purveyors and restaurants throughout the state.

Mary Ann says, "No one embodies the importance of supporting local better than Georgia Organics."

DOUGHERTY

Albany Farmers' Market
Corner of W. Broad Ave. & N. Jackson Street
Albany, GA 31702
Linda Riggins, 229.430.9870
lindamarylou@yahoo.com
The Albany Farmers' Market provides an outlet for local growers and gardeners to offer fresh produce, flowers, and herbs to the community year-round. Open every Saturday from 10am-4pm on the 200 block of Broad Avenue.

EARLY

White Oak Pastures
P.O. Box 98, Blufflon, GA 39824
Will Harris, 229.641.2081
willharris@whiteoakpastures.com
www.whiteoakpastures.com
For 142 years, humane treatment of our herd and environmental stewardship of our farm have been core values of the Harris Family. We have now built an artisianal abattoir on our farm to ensure our beef's quality. We also have a farm store on-site that sells value-added farm products from our region.

HOUSTON

Perry Farmers' Market
916 Commerce Street, Perry, GA 31069
Tish Chase, 478.988.2757
perry.dda@perry-ga.gov
Now in our sixth season, we offer Georgia-grown produce, from farmers direct to consumers. Our Mennonite community offers baked goods for sale at the Market. Georgia honey products, plants, and fresh flowers are also available. Open Saturdays, June through October, 8am until noon.

Take reusable bags with you on your shopping trips.

LOWNDES

Restaurants & Businesses

Packhouse Market
201 S. Church Street, Hahira, GA 31639
Jeff Allen Dorsey, 229.794.4112
thepackhousemarket@yahoo.com
Small, family-owned market featuring organic, local, and conventional produce, grassfed meats, natural/organic snacks, artisianal cheeses, antibiotic and steroid-free dairy products. Our goal is to become the buying and selling point for Southern Georgia's natural and organic foods and products.

MACON

Farmers & Growers

Malatchie Fields
RR 3, Fort Valley, GA 31030
Lucy Jarrett, 478.987.0025
jarrettl@bellsouth.net
Malatchie Fields is registered with the Georgia Department of Agriculture as an organic operation. We grow vegetables, fruit, flowers, and herbs. We sell at the Emory University Farmers Market in Decatur and also by prior arrangement.

PULASKI

Farmers Markets

Hawkinsville Downtown Community Market
P.O. Box 120, Hawkinsville, GA 31036
Karen Bailey, 478.783.9294
downtown@comsouth.net
Located in historical downtown Hawkinsville at the corner of Broad and Lumpkin Streets. Homegrown vegetables from farmers, gardeners, and organic growers welcome. Open Saturdays, 8am-2pm.

STEWART

Farmers & Growers

Beyond the Boonies Farm
RR 1 Box 32 C, Lumpkin, GA 31815
Robert & Nea Permenter, 229.838.9813
here@beyondtheboonies.com
www.beyondtheboonies.com
Beyond the Boonies farm is part of OrganiPharm, a 100% grower-owned botanical product company. We also have naturally grown seasonal produce, four types of shiitake mushrooms, and farm-fresh eggs that come from very happy hens.

Koinonia Farm
1324 Highway 49 South, Americus, GA 31719
Jerry Nelson & Sarah Pendergrast, 877.738.1741
jandrewnelson@yahoo.com
www.koinoniapartners.org
Koinonia Farm grows typical South Georgia produce. Commercial bakery onsite. Items sold in our Welcome Center, catalog, and online. Strong presence in area farmers' markets and restaurants. Visitors/guests welcome with advance notice. Internships available.

Restaurants & Businesses

Cafe Campesino, Inc.
725 Spring Street, Americus, GA 31709
Tripp Pomeroy, 888.532.4728
info@cafecampesino.com
www.cafecampesino.com
100% fair trade, organic coffee roaster and coffee house. Supplying individuals, coffee houses, restaurants, markets, fund-raisers, etc. with really delicious, roasted-to-order, specialty-grade coffee. Online ordering. A founding member of Cooperative Coffees working directly with small-scale coffee farmers for ten years.

THOMAS

Farmers & Growers

Home Park Farm
167 Home Park Farm Road, Thomasville, GA 31757
Charles Conklin, 229.228.6548
conklincr@hotmail.com
www.homeparkfarms.com
The two traits we emphasize in our Angus cattle are natural adaptability and good taste. We've been developing this since 1956. Beef is available as grass- or grain-finished wholes, halves, or quarters. Please contact us at the farm.

Visit the Organic Directory at
www.georgiaorganics.org
for the latest, up-to-date listings.

THOMAS (CONTINUED)

Sweet Grass Dairy
19635 US Highway 19 North
Thomasville, GA 31792
Karen Harper, 229.227.0752
info@sweetgrassdairy.com
www.sweetgrassdairy.com
A passion-driven family affair, dedicated to producing world-class cow and goat cheeses from the ground up. For more information, visit our website.

Green Market
Corner of W. Jackson & Stevens Streets
Thomasville, GA 31792
Alison Wilson, 229.277.7020
alisonw@thomasville.org
www.downtownthomasville.com
Downtown Thomasville Main Street hosts the Green Market every second Saturday of the month from 10am-1pm, except January, February, and December. Local vendors sell homemade/homegrown, organic, and eco-friendly products for purchase. We hope to see you at the next Green Market!

Organic Market
Corner of E. Jackson & Crawford Streets
Thomasville, GA 31792
Alison Wilson, 229.277.7020
alisonw@thomasville.org
www.downtownthomasville.com
Downtown Thomasville Main Street hosts the Organic Market every Thursday from 11am-2pm in the breezeway of the Municipal Building. We offer several types of organic produce, blueberries, eggs, coffees, grains, salad dressings, pepper sauces, salsa, and herbs.

TIFT

Tifton Farmers Market
Corner of Tift and Third Streets, Tifton, GA 31794
Leeann Culbreath, 229.848.2940
Market operates every first Thursday of the month, from 5-7pm, and Saturday mornings starting in late April through mid-July from 8-11am. Products available at the market include local produce, conventional and pesticide-free. Also homemade baked goods, preserves, medicinal herbs, and plant-related kid's art activities. Located in downtown Tifton Railway Depot, next to the red caboose.

FLORIDA

Magnolia Farms CSA and Farmstay Campground
12886 87th Road, Live Oak, FL 32060
Darlene & Michael McElwee, 386.364.6450
mcelwee87@alltel.net
www.magnoliafarms.org
CSA deliveries to Valdosta, Tallahassee, Jacksonville. Farm store open Saturdays, with produce, goat cheese, feta, eggs, goat milk soaps. Camping available; BBQ, picnic area. Educational farm tours of gardens and animals.

Turkey Hill Farm
3546 Baum Road, Tallahassee, FL 32309
Louise Divine & Herman Holley, 850.216.4024
turkeyhill@earthlink.net
www.localharvest.org/farms/M4181
We are Certified Naturally Grown and use organic and biodynamic methods. We grow seasonal vegetables, fruits, and shiitake mushrooms for two markets and select local restaurants. Our annual Tomato Festival is held on Fathers Day.

A Grower's Market
229 Lake Ella Drive, Tallahassee, FL 32302
Jennifer Taylor, 850.412.5260
jennifer.taylor@famu.edu
This open air market, behind the Black Dog Café, features fresh, seasonal, organically grown vegetables, fruit, and flowers direct from local small farmers. Open Wednesdays rain or shine from 3pm until dusk. Sustainable living workshops, raw cuisine, and cooking demonstrations by executive chefs.

GEORGIA ORGANICS
Join Today
www.georgiaorganics.org/join

Sunshine Growers' Market
Esplanade Way, Tallahassee, FL 32311
Jennifer Taylor, 850.412.5260
jennifertaylor@famu.edu
The market features locally grown produce–vegetables and fruit. Open every Monday from 1pm-2pm, except state holidays. In the SouthWood Office Complex on Esplanade Way, Buildings 4025 and 4055, at the Florida Department of Health.

Tallahassee Farmers' Market
1415 Timberlane Road, Tallahassee, FL 32312
Herman Holley, 850.216.4024
Year-round market located in the central covered pavilion in Market Square Shopping Center. Open Saturdays 8am-2pm, on the north side of Tallahassee off of US 319 at I-10.

The Green Market
Commonwealth Boulevard, Tallahassee, FL 32302
Jennifer Taylor, 850.412.5260
jennifer.taylor@famu.edu
Features fresh seasonal, organically grown produce direct from local small farmers. Open 3-5pm Thursdays, rain or shine, except state holidays. At the Florida Department of Environmental Protection between the Douglas and Carr Buildings, on Commonwealth Boulevard.

FARMER D
ORGANICS



Dig in with Farmer D!

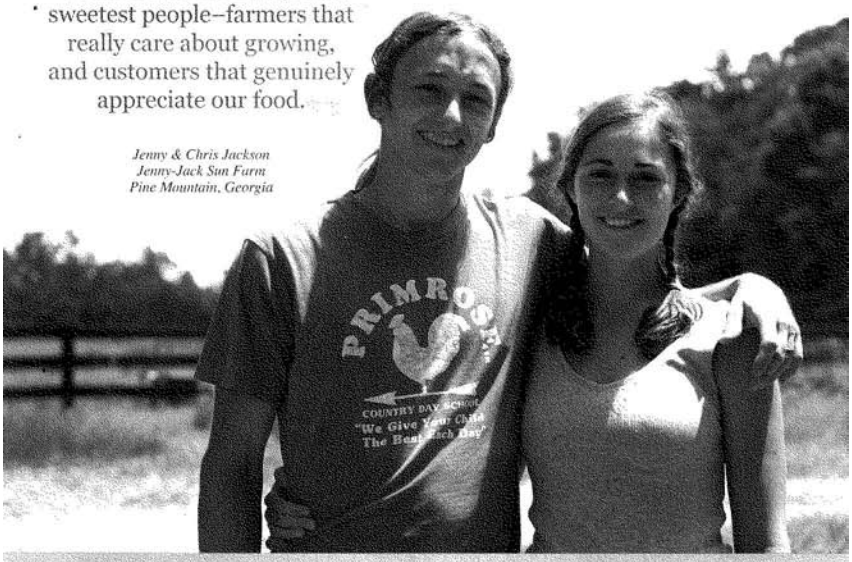
Farmer D Organics Biodynamic Blend Compost
is now available at Whole Foods Market and other fine garden centers.

To find out more about Farmer D Organics, visit
www.farmerd.com



We meet the most inspiring, sweetest people--farmers that really care about growing, and customers that genuinely appreciate our food.

Jenny & Chris Jackson
Jenny-Jack Sun Farm
Pine Mountain, Georgia



- Customers subscribing to farm CSA programs receive a weekly delivery of fresh, seasonal produce throughout the growing season from farmers like Jenny and Chris Jackson. Share the bounty of the local harvest by joining a CSA, or choosing from the growing number of other local food delivery programs.

Farming on Jenny's family land, Chris and Jenny Jackson have found the meaningful and worthwhile vocation they were looking for. Their produce, honey, and grains are sold on-farm, at the farmers' market in Columbus, and to select restaurants--and are also distributed through the Love is Love Farm CSA.



COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA) FARMS

What's in a name? The term "CSA" traditionally describes a single-farm relationship where a farm delivers just-picked produce to a designated location where customers go to pick up their share. By subscribing in advance of the growing season, customers provide their farmer with income to buy growing supplies when they're most needed. CSA programs offer Georgia's family farms economic stability, and help consumers develop a deeper relationship with the source of their food and the farmer who grows it.

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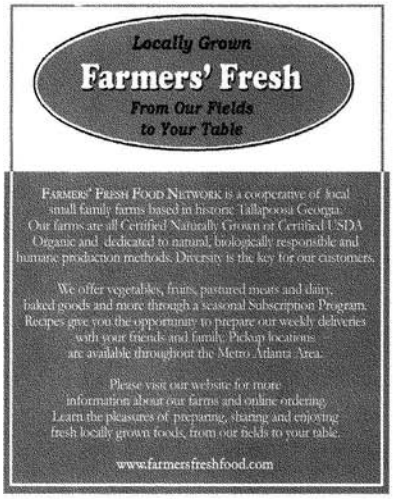
FARMER-OWNED BUSINESSES

Consumers and restaurants interested in purchasing a weekly share of Georgia's fresh, organic, and sustainable harvest have more options than ever. The following local businesses have built their model around distributing locally grown food–some deliver to consumers, some to restaurants. Others offer Internet shopping, or ordering by-the-item.

Athens Locally Grown
Athens, GA 30605
Eric & Christina Wagoner, 706.248.1860
eric@locallygrown.net
www.athens.locallygrown.net
An online farmers' market where over sixty sustainable farms located around Athens sell anything that can be locally grown. Over 1,200 individuals and families shop on the website that has become one of the largest and most diverse markets in the Southeast.

Columbus Natural Foods CSA
Columbus, GA
Cathy Carter
catcart@aol.com
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ColsNaturalFood
An all-volunteer organization composed of folks who value the opportunity to acquire local, chemical-free, sustainably-grown produce grown by three farms near Columbus. All proceeds from the sale of produce shares go directly to our farmers. Our farmers can currently support 50 weekly shares.

Conyers Locally Grown
915 Lake Stone Lea Drive, Oxford, GA 30054
Brady Bala, 404.456.4333
doublebeefarm@gmail.com
www.conyers.locallygrown.net
Our Internet-based program allows you to choose from available items to fill your box each week. We currently have twenty farms growing and marketing items on our site. It's easy and fun–shop without getting up from your computer! See website for pick up locations.









Farmers' Fresh Food Network
Tallapoosa, GA
farmersfreshfood@yahoo.com
www.farmersfreshfood.com
A cooperative of farmers and food producers from West Georgia and East Alabama. We provide fruits and vegetables grown without pesticides, and meats and eggs without hormones or antibiotics, through a subscription service with deliveries in metro Atlanta and West Georgia.

Moore Farms and Friends
239 County Road 561, Woodland, AL 36280
Will & Laurie Moore, 256.449.9417
moorefarmsandfriends@yahoo.com
www.moorefarmsandfriends.com
Moore Farms and Friends offers fresh local/regional, Certified Organic foods from over twenty farms, including our own. Order from our online market at www.moorefarmsandfriends.com, where features include custom ordering by the item from a wide array of products, nutrition information, and recipes. Multiple pickup locations throughout Atlanta.

Spruill Green Market CSA
4681 Ashford Dunwoody Road, Atlanta, GA 30338
Corinna Garmon, 770.214.8531
Spruillgreenmarket@yahoo.com
www.localharvest.org/farms/M14721
Operated by the vendors of Spruill Green Market, the Spruill Green Market CSA is a cooperative program formed to provide customers with a diverse and flexible share. No seasonal commitment required. Pickup on Wednesdays from 8am-noon at the Spruill Green Market, or 5-7pm in Ball Ground and Carrollton.

LOCAL PRODUCE DELIVERY SERVICES

Want delivery to your home or restaurant? These local companies bring the freshest local foods–produced by Georgia's Certified Organic and sustainable farms–to consumers and/or restaurants. Read the descriptions to find a service that's right for you!

auNaturale Market
115 Pine Grove Road, Locust Grove, GA 30248
Rena Richardson, 678.608.3329
sales@theanmarket.com
www.theanmarket.com
We are a Certified Organic delivery service south of Atlanta specializing in bringing the freshest produce directly to you from local farmers. We also offer green

grocery items such as local grassfed beef and fresh organic baby food.

Destiny Produce
16 Forest Parkway Building E
Forest Park, GA 30297
Dee Dee Digby, 404.366.7006
sales@destinyproduce.com
www.destinyproduce.com
The only Certified Organic distributor in Georgia offering a full line of Certified Organic fruits and vegetables and local dairy, meats, and juices. Destiny supports and distributes for local producers all over the Southeast...bringing people and food closer together.

Off the Vine–Organic Produce Delivery
Marietta, GA 30068
Shana Wolf & Cecilia Smith, 404.317.7459
support@offthevineproduce.com
www.offthevineproduce.com
Since 2002, Off the Vine Produce has been the one and only company that offers delivery of Certified Organic fruits and vegetables from local USDA-certified farms to your home or office, twelve months a year. Reliable and convenient!

Southeastern Organic Supply Co.
425 Forest Valley Road, Atlanta, GA 30342
Kristopher Swanson, 404.277.1233
kswanson@seorganicsupply.com
www.seorganicsupply.com
SEOS specializes in the marketing and distribution of locally and regionally grown and produced food to chefs who wish to use the most sustainable ingredients possible.

The Turnip Truck, Inc.
P.O. Box 18281, Atlanta, GA 30316
Michael Schenck, 404.909.7927
turniptruckproduce@gmail.com
The Turnip Truck bridges the gap between the farmer and the consumer, whether they are consumers who want weekly deliveries, or restaurants and chefs. We provide professional distribution and marketing services to farmers, and source local goods for Atlanta chefs.

Visit the Organic Directory at
www.georgiaorganics.org
for the latest, up-to-date listings.

COMMERCIAL DISTRIBUTORS

These commercial distributors are integrating locally grown, Certified Organic foods in their product lines sold to restaurants, businesses, and other institutions.

Royal Food Service Inc.
3720 Zip Industrial Boulevard SE, Atlanta, GA 30354
404.366.4299
web@royalfoodservice.com
www.royalfoodservice.com
Royal Food Service is a privately owned food distribution company focused on providing fresh produce through partnerships with Georgia farmers and grower cooperatives that specialize in growing Certified Organic, seasonal, and local produce. We are a HACCP-approved facility that delivers only the highest quality products to some of the finest restaurants in Atlanta, and beyond.

Sodexo/Emory Dining at Emory University
569 Asbury Circle, Atlanta, GA 30322
Christy Cook, 404.727.7361
christy.cook@sodexo.com
www.emory.edu/dining
Sodexo partners with Emory University to provide dining services on campus, serving more than 2.5 million meals every year. Emory Dining's vision is to create services that contribute to a more pleasant way of life for the Emory University community and to promote a diverse, healthy, and environmentally sustainable community. We actively seek foods grown or raised in Georgia. If you are interested in learning more about Emory Dining and opportunities to bring your product to campus, please contact Christy Cook.

U.S. Foodservice, Inc.
7950 Spence Road, Fairburn, GA 30213
800.241.7677
http://Atlanta.USFoodservice.com
A Broadline distributor in the Georgia market with a corporate initiative for responsibility and sustainability, we have a broad base of organic and local, sustainable products available for food service needs. We have created a "Green Product Solutions" catalogue for our customers including any and all products with third party certifications. Our branch has put together a team to address environmental performance, community engagement and creation of more sustainable offerings to be "your partner beyond the plate.™"



I want to preserve the world's ability to produce food for my children and grandchildren.

Lynn Pugh
Cane Creek Farm
Cumming, Georgia

TEACHER

"As I started farming, I realized that we needed more farmers–so I started teaching. I enjoy watching my students realize their ability, and watching them develop their talents. There's challenges, too. The biggest is making sustainable farming economically feasible. I don't want to promise something to my students that is going to lead them to the poor house. There has to be a way to farm and make a modest living."

Lynn Pugh teaches the annual Fundamentals of Organic Farming course for Georgia Organics, using the curriculum she coordinated. Visit www.georgiaorganics.org to download a free copy of the curriculum.

I walk away with a greater sense of purpose, seeing people enjoy something that I enjoy doing.

Greg Brown
Greenleaf Farms
Barnesville, Georgia



STUDENT

"I grew up on a small hog farm and hated every second of it. There were seven of us, and I was the oldest and was in charge of the chores. I complained about why I had to do all of this–and not the rest of my brothers and sisters. As I got older, there wasn't anything driving me. I tried a few different careers: chef, landscaper. But I kept coming back to farming. Why? I like seeing transplants sprout, knowing that I've at least done that part right. I love to watch things grow. I like going out to the fields, pulling fresh veggies and eating from the farm–and not worrying about my health. I love bringing my harvest to markets and seeing people who are excited about what I do."

Greg Brown is a graduate of farmer Lynn Pugh's first Fundamentals of Organic Farming course, taught in 2007.

growing supplies & services

Whether you're a farmer growing food for others, or just want to eat fresh produce grown organically in your very own yard, these suppliers, landscapers, and businesses provide the products and services you'll need–everything from soil amendments, fertilizers, and seedlings to home garden design and installation.

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farmerd@farmerd.com
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Creators of farms and products for the earth and its people, Farmer D Organics provides organic farm and garden consulting and a line of organic gardening products. Available at Whole Foods stores throughout the Southeast.

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GEORGIA ORGANICS
Visit the Organic Directory at www.georgiaorganics.org for the latest, up-to-date listings.

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P.O. Box 1401, Lake Worth, FL 33460
Chris Bell, 561.586.0048
cbell@internaturalmarketing.com
www.internaturalmarketing.com
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www.longwood-plantation.com
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Gabe Diaz-Saavedra, 941.350.7291
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www.naturesafe.com
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404.892.5853
gardentoe@yahoo.com
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lindsey@sustenancedesign.net
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www.whippoorwillhollowfarm.com
Whippoorwill Hollow Farm distributes Certified Organic livestock feed, soils, amendments, and fertilizers in addition to worm castings. 'Enriched by nature, not by chemicals' is our motto!

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melanie@youngsmillfarm.com
www.youngsmillfarm.com
Youngs Mill Farm is a Certified Organic greenhouse operation. Our focus is on growing quality herb and vegetable bedding plants for retail garden centers. We also contract-grow Certified Organic vegetable transplants for farmers throughout the Southeast.

The Georgia Department of Agriculture estimates that a 10-foot by 20-foot plot can grow $600 worth of vegetables each year.

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www.bountifulgardens.org
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www.highmowingseeds.com
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800.836.3710
vegseed@seedway.com
www.seedway.com
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540.894.9480
www.southernexposure.com
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organizations

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Melvin Bishop, 706.485.0004
melvinbishop@bellsouth.net
Provides support to farmers.

Alabama Sustainable Agricultural Network
P.O. Box 18782, Huntsville, AL 35804
Karen Wynne, 256.751.3925
info@asanonline.org
www.asanonline.org
Provides support to farmers.

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project
729 Haywood Road Suite 3, Asheville, NC 28806
828.236.1282
info@BuyAppalachian.org
www.BuyAppalachian.org
Provides support to farmers.

Atlanta Community Food Bank
732 Joseph E. Lowery Boulevard
Atlanta, GA 30318-6628
404.892.3333
feedback@acfb.org
www.acfb.org
Supports community gardens in Atlanta, and distributes food to communities in need.

Atlanta Local Food Initiative (ALFI)
P.O. Box 8924, Atlanta, GA 31106
678.702.0400
www.atlantalocalfood.org
Food policy coalition advocating for Atlanta's sustainable food future.

Carolina Farm Stewardship Association
P.O. Box 448, Pittsboro, NC 27312
919.542.2402
www.carolinafarmstewards.org
Provides support to farmers.

Earth Share of Georgia
1447 Peachtree Street, Atlanta, GA 30309
Madeline Reamy, 404.873.3173
madeline@earthsharega.org
www.earthsharega.org
Facilitates corporate charitable giving to environmental nonprofits.

Federation of Southern Cooperatives
2769 Church Street, East Point, GA 30344
Heather Gray, 404.765.0991
hlgray@mindspring.com
www.federation.coop
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Florida Certified Organic Growers & Consumers
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352.377.6345
www.foginfo.org
Organic certifying agency.

Georgia Department of Human Resources, Department of Public Health, WIC Branch
2 Peachtree Street NW #10476, Atlanta, GA 30303
Doris Evans-Gates, 404.656.9883
degates@dhr.state.ga.us
www.health.state.ga.us/programs/wic
Administers the WIC Farmers Market and Senior Nutrition Programs.

Georgia Citizens Coalition on Hunger
9 Gammon Avenue SW, Atlanta, GA 30315
404.622.7778
livingwageatl@hotmail.com
www.georgialivingwage.org
Advocates and improves access to healthy food in underserved neighborhoods.

Georgia Mountains Foodways Alliance
220 Beechwood Drive, Clayton, GA 30525
David Darugh, 706.782.5485
david-gayle@beechwoodinn.ws
www.georgiafoodways.org
Building local food community in North Georgia.

Green Foodservice Alliance
480 E. Paces Ferry Road Suite 7, Atlanta, GA 30305
Holly Elmore, 404.261.4690
holly@GreenFoodserviceAlliance.org
www.greenfoodservicealliance.org
Networking and environmental advocacy for Georgia's foodservice industry.

"A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself."

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

Heifer International
315 W. Ponce De Leon Avenue #245
Decatur, GA 30030
877.663.1685
se@heifer.org
www.heifer.org
Administers programs that improve food access to underserved populations.

Les Dames d'Escoffier
www.ldeiatlanta.org
Provides support to the sustainable agriculture community and women in the culinary arts.

Oakhurst Community Garden Project
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Stephanie Van Parys, 404.371.1920
director@oakhurstgarden.org
www.oakhurstgarden.org
Large community garden offers educational classes, plant sales, and tours.

Organic Extension Underground
P.O. Box 33459, Decatur, GA 30033
Mark Boudreau, 828.215.2093
info@organicextension.org
www.organicextension.org
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Atlanta, GA 30308
George Dusenbury
404.817.7970
parkpride@parkpride.org
www.parkpride.org
Administers the Adopt a Community Garden Program in Atlanta's city parks.

P.L.A.C.E.
P.O. Box 1924
Athens, GA 30603
www.localplace.org
Building local food systems in Athens.

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www.georgiaorganics.org
for the latest, up-to-date listings.

Slow Food
4148 Kings Troop Road, Stone Mountain, GA 30083
Julie Shaffer, 404.296.3932
indiasjules@hotmail.com
www.slowfoodatlanta.org
Supports good, clean, and fair food.

Southeastern African American Farmers Organic Network (SAAFON)
P.O. Box 456, Savannah, GA 31402
Cynthia Hayes, 912.495.0591
saafon@comcast.net
www.saafon.org
Provides support to farmers.

Southern Foodways Alliance
Barnard Observatory, University, MS 38677
662.915.5993
sfamail@olemiss.edu
www.southernfoodways.com
Dedicated to preserving the South's food heritage and culture.

Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative
P.O. Box 1933, Albany, GA 31702
229.430.9870
education@bellsouth.net
www.SRBWI.org
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Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SSAWG)
P.O. Box 1552, Fayetteville, AR 72702
Jim Lukens, 479.422.5831
info@ssawg.org
www.ssawg.org
Provides support to farmers.

Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE)–Southern Region
University of Georgia Agricultural Experiment Station, Griffin, GA 30223
www.southernsare.uga.edu
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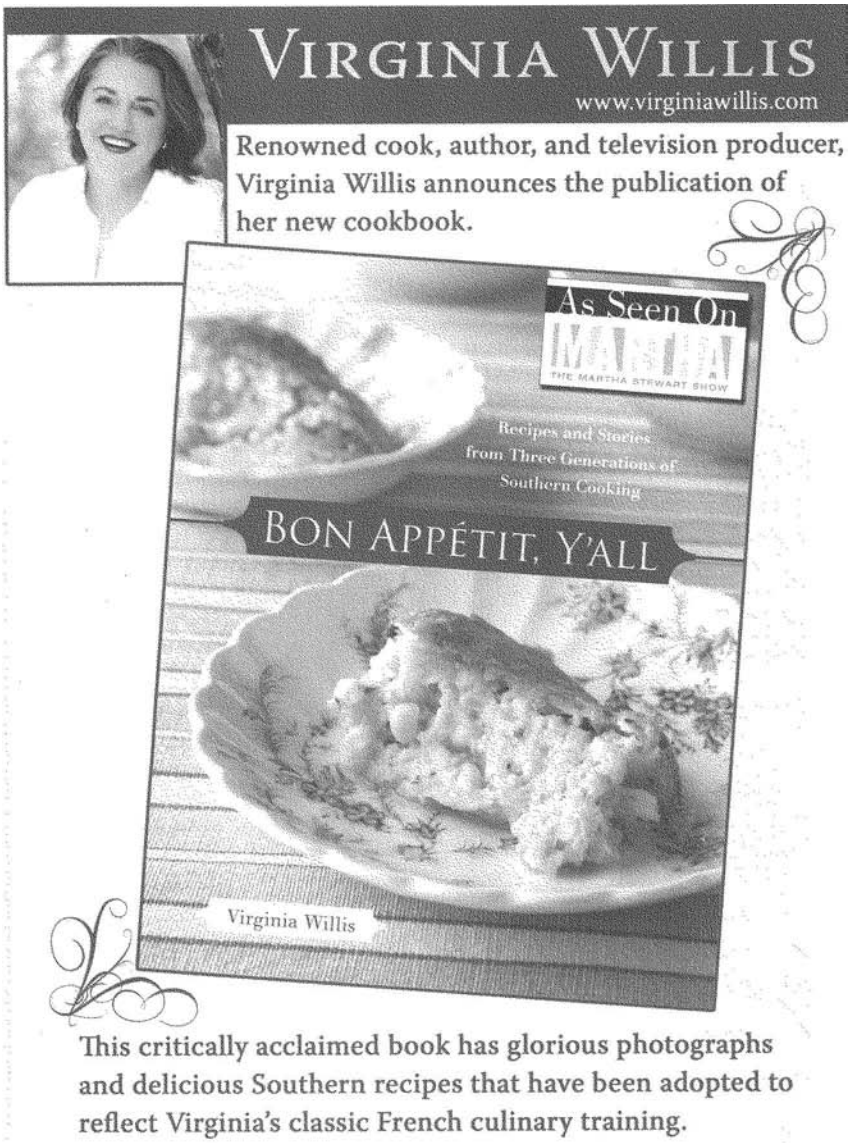
"I am not bound for any public place, but for ground of my own where I have planted vines and orchard trees, and in the heat of the day climbed up into the healing shadow of the woods. Better than any argument is to rise at dawn and pick dew-wet berries in a cup."

-Wendell Berry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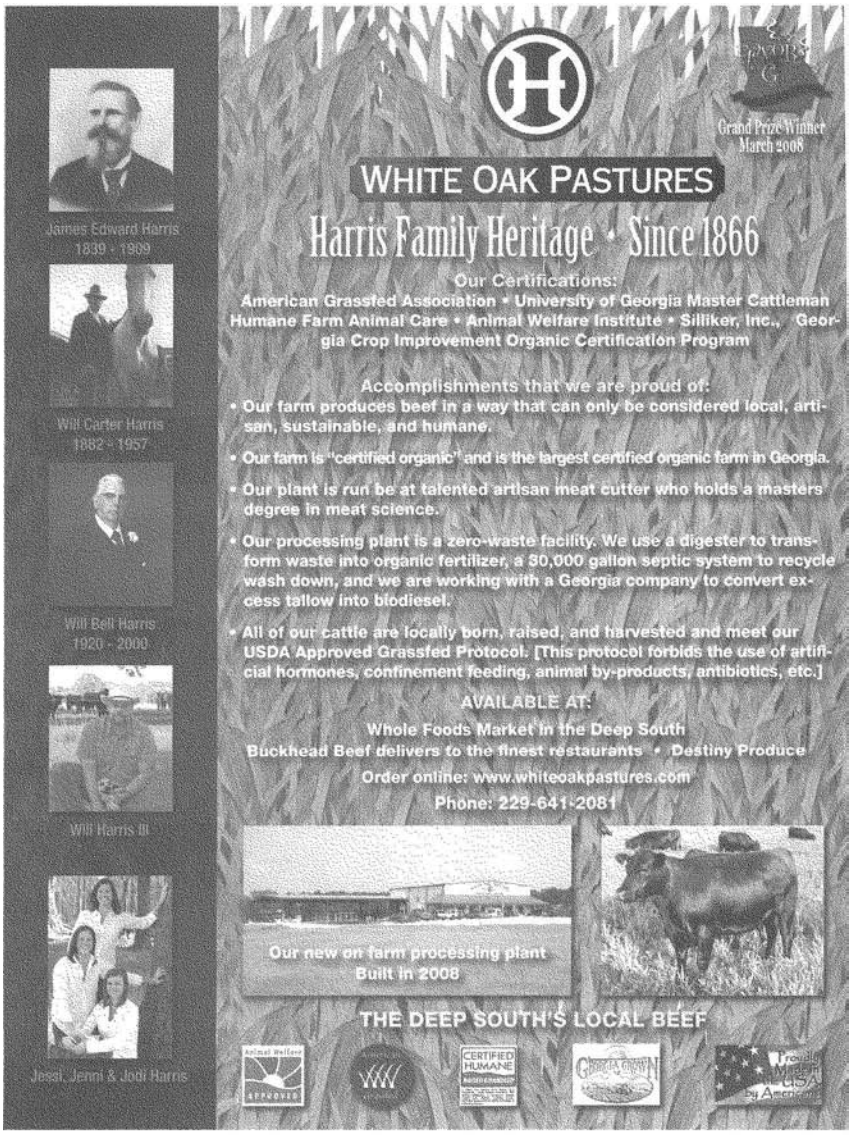
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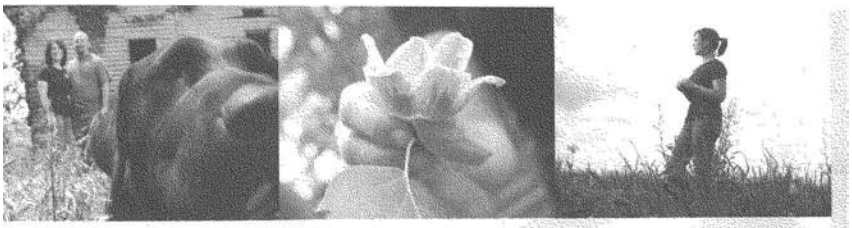

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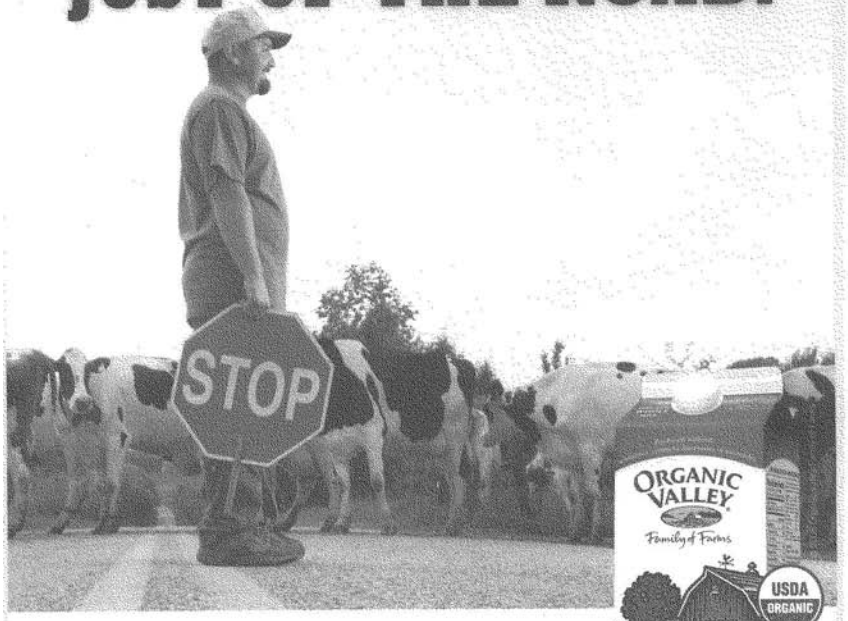
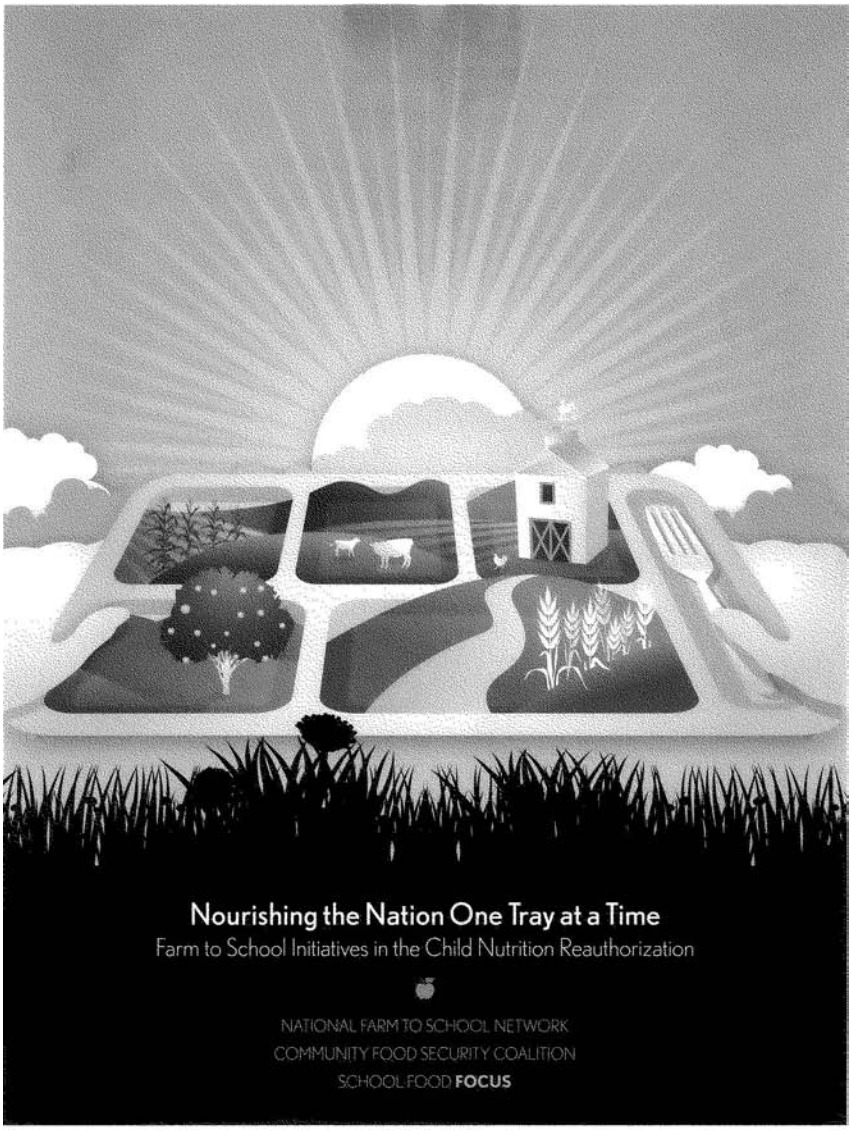
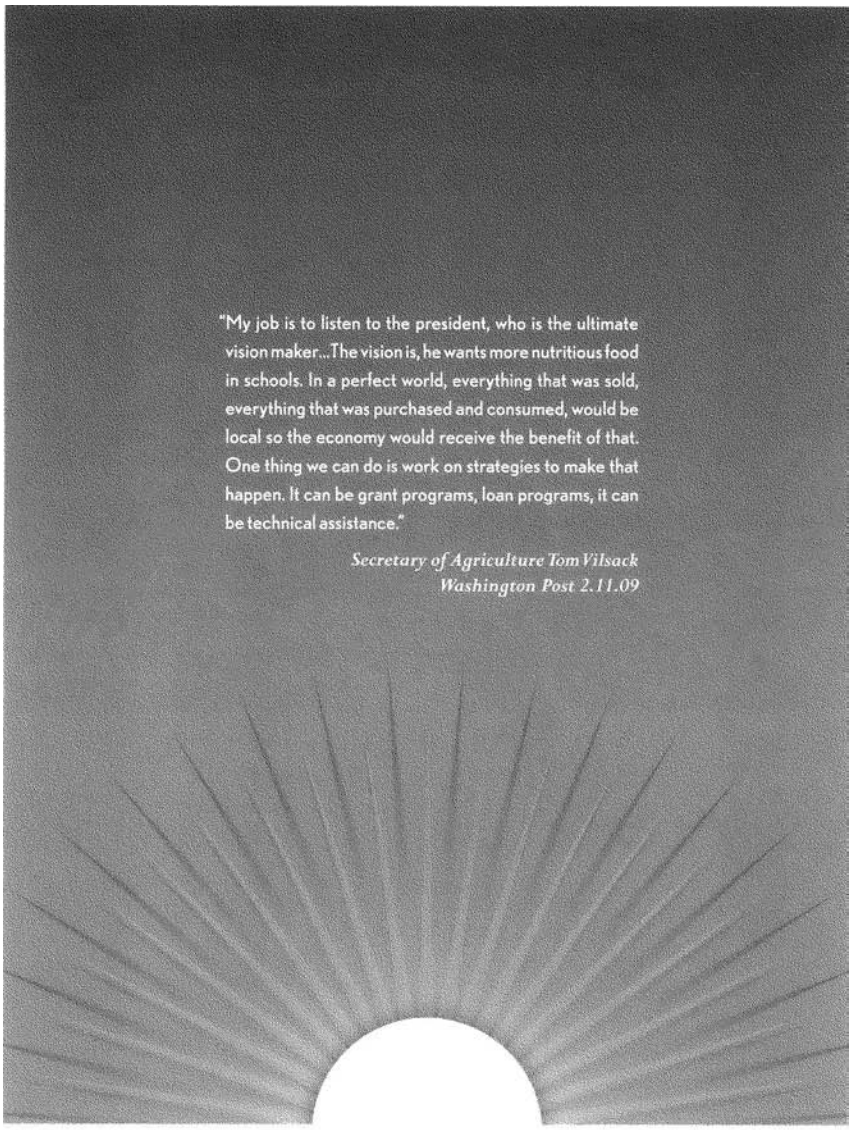


20 YEARS

As members of a farmer-owned cooperative, we have the freedom to farm the way nature intended. We never use antibiotics, synthetic hormones or pesticides. Our cows graze organic pastures. And we treat our customers, animals, and environment with respect. You see, like all Organic Valley farmers, we take pride in putting food on your table that's both healthy and delicious. After all, if it says Organic Valley, it has our name on it. **www.organicvalley.coop**


Nourishing the Nation One Tray at a Time
Farm to School Initiatives in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization
NATIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK
COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY COALITION
SCHOOL FOOD FOCUS


"My job is to listen to the president, who is the ultimate vision maker...The vision is, he wants more nutritious food in schools. In a perfect world, everything that was sold, everything that was purchased and consumed, would be local so the economy would receive the benefit of that. One thing we can do is work on strategies to make that happen. It can be grant programs, loan programs, it can be technical assistance."
Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack
Washington Post 2.11.09

Restore the Right of All Children to Access Healthy Food in School

School meals are a vital part of our responsibility to ensure the health and wellbeing of future generations. Improving the quality of school meals, and making them accessible to all children, is essential to our nation's future. More than 30 million children eat school food five days a week, 180 days a year. Over the past 60+ years, school meals have helped our nation make impressive strides toward improving childhood nutrition and reducing childhood hunger. Yet in recent years, school meals are confronting new challenges. School food services are fighting an uphill battle to provide kids with healthy food. Soaring food and energy costs, the lure of fast food outside the school campus, financial pressures caused by tight state budgets and diminished tax revenues all stand in the way of food services being able to provide healthy and delicious meals to schoolchildren.

School meals are an important way to turn around our nation's burgeoning obesity epidemic. Consider the following:

- Obesity rates among children have doubled in the last 10 years and tripled for adolescents.
- 27 percent of U.S. children are overweight.
- 1 in 3 children born in the year 2000 will develop diabetes—make that 1 in 2 if the child is black or Hispanic.
- For the first time in 200 years, today's children are likely to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.

Like school food services, today's family farmer is facing numerous challenges to make a living off the land. The farmer's share of every food dollar has dropped to 19 cents from 41 cents in 1950. As a result, many farmers have a hard time just breaking even. Three hundred thirty farm operators leave the farm every week, and the average age of farmers nationally is 57 years. The U.S., with only 2.2 million farmers, now has more prisoners than farmers.

There is a solution that can help turn around both of these trends: farm to school. School meals form a potentially lucrative market, estimated at more than $10 billion per year. Farmers who sell to schools can augment their income and stay on the land. Yet today's family farmer doesn't have very good access to this market.

Farm to school programs ensure that our children eat the highest-quality food available. These programs deliver food that not only nourishes children's bodies immediately, but also knowledge that enhances their educational experience and cultivates long-term healthy eating habits. They are a win-win for kids, farmers, communities, educators, parents, and the environment.

Thanks to the efforts of social entrepreneurs, farm to school programs have blossomed on their own in thousands of schools across the country. Think about what they could do with active support from USDA.

ONE FARMERS

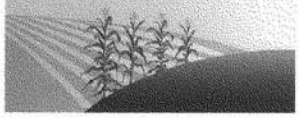
WHAT IS FARM TO SCHOOL?

»» Nourishing kids and community

In 40 states, students in over 2,000 school districts are eating farm-fresh food for school lunch or breakfast. Farm to school enables every child to have access to nutritious food while simultaneously benefiting the community and local farmer by providing a consistent, reliable market. In addition to supplying nourishing, locally grown food in the cafeteria or classrooms, farm to school programs often also offer nutrition and agriculture education through taste tests, school gardens, composting programs, and farm tours. Such experiences help children understand where their food comes from and how their food choices affect their bodies, the environment, and their communities at large.

Both the food itself and the experiential education surrounding it are equally essential to the success of farm to school programs in changing eating habits for the better. When schools tout the advantages of eating produce but don't offer it in meals, their students are being taught one thing but shown another. Schools need to give students a consistent message, reinforced through hands-on experiences such as growing food in a school garden, visiting a farmers' market, tasting new products, and developing cooking skills that will serve them their whole lives. These linkages give students vivid and lasting impressions of the delights of growing and eating fresh-picked produce, and help them understand where food comes from and how it is grown—knowledge that's been shown to drive better dietary choices.

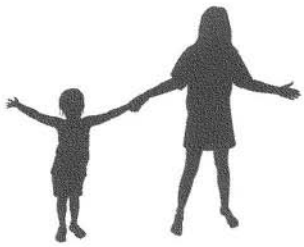
If school food can improve the health of kids, develop new marketing opportunities for farmers, and support the local economy, it's a win-win for everyone.

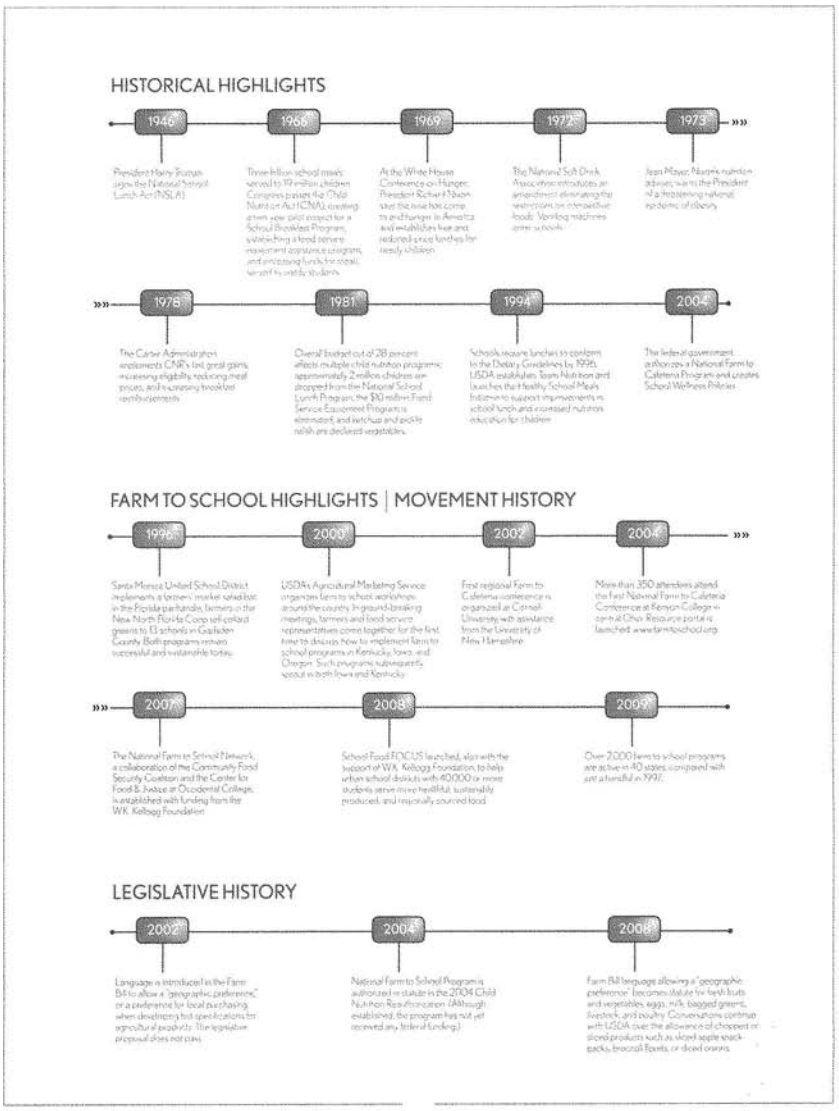


The Child Nutrition Act

Every four or five years, an opportunity arises for all concerned with the health of our nation's children to evaluate, defend, and improve federal Child Nutrition programs. These programs were born in the post-World War II era with the goal of improving national security through improving the nutritional status of future soldiers. They were expanded in the 1960s and 1970s as part of civil rights struggles to reduce hunger and poverty. Now, in 2009, with our nation's health security and the survival of family farming at risk, it's the perfect opportunity to revamp Child Nutrition programs to enable more schools—and more children—to benefit from the healthy meals and educational opportunities that farm to school programs can provide. The current Child Nutrition Act expires in September 2009, and Congress is moving quickly to enact the next version.

In 2004, the National Farm to School Program was established as part of the Child Nutrition Act reauthorization, creating a seed grant fund for schools to set up farm to school programs. This program received a $10 million authorization, but never was appropriated funds. Following this legislation and the tremendous subsequent growth and interest in farm to school programs, the time is ripe to implement policies that include locally and regionally grown foods in national meal programs.




HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS
1946
President Harry Truman signs the National School Lunch Act (NSLA).
1966
Three billion school meals served to 19 million children. Congress passes the Child Nutrition Act (CNA), creating a two-year pilot project for a School Breakfast Program, subsidizing a food service management assistance program, and increasing funds for cash, based on needy students.
1969
At the White House Conference on Hunger, President Richard Nixon says the nation has come to end hunger in America and establishes free and reduced-price lunches for needy children.
1972
The National Soft Drink Association introduces an amendment eliminating the restriction on competitive foods. Vending machines enter schools.
1973
Jean Mayer, Nixon's nutrition adviser, warns the President of a threatening national epidemic of obesity.
1978
The Carter Administration implements CNP's first great gains, increasing eligibility, reducing meal prices, and increasing breakfast reimbursements.
1981
Overall budget cut of 28 percent affects multiple child nutrition programs; approximately 2 million children are dropped from the National School Lunch Program; the $10 million Food Service Equipment Program is eliminated; and ketchup and pickle relish are declared vegetables.
1994
Schools receive funding to conform to the Dietary Guidelines by 1996. USDA establishes Team Nutrition and launches the Healthy School Meals Initiative to support improvements in school lunch and increased nutrition education for children.
2004
The federal government authorizes a National Farm to Cafeteria Program and creates School Wellness Policies.
FARM TO SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS | MOVEMENT HISTORY
1996
Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District implements a farmers' market salad bar in the Florida panhandle, farmers in the New North Florida Coop sell collard greens to 13 schools in Gadsden County. Both programs remain successful and sustainable today.
2000
USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service organizes farm to school workshops around the country. In-ground-breaking meetings, farmers and food service representatives come together for the first time to discuss how to implement farm to school programs in Kentucky, Iowa, and Oregon. Such programs subsequently sprout in both Iowa and Kentucky.
2002
First regional Farm to Cafeteria conference is organized at Cornell University with assistance from the University of New Hampshire.
2004
More than 350 attendees attend the first National Farm to Cafeteria Conference at Kenyon College in central Ohio. Resource portal is launched: www.farmtoschool.org.
2007
The National Farm to School Network, a collaboration of the Community Food Security Coalition and the Center for Food & Justice at Occidental College, is established with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.
2008
School Food FOCUS launched, also with the support of W.K. Kellogg Foundation, to help urban school districts with 40,000 or more students serve more healthful, sustainably produced, and regionally sourced food.
2009
Over 2,000 farm to school programs are active in 40 states, compared with just a handful in 1997.
LEGISLATIVE HISTORY
2002
Language is introduced to the Farm Bill to allow a "geographic preference," or a preference for local purchasing, when developing bid specifications for agricultural products. The legislative proposal does not pass.
2004
National Farm to School Program is authorized in statute in the 2004 Child Nutrition Reauthorization. (Although established, the program has not yet received any federal funding.)
2008
Farm Bill language allowing a "geographic preference" becomes statute for fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, milk, bagged greens, livestock, and poultry. Conversations continue with USDA over the allowance of chopped or sliced products such as sliced apple snack packs, broccoli florets, or diced onions.

Benefits of Farm to School

The major aims of the farm to school approach are healthy children, healthy farms, and healthy communities. Farm to school programs are based on the premise that students will choose healthier foods, including more fruits and vegetables, if products are fresh, locally grown, and picked at the peak of their flavor and if those choices are reinforced with educational activities. Farm to school projects provide benefits to the entire community: children, farmers, food service staff, parents, and teachers.

Children

Existing research shows that farm to school programs influence students on many levels, increasing their knowledge and awareness about food sources, nutrition, and eating behaviors and lifestyles. Eating locally sourced products becomes part of the educational framework that turns kids on to healthier food options. A connection with the source of their food also deepens students' appreciation for food and agriculture. The major impacts of farm to school programs on children, collated from various programs, are:

- The choice of healthier options in the cafeteria through farm to school meals results in consumption of more fruits and vegetables (+0.99 to +1.3 servings/day) and at home. For example, studies in Portland, OR, and Riverside, CA, have found that students eating a farm-fresh salad bar consume roughly one additional serving of fruits and vegetables per day.
- Better knowledge and awareness about gardening, agriculture, healthy eating, local foods and seasonality. In Philadelphia, the percentage of kindergartners who knew where their food came from increased from 33 percent to 88 percent after participation in a farm to school program.
- Demonstrated willingness to try out new foods and healthier options. In one school in Ventura, CA, on days in which there was a choice between a farmers' market salad bar and a hot lunch, students and adults chose the salad bar by a 14 to 1 ratio.
- Reduced consumption of unhealthy foods and sodas; reduced television watching time; positive lifestyle modifications such as a daily exercise routine.

"Dear Shcool Board, Well I herd that we only get crunch lunch on 2 days of the week. How do you expect us to stay helthey? How do you expect us to live with the meatlof? Well, I hope you do sumthing."

Letter from a student at Davis Joint Unified School District (CA) to the School Board supporting the Davis Farm to School Salad Bar Program

"The greater the exposure to farm-fresh fruits and vegetables, the greater the likelihood that a child will eat them. In this Missouri study 83 percent ate homegrown produce 'sometimes or almost always.'"

April, 2007 issue of the Journal of the American Dietetic Association

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Farmers

Historically, local farmers have found it difficult to access school-food markets, given the complexities of the procurement process. Farm to school programs open up that multi-billion-dollar market to family farmers. Data from farm to school programs suggests that when schools dedicate a significant percentage of their purchases to local producers, local farmers gain a significant and steady market.

"We are cultivating more than just food here. This is about community; this is about relationships."

Iowa Farmer: Michel Nash

For example, the New York City school district signed a $4.2 million contract with farmers in upstate NY to provide apples for NYC schools over a three-year period. The 60 farms providing products to local schools in Massachusetts, meanwhile, are generating more than $700,000 in additional revenue each year. For most participating farmers, school sales represent 5 to 10 percent of their total sales.

Apart from the health and taste benefits of eating fresh, local food, Mary Ann Lopez, South Windsor's School Nutrition Specialist and Food Service Director, says it's good for her budget. Farmers set a price at the beginning of the season and that's what she pays all season. In contrast, during the winter, when she buys from national distributors, her price fluctuates. Because their food comes from different vendors across the country.

"For the six or eight weeks I get tomatoes, I get them for the same price, which helps stabilize my budget," Lopez says. "For us, it's a win-win situation. We get to support the farmers in our local area. We're someone they can depend on. In turn our kids are saying, 'We really like this.'"

LOCAL FARMERS HAVE TWO ADVANTAGES

»» **PROCEDURE** We can get fresh, high quality, and safe product to the institutions within 24 hours after harvest, including all post-handling procedures.

»» **RELATIONSHIP** The buyer and the grower have a real, face-to-face knowledge of one another, which promotes transparency and trust.

Some of the benefits reported by participating farmers are:

»» Diversification of market;

»» Positive relationships with the school district, students, parents, and community;

»» Opportunities to explore processing and preservation methods for institutional markets;

»» Establishment of grower collaboratives or cooperatives to supply institutional markets.

Food Services

With high overhead costs, the financial viability of school food services often depends on their ability to increase the participation of paying students and adults. Farm to school programs typically increase the participation rates in school meal programs, enhancing the overall financial viability of participating school food services.

The Massachusetts Farm to School project noted that Worcester Public Schools have seen a 15 percent increase in school lunch purchases since the district began buying locally. Student lunch participation in one school in Southern California increased by over 50 percent in the first two years the farm to school program was in place. Overall, schools report a 3 to 16 percent increase in participation in school meals when farm-fresh food is served.

SHUTTERSTOCK

Increased participation can cover the additional labor costs associated with food preparation of farm to school programs. Through a detailed cost analysis of 2006-07 purchases, Missoula County Public School District found that buying some local foods in season (apples, cantaloupe, carrot coins and shredded carrot, potatoes, and salad mix) was either less expensive or no more expensive than what it would have cost to purchase comparable foods through mainstream suppliers.

Food service staff participating in farm to school programs show increased:

- Knowledge and interest in local food preparation;
- Knowledge regarding seasonal recipes;
- Interest in interacting with teachers to strengthen classroom-cafeteria connections.

Parents

Incorporation of a parent-education component through a farm to school program can ensure that messages about health and local foods are carried into homes and reinforced there by parents and caregivers. Farm to school education inspires parents to incorporate healthier foods into their children's and their family's diets and better equips them to do so through both shopping and cooking tips. In a project in Vermont, 32 percent of parents with participating children believed that their family diet had improved since their child's participation in the program. In another project in Philadelphia, 78 percent of parents with participating children reported that their children ate more fruits and vegetables.

Many parents have exhibited:

- Gains in ability and interest in incorporating healthier foods in family diets;
- Greater interest in guiding children to make healthier choices;
- Positive changes in shopping patterns to incorporate healthy and local foods.

Teachers

Farm to school programs also affect teachers in positive ways— a very important and often overlooked outcome, as teachers are role models for students in all areas, especially regarding healthy lifestyles and eating. Some effects:

- Demonstrated positive attitude and eagerness about integrating farm to school related information in curriculum;
- Positive changes in personal diets and lifestyles, including but not limited to purchasing farm to school meals in the school cafeteria.

In the U.S., it takes the typical food item 1,500 to 2,400 miles to travel from farm to plate. A head of California lettuce shipped to Washington, DC, requires 36 times more fuel energy just to transport than the caloric food energy it provides.

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Farm to School Case Studies

Here are some examples of how farm to school has worked for three school districts and one farmers' cooperative. These stories also illustrate the challenges that these programs have faced, which can be addressed by federal policy changes.

Chicago Public Schools

Each school day, the 600-plus schools in the Chicago Public School (CPS) district serve about 385,000 lunches and breakfasts, 83 percent of which are free or discounted. A more healthful school meal program means healthier kids both now and in the future. Chicago Public School district is working with farmers and processors located within 150 miles of the city, including in Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Indiana, to serve fresh local fruit and vegetables to more than 300,000 students all year long. By doing this, Chicago has found a cost-effective way to make fresh local produce—including apples from Michigan, as well as corn, peas, carrots, and green beans frozen within 48 hours of harvest— accessible and available to students year-round, not just in the summer.

In 2007, the district took a bigger step to providing fresh and more healthful food for its students. Partnering with its main food service company, Chartwells Thompson Hospitality, it decided to put fresh fruits and vegetables on the menu twice a week. The change in food procurement creates a healthier meal for students, since the nutritional content of fresh food is far greater than canned food and especially more than highly processed or fried food. The switch to local produce also makes economic sense, thanks to rising shipping costs.

However, the district's changed procurement plan has created so much more regional demand for farm-fresh food that it strains the local supply, as many farmers have prior commitments to other large institutions. Another issue facing the district is financial: the federal reimbursement rate has not kept up with inflation and the rising costs of food and labor. In 2007, CPS ran a $23 million deficit in its food service program.

For Chicago Public Schools to continue improving the diets of its students, reimbursement rates for school meals need to be raised so that they are in step with current costs. The now outdated procurement model for school meals has not reflected a demand for fresh, more healthful food. This model needs to change, and schools and districts need support as they work to improve procurement systems.

Increased supply of fresh foods from the region surrounding Chicago is one clear example of the need targeted in our call for *increased funding for scaling up food procurement* by addressing gaps in food handling and infrastructure, and for *increased technical support* by USDA in partnership with city and state agencies as well as community based non-profit and farmers organizations.

Riverside, CA Unified School District

In March 2005 the Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) in Riverside, California launched its Farm to School Salad Bar Program in Jefferson Elementary School with support from the California Endowment and in partnership with the Center for Food & Justice. Since the implementation of the Jefferson salad bar, the program has expanded to 22 schools. The success of the Riverside program is due in large part to RUSD's Nutrition Services Director Rodney Taylor. Mr. Taylor was previously the food service director at the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified

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School District, where he implemented one of the country's first farm to school programs.

Riverside County is a historic agricultural county in Southern California. Once abundant with citrus groves and apples orchards, the county now has one of the fastest growing populations in the nation, and agricultural land is rapidly being lost to housing developments. For these reasons, Taylor saw farm to school as particularly important for Riverside and sought to make the program as locally-focused as possible. Through local farmers' markets he identified two small family farmers located within 30 miles of the City of Riverside who were willing to make weekly deliveries to the district. When produce isn't available from the two growers' farms, they look to other independent growers in the area to provide the needed items. Taylor spends about $250,000 per year in food purchases from local farms.

The main component of the Riverside Farm to School program is a daily salad bar offered to students as an alternative to the hot lunch meal. The salad bar is stocked with as much local produce as the district is able to purchase. In the peak growing seasons nearly all of the fruits and vegetables served are from local sources, in slower months the salad remains about 50% local, owing to the year-round growing season in Southern California. Approximately one quarter of students choose the salad bar on any given day. An unexpected result of the program at Jefferson has been a nearly 9% increase in overall school meal participation, including exponential growth in the number of teacher meals served.

Grant funding has allowed Taylor to hire a nutrition specialist/ salad bar coordinator to oversee the program. This person has become key to the program's success and sustainability. The coordinator serves as a liaison between the district and the farmers, placing produce orders with the local farmers each week. This kind of start up funding has been essential to Riverside and many other schools to implement farm to school programs. Yet, few schools have access to the private foundation dollars that Rodney Taylor, because of his history and connections with community groups, has had. For farm to school programs to become the norm across the country, *federal seed grant funds need to become available* to help schools make the transition to healthier foods.

New York City Public Schools

Because of the sheer size of the New York City school system—it serves 850,000 meals every day of the school year—changes in its school food procurement have a huge opportunity to have a positive impact on children's health.

Successes in several of the school system's farm to school partnerships over the past few years can shine light on new ways to get fresh and more healthful food to kids in public schools. Jerry Dygert of Champlain Valley Specialty has teamed up with the schools to sell Grab Apples. Millions of New York state-grown apples, pre-sliced and -bagged, have been purchased by New York schoolchildren. New York City's food service division estimates that kids are eating four times as many apples as they used to. To make the partnership possible, Champlain Valley Specialty had to invest in infrastructure changes in order to be able to cut and bag the apples—a presentation that was attractive to kids—in the quantities needed by NYC's schools.

The district's struggles to expand to other products point to the kinds of support and resources school districts will need to turn the tide of ill health of American children. Locally grown sliced and bagged carrots have not yet enjoyed the success of apples, even though the district has been working with producers for more than two years to try to get fresh carrots to New York's schoolchildren. As the district serves 285,000 pounds of baby carrots trucked in from faraway states, it seemed like it should

be an easy, not to mention cost-effective switch to use carrots grown close to the city. The district wanted to serve carrots in the same way they serve pre-sliced, pre-bagged apples because it is too labor-intensive to hand-cut as many carrots daily as they would need. But farmers and producers would have to invest in a different infrastructure to cut carrots. This might initially drive costs up and out of the purchasing price range: current federal and local laws require distributors to purchase the least expensive product, meaning schools have not been able to give preferential treatment to local products.

Outdated procurement regulations are among the systems that must change for school meals to offer the more healthful food they were originally intended to include. Growers of other fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as New York dairy and meat producers, have experienced similar frustrations in getting farm products into schools. Well-intentioned schools have also had a hard time navigating the food purchasing bureaucracy. A May 2008 piece of New York State legislation called the Healthy Foods Act sought to improve such regulations by giving farmers greater access to selling to their local schools, making it easier for both groups to serve healthier foods to kids.

Reauthorization of child nutrition programs in 2009 can *help reform and streamline state procurement regulations* following the 2008 Farm Bill, where the geographic preferences have now been allowed for school districts. The need for *more technical and financial support* to accomplish the goals of bringing more healthful local foods to New York City school meals is reflected in the call for evaluating and modeling best practices in more complex and larger scale procurement systems.

New North Florida Cooperative

One of the pioneers of the farm to school approach, the New North Florida Cooperative Association, Inc. (NNFC), has been working with school districts since 1995 to provide fresh produce for school meals. This group of innovative African-American farmers—60 to 100 farmers based in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas—has served more than a million students in 72 school districts.

NNFC began selling to Gadsden County schools during the 1996-1997 school year, and since that time has rapidly expanded, selling to a total of 15 school districts. The association initially received *financial assistance, mainly for the purchase of infrastructure and equipment to expand processing and distribution*, along with a $40,000 grant from the USDA Agriculture Marketing Service. Although grant monies were used in the initial stage of this program, approximately 90 percent of the funding for the NNFC's marketing efforts now comes from direct marketing sales, which contributes to the sustainability of the farm to school program today.

North Florida, where the program initially began, is an economically depressed area with high unemployment rates. Farm to school was a boon for all sides of the equation: farmers, land use, children, schools, community, and the local economy. Farmers saw that sourcing to schools would create a new market that could bring stability, profitability, and organization to small operations that could not survive on their own. From the food service perspective, integrating fresh local produce into school meals was a nutritionally sound decision that benefited children, the local economy, and community. It's a win-win-win situation.

CONFIDENTIAL

POLICY SOLUTIONS

WHY AMERICAN CHILDREN NEED US TO CHANGE FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Every child deserves the opportunity to eat food in school that ensures their health and wellbeing. Valuing the nourishment of our children is a principle shared by the collaboration forged by the National Farm to School Network, Community Food Security Coalition, and School Food FOCUS. Each organization represents active citizens, communities, and public institutions across the United States working in innovative ways to improve the food served in schools. The National Farm to School Network works with schools, farmers, food services, children, parents, and communities providing direct technical assistance to get farm to school programs off the ground. The Community Food Security Coalition builds strong local and regional food systems, especially in places where poor access to healthy food is prevalent. School Food FOCUS works with large urban school districts to bring more regionally sourced and sustainably produced food to school meals via changes in procurement policies.

Together, we represent millions of Americans supporting policy solutions that:

- restore the right of all children to access good food in school;
- educate and inform communities about healthy food and its impact on the wellbeing of children; and
- connect farmers, school districts, food service companies, and great ideas to the food system delivering school lunch.

Nineteen states across the country have passed policies to support farm to school initiatives. Some states have set up statewide farm to school programs, with staff in the Departments of Agriculture or Education, or both. They've communicated the state's preference for schools to buy local food through policy statements, changes to bidding practices, or cost preferences for in-state products ranging from 5 to 25 percent. They have also helped to connect farmers and school food services through websites and databases.

The federal government can learn from the example of these states. The 2004 Child Nutrition Act reauthorization included just one provision on farm to school: a seed grant program with $10 million in discretionary funding that has failed to receive an appropriation. But farm to school projects are growing explosively, and multiple policy strategies are needed to capture this momentum and propel them to the next level.

The policy recommendations in this document are solutions that are fair to American children, schools, farmers, food producers, and communities. The following lists the most effective ways Washington can rebalance the way American children eat in schools. We hope you will join us in our effort to nourish the nation, one tray at a time.



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Community Food Security Coalition
National Farm to School Network
and School Food FOCUS

Priorities for Child Nutrition Reauthorization

»» TOP PRIORITIES

Enact $250 million over 5 years, with $50 million mandatory, for Section 122: Access to Local Foods and School Gardens for grants to schools. This would fund 100-500 projects per year up to $100,000 to cover start-up costs for farm to school programs. These competitive, one-time grants will allow schools to develop vendor relationships with nearby farmers, plan seasonal menus and promotional materials, start a school garden, and develop hands-on nutrition education to demonstrate the important interrelationship of nutrition and agriculture.

Establish a farm to institution initiative within the Secretary of Agriculture's Office. This initiative will help provide national leadership to a rapidly growing movement, helping to consolidate and guide the various policies and programs necessary to expand and institutionalize farm to institution across the country.

Increase funding for improving and evaluating school food procurement. The challenges of farm to school in large school districts include bridging the many gaps in supply-chain and food-handling infrastructure. USDA, together with national and state agencies and non-governmental organizations, should collaborate to share and perfect best practices for increasing local and regional procurement of school food, including evaluation of programs across the country.

»» ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES

Increase Use of Foods From Regional Food Systems in School Food Programs

Encourage purchasing of local fruits and vegetables through the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

The schools selected for this program should be urged to buy from local farms and sources as feasible. Buying locally reduces transportation costs and related environmental impacts, and supports the local economy. Research shows that production methods for food (i.e. organic, less pesticides, etc.) are important to children's health. Production standards should be part of the standards set for food provided to our children similar to nutritional standards.

Increase technical assistance to school food services and coordination among education, health, agriculture, and procurement agencies for product sourcing, bid specifications, and menu planning for all child nutrition programs that purchase local foods.

Food preparation using whole foods rather than highly processed foods is better for children's health. To implement farm to school programs, food service staff may require training in specific areas such as procurement, product handling, and seasonal menu development. Training in these areas will help to build the skills of food service staff and further institutionalize farm to school programs.

Increase Reimbursement Rates and Improve Access for Child Nutrition Programs

Increase school food reimbursement rates by at least 35 cents per meal for school districts that achieve excellence in providing nutritious school meals.

Food services operate under incredible financial constraints, especially as the cost of food has increased in the past year. Improvements in the quality of meals require the commitment of

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additional funds. Reimbursement rate increases should be made available to school districts on the condition that they use the funds for foods that help them meet dietary guidelines, such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Eliminate the reduced-price category for school meals and extend free meal eligibility to households with incomes up to 185% of poverty level.

Currently children from families with income between 130-185% of the poverty level are eligible for reduced price school lunch. The 40 cents per meal charge can be a barrier for participation by low-income families, resulting in increased childhood hunger during the school day.

Strengthen Operations & Infrastructure of Child Nutrition Programs

Enhance and fund food service training programs to develop a skilled workforce that can prepare whole foods, practice healthful and safe cooking, procure local food, develop seasonal menus, and promote positive diet behaviors among students.

Based at the University of MS, the National Food Service Management Institute provides on-site and remote learning opportunities for state and food service leaders on a variety of topics related to child nutrition programs. To implement farm to school programs, food service directors may require training in specific areas, such as procurement, product handling, and seasonal menu preparation. NFSMI can help to build food service directors' skills and further institutionalize farm to school projects through specific training in these areas.

Strengthen Nutrition Standards for School Meal Programs and Competitive Foods

Require all foods served where Child Nutrition Programs operate to meet or exceed national standards consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans on the entire campus throughout the school day.

Currently USDA has the ability to regulate the nutritional content of those foods served as part of a federally-funded child nutrition program. Yet, schools make available other foods during the day through vending machines, competitive meals, student stores, and sales. It is up to the federal government to set nutritional standards as a floor, and allow states or districts to develop more stringent guidelines as desired.

Support Food and Nutrition Education and Advocacy for Healthy Foods

Provide consistent and mandatory funding for Team Nutrition to use proven, effective and experiential educational programming in child nutrition programs, such as culinary professionals in schools, school gardens, farm to school programming, and cooking with students.

The childhood obesity epidemic, along with increased rates of chronic diseases in children and skyrocketing healthcare costs, demonstrate the need for a more comprehensive nutrition education and promotion program, coordinated within and across child nutrition programs. Under the current competitive grant structure, states continue to have minimal or no funding for nutrition education and promotion. Team Nutrition, USDA's primary method for providing nutrition education in schools, has not received an annual appropriation for the past four years. The Society for Nutrition Education proposes a one cent per school lunch allocation to this program ($69.8 million/year). This program should be directed to develop curriculum that includes information on gardening, cooking education, and other experiential nutrition education.

Maintain the Integrity of the WIC FMNP

Whereas the Fruit &Vegetable component of the new WIC package allows all types of produce (canned, frozen, and fresh), the FMNP provides access to fresh local produce exclusively. This distinction needs to be maintained.

COME JOIN US!

National Farm to School Network

The National Farm to School Network improves student health by reducing childhood obesity, supports community-based food systems, and strengthens family farms. The Network is a collaborative effort of the Center for Food & Justice, Occidental College, and the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC). With funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Network coordinates, promotes, and expands the farm to school movement at the state, regional, and national levels. Eight regional lead agencies and national staff provide free training and technical assistance, information services, networking, and support for policy, media, and marketing activities.

Community Food Security Coalition



The Community Food Security Coalition is a North American organization of 260 member groups that concentrate on social and economic justice, environmental, nutrition, sustainable agriculture, community development, labor, and anti-hunger issues and that together are dedicated to building strong, sustainable, local and regional food systems. CFSC works to ensure that all people have access at all times to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food. CFSC encourages communities to become self-reliant in obtaining their food and to create a system of growing, manufacturing, processing, and distributing food that is sustainable, just, healthy, and democratic. The coalition offers a blend of comprehensive training, networking, and advocacy strategies to further the efforts of grassroots groups to create effective solutions from the ground up.

School Food FOCUS

School Food FOCUS is a national initiative that helps urban school districts with 40,000 or more students serve more healthful, more sustainably produced and regionally sourced food so that children may perform better in school and be healthier in life. Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and launched in late 2008, FOCUS works with school food service directors and other stakeholders to collect, analyze, and use food system data and peer-tested research to spur change in procurement methods. FOCUS supports a network of experts who are engaging their big-city school districts in systems change and also facilitates the sharing of best practices and lessons learned.

VISIT

Join us in our effort to nourish the nation, one tray at a time. For the latest information on the One Tray campaign and to endorse this policy platform, visit **www.onetray.org.**

A healthier nation is one click away.

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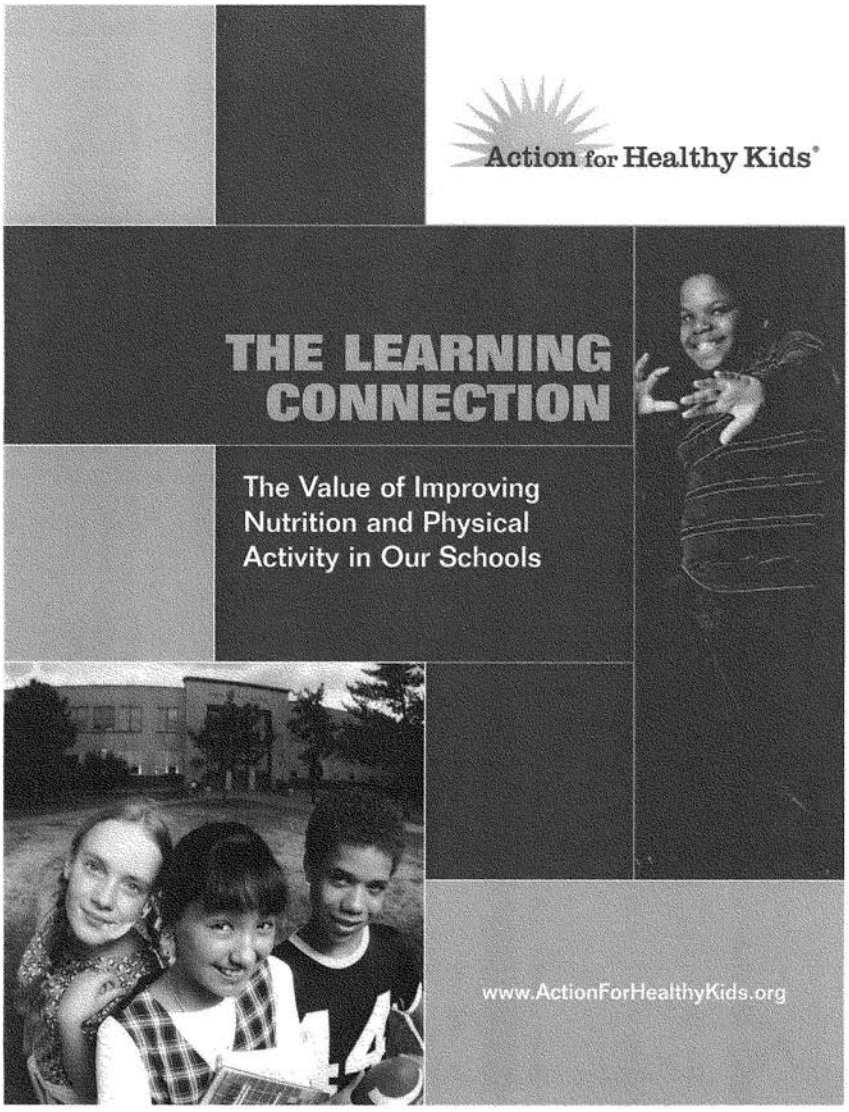
Action for Healthy Kids®
THE LEARNING CONNECTION
The Value of Improving Nutrition and Physical Activity in Our Schools
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Preface

A Message From David Satcher

In December 2001, when I was Surgeon General, we released the *Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*, which identified schools as a key setting to help address this national health challenge. Obesity is not a cosmetic issue; it is a health issue, and our best hope for combating this epidemic is to prevent children from becoming overweight in the first place. Schools have the opportunity — even the responsibility — to teach and model healthful eating and physical activity, both in theory and in practice.

The Learning Connection: The Value of Improving Nutrition and Physical Activity in Our Schools examines the impact of the root causes of childhood obesity, revealing a strong link between nutrition, physical activity, and academic success. We must understand this important truth: that improving children's health likely improves school performance. It may even help a school's bottom line.

Why schools? Schools are uniquely poised to play a significant role in preventing and decreasing childhood overweight. School is where children spend their time; where they *learn*, be it from books, from example, from teachers or from their peers. Schools provide all children equal access to information about nutrition and physical activity — regardless of their family's background or knowledge of these issues. Children spend nearly 2,000 hours each year at school. This influence cannot be overstated and shouldn't be underutilized.

Since 2002, Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) has galvanized a remarkable coalition of school administrators, educators, healthcare professionals, policy-makers and other committed individuals. They work in collaboration to improve children's eating habits, increase their physical activity, and educate about the role of sound nutrition and physical activity in academic achievement.

Some great things are already happening at the national, state, district and school levels. AFHK has set standards for developing and evaluating quality school-based nutrition and physical activity initiatives — an important step that will help educators share best practices. Policy-makers have begun to address the need for schools to adhere to U.S. dietary guidelines. Schools and school districts are implementing improvements, from scheduling more recess and physical education to offering healthier foods in the cafeteria and vending machines. Teachers are learning better ways to motivate students, from non-candy rewards to healthier classroom parties.

We still have a long way to go in the fight against childhood obesity, but I'm encouraged by partnerships such as AFHK that are working within our schools and communities to take action. Together, we can make a difference.

David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D.
Director, National Center for Primary Care, Morehouse School of Medicine
Founding Chair, Action for Healthy Kids

A Message From Gene Carter

As education professionals, we choose to get involved in elementary and secondary education for one key reason: We want to help children fulfill their potential. We want them to have happy and rewarding childhoods and to grow up to make positive contributions to society.

We know that the playing field isn't level for all children. Students come to school with a variety of family backgrounds and life experiences that affect their readiness to learn, for better or worse. And just as there are disparities in academic achievement along the lines of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, there are disparities in health as well.

Schools across the United States understand the need to close the achievement gap, and educators are working to do so. One of the most promising directions lies in efforts to improve students' eating habits and increase their levels of physical activity, which can lead to better academic and health outcomes. Unfortunately, such efforts are limited. Informed school and classroom leaders understand the importance of educating the whole child, but too often their attention is diverted. The challenge to raise test scores, for instance, may cause us to focus too narrowly on core academic subjects at the expense of developing the whole child.

As *The Learning Connection: The Value of Improving Nutrition and Physical Activity in Our Schools* makes clear, schools cannot afford to act as if student health is somebody else's problem. Indeed, poor nutrition and physical inactivity among children and adolescents are *everybody's* problems. Families, schools, and communities must work together to find creative solutions to students' academic and health disparities. Examples abound of schools that have implemented programs that have had a positive effect on their students' achievement and health outcomes as well as on the financial and community resources available to the schools.

As educators, we have a responsibility to teach children not only how to develop their minds but also how to care for their bodies. This requires arming them with the knowledge they will need to make decisions about their health, nutrition, and general welfare. If we are to prepare them properly for their lives tomorrow, we must lay the solid foundation for healthy behaviors and decision making today.

Gene R. Carter, Ed.D.
Executive Director, CEO
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

Executive Summary: Healthy Children, Healthy Schools

The purpose of this paper is to bring attention to the costs that poor nutrition and physical inactivity impose on our schools. There is mounting evidence that, by taking action to improve these areas, schools can meet performance goals and alleviate financial constraints.

The majority of American youth are sedentary and do not eat well. These unhealthful practices can lead to learning problems in school and health-related problems that may begin during school-age years and continue into adulthood. Perhaps one of the biggest consequences is the risk of becoming overweight. Sixteen percent of school-aged children and adolescents — or nine million — are overweight, a figure that has risen three-fold since 1980. Poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, and being overweight can lead to complications such as elevated cholesterol and blood pressure, gallbladder disease, joint problems, asthma, Type II diabetes, depression and anxiety. Between 70 and 80 percent of overweight children and adolescents remain overweight or become obese as adults.

The nation's schools can play a critical role in combating problems associated with poor nutrition and inactive lifestyles. But schools cannot be expected to take steps to address these issues unless it is in their interest to do so.

The Cost to Schools Today

Schools currently bear avoidable or reducible costs due to poor nutrition, inactivity, and weight problems among students.

Impact on Learning

Many studies show a direct link between nutritional intake and academic performance, as well as between physical activity and academic achievement. For example, increased participation in breakfast programs is associated with increased academic test scores, improved daily attendance, and better class participation, and has also been shown to reduce tardiness. A meta-analysis of nearly 200 studies of the effectiveness of exercise on cognitive functioning found that regular physical activity supports better learning. Other recent studies found a significant relationship between academic achievement and fitness levels. Physical activity in adolescents has consistently been related to higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of anxiety and stress — each of which has been associated with better academic performance.

Emerging research also suggests an association between weight problems and lower academic achievement. Perhaps the most obvious reason is increased absenteeism, which has been clearly and directly linked to poorer academic performance. It is probable that students with poor nutrition, inactivity and weight problems have a higher prevalence of physical conditions and psychological/social problems that are frequent causes of absenteeism.

Economic Costs

In addition to the economic toll on our nation, poor nutrition, inactivity, and weight problems are beginning to take an economic toll on our school systems as well. One burden comes from the potential reduction in funding in states where attendance helps to determine the level of state funding for schools. A single-day absence can cost a district between $9 - $20 per student. One study found that severely overweight students miss one day per month or nine days per year (median value). While more research in this area is needed, one can use these figures to develop a preliminary estimate of the potential impact of poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and weight problems on attendance, and thus on school funding in these states. Using an estimate of the rate of absenteeism among overweight students, combined with an average prevalence of overweight students, the extrapolation shows a potential loss of state aid of $95,000 per year in an average-sized school district in Texas, and $160,000 per year in an average-sized California school district. The loss in large cities is likely to be much higher; for example, Chicago could forfeit an estimated $9 million and Los Angeles an estimated $15 million.

Data do not currently exist to determine the exact proportion of funds lost as a result of absenteeism due to poor nutrition, inactivity, and weight problems among students. Compelling reasons exist, however, to suppose that a significant proportion of the absences (and thus the loss in state funds) could be a direct or indirect result of these problems. Poor nutrition and inactivity are linked to an increased risk of getting a cold or the flu, while poor nutrition is associated with dental caries; all are common reasons for students to miss school. There is evidence that poor nutrition, inactivity and weight problems may also lead to more days of missed school due to other physical, psychological, and social problems.

Poor nutrition, inactivity, and weight problems can also indirectly drive up a school's costs. First, schools bear significant costs in helping students whose academic performance and/or behavior suffers because of these problems. These costs include additional staff time spent with these students, but also expenses related to formal remediation programs. Second, schools must spend resources to oversee the administration of prescription drugs to treat students with physical and emotional problems caused by poor nutrition, inactivity, and weight problems. Schools that use administrative staff to administer medications to students could also be exposing themselves to potential legal risks. A third area of hidden costs relates to poor nutrition and inactive lifestyles of school staff. Like most employers, schools are increasingly burdened by the rapidly rising cost of providing health coverage to employees, high levels of employee absenteeism, and suboptimal levels of productivity.

Schools Unknowingly Undermine Their Own Interests

Many school practices and policies related to nutrition and physical activity may be counterproductive to schools' goals for improving academic performance and generating additional revenues. For example, 80 percent of school districts sell foods that compete with school meal programs; most of these "competitive" foods are low in nutrients and high in calories. The availability of these foods can decrease participation in school meal programs

that offer more nutritionally balanced foods and beverages. In turn, selling competitive foods may not help (and could even hurt) a school's finances as government funding for school meal programs declines with lower participation. Also, these low-nutrient foods do not help enhance students' readiness to learn. Schools that at least offer more healthful options outside of the meal program are not aggravating students' health and learning and they may be able to do so without losing revenues. Some schools, in fact, have even seen gains.

Schools have reduced the amount of time dedicated to recess and after-school physical activity opportunities; few offer daily physical education. Schools have reportedly been cutting back on physical activity and physical education programs, primarily to allow for more classroom time to improve test scores and grades. Yet there is little or no data to support this practice. A growing body of evidence suggests less time dedicated to physical education/activity may undermine the goal of better performance, while *adding* time for physical activity may support improved academic performance.

A Call to Action: Schools as Part of the Solution

The ultimate goal for schools is to provide high quality education for all students. Combating poor nutrition and physical inactivity can help schools meet this goal by boosting the academic achievement of their students while maintaining (if not improving) their own financial situation. In addition to eliminating counterproductive strategies, schools can offer and promote consumption of nutritious foods and provide opportunities for students to engage in physical activity both during school and in after-school programs.

Just as the problems that have led to poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and weight problems among youth are multifaceted, so are the solutions. Tackling these problems is the responsibility of every individual, every community, and every state in the nation. Therefore, public and private stakeholders at all levels must join together. Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK), a public-private partnership, includes over 50 national organizations and government agencies that provide guidance to the 51 AFHK State Teams (includes the District of Columbia). These teams are helping schools to find solutions that will help improve students' health and readiness to learn. Action for Healthy Kids calls on schools to include daily physical activity, provide quality health and physical education, increase the availability of health-promoting foods and beverages, and offer more after-school programs providing nutritious snacks, physical activity and nutrition education.

Background and Introduction

The trends in children's and adolescents' eating and physical activity habits are startling. The majority of American youth are sedentary and do not eat well. These unhealthful practices have both short- and long-term consequences, resulting in learning difficulties and health-related problems that begin during school-age years and continue into adulthood. The National Association for Sports and Physical Education recommends that children engage in at least 60 minutes — and as much as several hours — of age-appropriate physical activity all or most days of the week. Yet almost half of young people age 12 to 21 and more than a third of high school students do not participate in physical activity on a regular basis.[1] Fewer than one in four American children get 30 minutes or more of physical activity per day — and more than three in four get no more than 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity per day.[2]

The statistics are no better when it comes to nutrition. Only 2 percent of school-aged children consume the recommended daily number of servings from all five major food groups. Less than 20 percent eat five servings of fruits or vegetables a day, and only 30 percent consume the recommended serving amounts for the milk group.[3] As milk consumption, a critical source of calcium, has drastically decreased, consumption of carbonated soft drinks has increased by 41 percent between 1970 and 1994.[4] Between 56 and 85 percent of children (depending on age and gender) consume soda on any given day; over a third of teenagers consume more than three servings of soda a day.[5]

More than 80 percent of children and adolescents eat too much total fat (i.e., more than 30 percent of total calories from fat), and more than 90 percent eat too much saturated fat (i.e., more than 10 percent of total calories from saturated fat).[6] Some of this fat intake is due to too frequent snacking; 98 percent of 6-18 year old students report having at least three snacks per day and more than 50 percent report five or more snacks each day.[7] This type of unbalanced eating leads to lowered intakes of nutrients critical for growth, cognitive function, and prevention of chronic conditions.

There are many health and learning consequences from poor nutrition and low fitness levels, with the most visible risk being overweight. Nine million children and adolescents between the ages of 6 and 19 are considered overweight.[8] Roughly 10 percent of 2-to-5-year-olds and 16 percent of 6-to-19 year-olds are overweight; these percentages have risen two-fold and three-fold respectively since 1980.[9,10] Childhood weight problems are a medical concern, not a cosmetic issue. Poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, and being overweight can lead to complications such as elevated blood cholesterol and blood pressure, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis and joint problems, asthma, Type II diabetes, depression, anxiety, and sleep apnea.[11] Poor nutrition and lack of physical activity contribute to 27 percent of children ages 5–10 having one or more adverse risk factors for heart disease. For overweight children, 61 percent of this age group has at least one risk factor for heart disease.[12] These problems often continue into adulthood, as between 70 and 80 percent of overweight children and adolescents continue to be overweight or become obese as adults.[13]

Schools strive to ensure high standards of performance for every child and to prepare each child to be a productive citizen. To many it may seem that schools have no compelling need to combat poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and weight problems in students. These problems are often seen as being outside of the core competencies of administrative and teaching staff. In addition, because the underlying causes of poor nutritional habits, sedentary lifestyles, and weight problems among America's youth extend beyond the school's walls, schools may not seem like a logical place to address these issues. Schools have a full agenda, and thus students' nutrition and physical activity levels may be seen as outside the priorities of meeting performance goals and managing stringent budgets.

The Council of Chief State School Officers' *Policy Statement on School Health* acknowledges the enormous impact that health has on the academic achievement of our nation's youth.[13] Children's physical, cognitive, and emotional health is linked to their readiness to learn and ability to achieve academic success. Schools have to make difficult choices, though, in an effort to meet performance goals and manage effectively under financial constraints. To do so, many are trying to fit as much classroom time as possible into the day. As a result, there is less time available for physical education, recess, health education, or an adequate lunch period. Faced with financial strains that threaten valued academic programs and important co-curricular and after-school activities, schools sell foods and beverages and make exclusive contracts with vendors in order to generate additional revenues. These practices contribute to poor eating habits, can aggravate weight and other health problems, and undermine the nutritional contributions of school meal programs.

This Action for Healthy Kids report brings attention to the costs of poor nutrition and physical inactivity to our schools. There is sufficient evidence that promoting good nutrition and allotting more time for physical activity and physical education can lead to better academic achievement for students. There is also evidence that such programs can be implemented so that, at a minimum, they will not hurt a school financially; if implemented well, they may even generate additional funds. It is critical that in their

Success Stories: Healthy Practices Pay Off for Schools

After analyzing disciplinary referrals, administrators at Whitefish Central School in Montana noticed that most disruptive behavior occurred 40 to 60 minutes after lunch, and they hypothesized that this may be the result of students eating unhealthy foods that are high in fat and sugar content. The school made several changes, including replacing vending-machine sodas with bottled waters and 100 percent juices, eliminating candy from the lunch menu and vending machines, and increasing the nutritional content of its vending machine items through the sale of sandwiches, yogurt, fruit, milk, bagels, and salads. Within two years of making the change, disciplinary referrals after lunch have fallen dramatically, from an average of six to eight per day to one or two per week.[14]

search for solutions to help meet performance outcomes and minimize the impact of budget cuts, schools do not further aggravate problems of poor nutrition and inactive lifestyles in our nation's youth, which in turn, may undermine the very objectives that schools are trying to achieve. Our goal is to motivate school leaders to take steps to improve these areas, as such actions will help in achieving performance goals and in alleviating the financial constraints experienced by most school districts.

Defining Overweight and Risk of Being Overweight in Children

The medical definitions for overweight rely upon body mass index (BMI), a number calculated by dividing weight (in kilograms) by height (in meters) squared. For children, appropriate BMI ranges change by age and gender. These ranges are plotted on a standard growth curve to obtain a percentile ranking for each child. Children whose BMI is between the 85th and 94th percentile are considered to be at risk of being overweight. Children whose BMI is above the 95th percentile are considered overweight. The term obese is not generally used for children. BMI growth charts are developed by the National Center for Health Statistics of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and are available at www.cdc.gov/growthcharts.

The Costs of the Status Quo: The Impact of Poor Nutrition, Inactivity, and Weight Problems on Schools Today

The case for schools to take action begins with an understanding of the burden that schools face today because of the status quo — that is, the costs that schools must bear because of poor nutrition, inadequate physical activity, and resulting overweight problems among students.

Cost #1: Suboptimal Academic Achievement

Perhaps the most important consequence is the impact on learning. There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating that children who eat poorly or who engage in too little physical activity do not perform as well as they could academically, and that improvements in nutrition and physical activity can result in improvements in academic performance. In addition, emerging research indicates that overweight children face additional barriers that could contribute to poor academic performance.

The Link Between Nutrition and Academic Achievement

Well-nourished students tend to be better students, while poorly nourished children tend to have weaker academic performance and score lower on standardized achievement tests. Given that the majority of our nation's youth have poor eating habits, this creates a tremendous challenge for meeting achievement outcomes. This link between nutrition and academic achievement exists for a variety of reasons. Inadequate consumption of key food groups deprives children of essential vitamins, minerals, fats, and proteins that are necessary for optimal cognitive function.[16,17] For example, iron deficiency has been linked to shortened attention span, irritability, fatigue, and difficulty with concentration,[18] while low protein intake has been associated with lower achievement scores.[19] Poor nutrition and hunger also interfere with cognitive function and are associated with lower academic achievement, and these conditions can be present in underweight, normal weight, or overweight children. One study found that students who are "food-insufficient" have significantly lower math scores and are more likely to repeat a grade, see a psychologist, and be suspended from school.[20] Another study found that hungry children and those at risk for being hungry were twice as likely to have impaired functioning (as reported by parent or child); teachers reported higher levels of hyperactivity, absenteeism, and tardiness among hungry/at-risk children than among their peers who were not hungry.[21]

Several studies, moreover, have shown a direct link between nutritional intake and academic performance. Transient hunger from missing meals and moderate under-nutrition can compromise cognitive development and school performance. Omitting breakfast can

interfere with learning even in well-nourished children. Numerous studies have found that increased participation in School Breakfast Programs is associated with increases in academic test scores, daily attendance, and class participation, and it has also been linked to reductions in absences and tardiness.[22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29] Both parents and teachers report that students participating in these breakfast programs are calmer in class and have more energy for studying.

Chronically undernourished children attain lower scores on standardized achievement tests, are more irritable, have difficulty concentrating, and have lower energy levels. Undernourished students have less ability to resist infection and are more likely to become sick, and therefore miss school,[30] which can undermine academic achievement since attendance is positively correlated with school completion and academic success.[31]

Success Stories: Healthy Practices Pay Off for Schools

Southlake Elementary School in Maryland saw an 8 percent decline in tardiness, a 50 percent decline in suspensions, and a 5 percent increase in the number of students scoring satisfactorily on state testing after increasing participation in its school breakfast program.

The Link Between Physical Activity and Academic Achievement

Physical activity has also been linked to academic performance. A recent study found that California schools with high percentages of students who did not routinely engage in physical activity and healthy eating habits had smaller gains in test scores than did other schools.[32] Schools that offer intense physical activity programs have seen positive effects on academic performance and achievement (e.g., improved mathematics, reading, and writing test scores, less disruptive behavior), even when the added physical education time takes away from class time for academics.[33] A recent national survey of 500 teachers and 800 parents conducted for The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that 90 percent of teachers and 86 percent of parents are convinced that physically active children are better able to learn.[34]

A meta-analysis examined the effect of exercise on cognitive function. Surveying results from nearly 200 studies including adults and children, this analysis found that physical activity supports learning.[35] The California Department of Education recently analyzed 2001 results of physical fitness testing and compared them with the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition (SAT 9), which was given as part of the California Standardized Testing and Reporting Program. The analysis showed a significant relationship between academic achievement and fitness. In the study, reading and mathematics scores were matched with fitness scores of 353,000 fifth graders, 322,000 seventh graders, and 279,000 ninth graders. Higher achievement was associated with higher levels of fitness at each of the three grade levels measured. The relationship

between academic achievement and fitness was greater in mathematics than in reading, particularly at higher fitness levels. Students who met minimum fitness levels in three or more physical fitness areas showed the greatest gains in academic achievement at all three grade levels. Females demonstrated higher achievement than males, particularly at higher fitness levels.[36] Physical activity among adolescents is consistently related to higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of anxiety and stress — each of which has been associated with better academic performance.

One study linked physical activity programs to stronger academic achievement, increased concentration, and improved math, reading, and writing test scores. And another study found that students participating in daily physical education exhibit better attendance, a more positive attitude towards school, and superior academic performance.[37] While the effect of physical activity on attendance needs more study, it is well-documented that moderate physical activity has a positive effect on immune function.[38] Of course, whether one gets sick depends on many factors. Nonetheless, because physical activity and good nutrition have a positive effect on the immune system, they can help to prevent colds and the flu, two of the most common childhood ailments.

The (More Tenuous) Link Between Weight and Academic Achievement

While the evidence on the direct effect of weight on academic achievement is less conclusive, there is little doubt that overweight students face additional barriers to learning that likely lead to poorer academic achievement.

To date, only a handful of studies have directly examined the relationship between weight and achievement. Because multiple factors must be controlled in conducting this type of research, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions. A 2003 *JAMA* study found that severely overweight children and adolescents (those above the 95th percentile for weight) were four times more likely than healthy children and adolescents to report "impaired school functioning."[39] Another study found that severely overweight inner city school children tended to have abnormal scores on the Child Behavior Checklist, and that these children were twice as likely to be placed in special education and remedial class settings than were children who are not overweight.[40] A 2004 study of 11,192 kindergartners by researchers at RAND Corporation found that overweight children had significantly lower math and reading test scores at the beginning of the year than did their non-overweight peers, and that these lower scores continued into first grade.[41,42]

A correlation between weight problems and academic achievement does not necessarily imply causation, and therefore, results must be interpreted cautiously. In some of the studies cited above, the underlying cause of poorer academic achievement among overweight students can also be related to other factors, such as socioeconomic status, parents' level of education, poor nutrition, and/or inadequate physical education. Hispanic and non-Hispanic black children are less likely to participate in organized physical activity than are white, non-Hispanic children. Children of parents with lower income and educational levels are also less likely to participate in organized

physical activity.[43] In several studies, including the one conducted by RAND, the authors concluded that being overweight should be thought of as a "marker" for poor performance — not the underlying cause. One recent study, however, found that lower math scores among overweight boys in kindergarten could not be explained by other factors such as race/ethnicity and the mother's level of education. For these boys the negative effect of being overweight on math scores was found to be statistically equivalent to watching two extra hours of television each day.[44] These emerging findings indicate that for some students, being overweight could contribute to poor school performance.

There are a number of possible ways that being overweight may affect students' readiness to learn — one being increased time away from the classroom due to related health problems. Absenteeism is directly linked to academic performance; if being overweight causes a child to miss school, it follows that he or she might suffer academically as a result. A 2004 study in Texas found that the higher the attendance rate in a given district, all other things being equal, the higher the district's pass rate on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills.[45]

Schools do not systematically collect and report reasons for students' absences. However, it's reasonable to assume that being overweight can cause students to miss more class time. One study found that severely overweight students (those who had sought medical attention for the problem) are absent up to four times more often than normal weight students.[46] Being overweight can trigger or exacerbate a variety of chronic medical conditions in school-aged children, including asthma, joint problems, Type II diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, depression/anxiety, and sleep apnea.[47,48,49] Sixty percent of overweight children have at least one risk factor for heart disease.[50] These weight-related medical conditions undoubtedly cause students to miss class time, either through absences or visits to the nurse's office. In fact, some of these conditions appear to be significant sources of absenteeism. For example, asthma alone accounts for more than 14 million missed school days each year.[51]

In addition to missing school, children who are overweight might face physical, psychological, and/or social problems that are directly related to their weight and that lead to academic problems. For example, overweight children are more likely to be victims of bullying or to be bullies than are normal-weight children, according to a study published in *Pediatrics*.[52] Several studies support the link between psychological and social problems faced by overweight students and academic achievement. For example, a 2004 study found a strong association between being overweight in kindergarten and behavior problems such as anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem, sadness, anger, arguing, and fighting.[53]

Another recent study on correlates of weight status in adolescents found that severely overweight (>95th percentile) girls were more likely than average-weight girls to report being held back a grade and to consider themselves poor students. The same study found that severely overweight (as well as underweight) boys were more likely than average-weight boys to dislike school and consider themselves poor students.[54]

Cost #2: Economic Strains on Schools

Little, if any, analysis has been conducted to evaluate the impact of poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and the increasing number of overweight students on a school's ability to manage within its budget. At first glance, the relationship may appear to be nonexistent. Upon closer inspection, however, reasons to believe that poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and the increasing prevalence of weight problems among students are beginning to take an economic toll on our nation's schools become most apparent.

These economic strains may not seem obvious. The manner in which poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and the increasing prevalence of weight problems among students may potentially affect school finances is subtle and indirect.

Reduced State Funding

In nine states (California, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, Tennessee, and Texas) collectively serving more than one-third of all students in the U.S., state funding for schools is, at least in part, determined using the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) methodology. In other words, public education dollars in these states are determined not by how many students are enrolled, but by how many actually show up at school. Student absenteeism can therefore have a negative impact on a school's bottom line. Data from The Finance Project, a nonprofit policy research and technical assistance group, demonstrate how absenteeism can be a significant problem for school budgets. These data suggest that a single-day absence by one student costs a school district in these states anywhere between $9 and $20.

While these figures may seem small, they add up quickly. An estimated 16 percent of youth are overweight to a degree that affects their health. One study found that severely overweight students miss (using the median number) one day per month or nine days per year.[55] While additional research on the role of weight, nutrition, and inactivity on absenteeism is needed, one can use these figures to derive a rough, preliminary estimate of the maximum potential impact of poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and weight problems on attendance, and therefore on school budgets in the nine ADA states. This type of absentee rate among overweight students in a student population with average prevalence of overweight could lead to a potential loss of state aid of $95,000 per year in an average size school district in Texas, and $160,000 per year in an average California school district. The loss in state funding in large cities could be much higher; for example, Chicago could forfeit an estimated $9 million and Los Angeles an estimated $15 million.

The impact of nutrition, inactivity, and weight-related absenteeism on school budgets is likely to vary across geographic regions and even across schools within a local region. For example, schools in areas where the prevalence of poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and/or weight problems among students is above the national average (e.g., such as New York City, where more than 24 percent of elementary school students are

overweight[36]), as well as those schools that serve populations (e.g., Hispanics, African-Americans) where childhood weight and nutrition problems and physical inactivity tend to be more common, may experience a larger loss in state funds due to higher levels of absenteeism. In New York City, for example, 31 percent of Hispanic elementary school children were found to be overweight.[37] A study in Texas found that 27 percent of Hispanic and 31 percent of African-American fourth-grade girls were overweight.[38]

Data do not exist that show exactly what proportion of the total loss of funds from absenteeism is due to poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, and weight problems among students. However, given that most school-age children are sedentary and do not eat well, and that 16 percent of them are overweight, there are compelling reasons to believe that a meaningful percentage of the loss in state revenues is directly or indirectly related to these problems. Poor nutrition and inactivity are linked to an increased risk of getting a cold or the flu, while poor nutrition is associated with dental caries.[39] These problems represent some of the most common reasons that students miss school. In addition, poor nutrition and inactivity are associated with being overweight, a condition that exacerbates asthma (a major source of absenteeism) and that is linked with diabetes, both of which are thought to result in significant amounts of missed school time. Children who are overweight are reported to suffer from lower self-esteem, depression, and/or fear of being bullied or teased (especially in physical education classes), each of which represent additional reasons why overweight children may miss more school.

Success Stories: Healthy Practices Pay Off for Schools

Adopting healthier practices can help schools meet their education goals and generate additional revenue, as well.

Mississippi's McComb Separate School District serves 3,000 students, 80 percent of whom live in public housing projects. McComb met the federally mandated "Annual Yearly Progress" requirements for every sub-group of students in 2002 — an achievement Superintendent Pat Cooper attributes to changes made in recent years to promote better student health. These changes have also had a positive impact on the district's bottom line. Over the past five years, average daily attendance has increased from 93 to 96 percent, which translated into an additional $390,000 in state funding. In addition, vending machine revenues from water sales are up by 30 percent.[40]

Indirect or "Hidden" Costs

Poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and overweight can indirectly drive up a school's cost structure, for several reasons.

First, it is likely that schools unknowingly bear significant costs (including staff time and money) on programs designed to help students whose academic performance and/or behavior suffers because of poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and/or weight problems.

In addition, some schools have reported linkages between poor nutrition and disruptive behavior and fatigue in the classroom. Students who misbehave, are fatigued, and/or who fall behind academically typically require extra attention, meaning that teachers and other school staff end up spending extra time with them. Some of these students may also require formal remediation programs. These programs typically involve additional, after-hours class time for teachers, and most school districts pay extra for this time. While it is difficult to assess how much of these indirect costs are due to the nutritional and sedentary habits of students, one can safely assume that the proportion is meaningful, given that poor nutrition and physical inactivity are so common and have such direct links to underachievement.

Second, the wide variety of physical and emotional problems that can be caused by poor nutrition and physical inactivity — including being overweight and weight-related medical conditions — can place a significant burden on teachers, medical personnel, counselors, and administrative staff within schools. More students are coming to schools with conditions — such as Type II diabetes, asthma, anxiety, depression, and joint problems, among others — that require the use of prescription medicines that must be administered under the supervision of school personnel. While the Americans with Disabilities Act requires schools to accommodate students with these and other medical conditions, schools do not receive federal reimbursement for the costs of managing these illnesses. Many schools cannot afford the professional resources needed in the area of student health; less than half of all American schools have the American Federation of Teachers recommended ratio of one nurse for every 750 students. Consequently, students' health needs are either neglected or addressed by non-medical staff who are called on to administer medications, such as insulin for children with diabetes, inhalants for those with asthma, and medications for those suffering from anxiety and other mental disorders. Schools bear the costs, either through increased student health costs (for the few schools that hire more nurses), reduced time for administrators to do their "real jobs" (for schools using non-medical personnel to meet these needs), or unmet health needs among students (for schools that cannot afford to do anything). A potentially significant cost for schools using non-medical personnel relates to increased risk of liability; schools using assistant principals and other administrative staff to administer medications to students may open themselves up to potential legal risks.

A third area of hidden costs relates to school staff. Like most employers, schools are increasingly burdened by the rapidly rising cost of providing health coverage to employees, high levels of employee absenteeism, and suboptimal levels of employee productivity. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that employee benefit costs in schools have risen 32 percent from 1996, and that in 2001-2002 they represented nearly 17 percent of total school expenditures. Health care is responsible for roughly two-thirds of these costs.[61] These data do not include the costs of hiring substitutes to fill in for teachers when they are sick.

Rising health costs and absenteeism and falling levels of productivity not only drive up labor costs for schools, but they also drive down the quality of instruction in a variety

of ways. When good teachers miss class, teaching quality inevitably declines, no matter how competent a substitute might be. And rising costs and falling productivity mean that fewer resources are available to invest in academic instruction. In fact, a recent survey by the Association for School Business Officials suggests that rising health care costs are forcing schools to reduce spending in important areas, such as teacher positions (43 percent are cutting back in this area) and professional development and technological upgrades (40 percent are cutting back in these areas).[42]

These data make it clear that improving nutrition and physical activity among school employees should yield significant benefits to schools by reducing the prevalence of poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and obesity-related illnesses and absences among teachers and other staff. Much of corporate America has already gotten this message. A number of major corporations, in fact, have invested in wellness programs that are designed, among other things, to boost physical activity levels and improve the dietary habits of employees. These programs have been found to result in a positive financial return, typically more than $3 in benefits for every $1 spent on health management programs, and even greater returns for demand management and disease management initiatives.[43]

School leaders would be wise to consider enacting programs to combat physical inactivity, poor nutrition, and overweight/obesity among school staff, especially teachers and principals who serve as role models for students. Such programs will not only lead to better nutrition and improved physical activity among students who emulate their teachers' behaviors, they can also reduce expenses and lead to higher-quality instruction.

The Costs of the Status Quo: Schools Unknowingly Undermine Their Own Interests

Another central reason for schools to combat poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and weight problems is the unintended consequences of many current school practices in these areas. Today many school leaders are cutting back on physical education and health education programs in the hope that they can boost academic performance among students by putting more time into reading and math. At the same time, most schools promote and sell low-nutrient, high-calorie foods in an effort to generate additional revenues. This section briefly reviews current school practices and policies with respect to nutrition, physical activity, and physical education, and highlights problems related to these strategies and their relative lack of success in meeting stated objectives. It also presents anecdotal evidence that schools that reverse these practices — i.e., improve nutrition and increase the time allotted for physical activity — can reap benefits in terms of higher academic achievement and in some cases improved finances.

School Nutrition: Practice and Policy

Most schools make high-calorie, low-nutrient foods and beverages available. Eighty percent of American school districts sell competitive foods (foods and beverages sold in competition with school meal programs) in a la carte lines, school stores, snack bars, and vending machines. This includes nearly 98 percent of high schools, 74 percent of middle schools, and 43 percent of elementary schools.[44] Most of the foods sold are low in nutrients and high in calories. A recent study evaluating the contents of 1,420 school vending machines in 251 middle and high schools found that 75 percent of beverage options and 85 percent of snack options were of "poor nutritional quality."[45]

Schools not only sell non-nutritious foods and beverages, but they also promote their consumption. For example, some schools allow their students to see advertisements for these types of foods on Channel 1, which offers "educational" programming to millions of students in schools across the country each day. It is also common practice for schools to sell non-nutritious foods as a part of fundraising activities, be it classroom bake sales or booster group sales featuring donuts, cookies, and cake; class parties with pizza and soda; or after-school sporting events that feature soda and candy bars. Even teachers who want to recognize accomplishments by their students add to this type of promotion by rewarding students with candy and soda.

These practices make participation in meal programs, which tend to offer more nutritious foods, less desirable for many students. Students who do participate in the National School Lunch Program enjoy better nutrition than those who make other lunchtime

choices. They consume more vegetables and grain foods, drink more milk and fewer sugary drinks, and eat fewer cookies, cakes, and salty snacks.[66] School lunch and breakfast programs may also protect against being overweight in some students: one study found that food-insecure girls whose families participated in the Food Stamp Program and the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs had a lower risk of being overweight than did food-insecure girls who did not participate in these programs.[67] But fewer and fewer students — including many who qualify for free or reduced-price meals — are choosing school meals. Less than 60 percent of students choose such lunches today. While school enrollment increased by 6.8 percent in the last 20 years, participation in school meals actually *decreased* by 1.2 percent over the same time frame.[68]

There are several reasons for declining participation in school meals programs, many of which are directly related to school practices and/or policies. First, students may not feel they have enough time to eat a full meal. Often children are given as little as 10 to 15 minutes to eat lunch so that everyone in crowded schools can be served. One study of 285 elementary schools in Pennsylvania found that more than one-half of the students had 20 minutes or less to eat.[69] In another Pennsylvania study, more than 25 percent of middle schoolers reported that they did not have enough time to eat.[70] Second, students may opt out of school meals because they do not want to be publicly identified as coming from a low-income household. "Children may perceive that school meals are primarily for poor children rather than nutrition programs for all children," according to a USDA report to Congress in 2001. "Because of this perception, the willingness of low-income children to accept free or reduced price meals and non-needy children to purchase school meals may be reduced."[71]

The net impact of school practices that offer and promote competitive foods is, not surprisingly, to drive students to these foods (which do not have to meet federal nutrition guidelines) and that undermines the nutritional status of students. Several recent studies have found that the availability of these foods in a la carte lines and vending machines displaces the consumption of more nutritious foods.[72] One study found that a la carte offerings of low-nutrient foods and beverages were negatively associated with daily fruit and vegetable consumption. Students from schools that did not offer these foods had higher consumption of fruits and vegetables and were more likely to meet the recommended intake levels for fat.[73] Another study found that fifth graders who entered a school offering a la carte foods and snack bars significantly decreased their consumption of fruit (by 33 percent), vegetables (42 percent), and milk (35 percent) from the levels consumed in fourth grade.[74] Conversely, in states that restrict the sale of competitive foods, rates of participation in the school meal program have held steady or are even higher than the national average, according to the USDA.[75]

The irony, moreover, is that schools that sell competitive foods may not be helping their overall financial situation, in the short- or long-term. Competitive foods drive down participation in school meal programs, causing schools to lose potential revenues from federal meal reimbursements for participation in the National School Lunch and

Breakfast Programs. For example, a major survey of vending contracts in the state of Texas estimated annual revenues from these contracts to be approximately $54 million. However, the total loss in revenues from the declining meal sales (due to increased vending machine sales) was much greater than this figure — yielding a net loss of $60 million to the schools.[76] At the same time, case studies regarding schools and school districts that have improved the healthfulness of food and beverage offerings while simultaneously maintaining or increasing total revenues from food sales are accumulating. For example:

• The city of Philadelphia realized increased revenues and reduced costs after pursuing several strategies designed to improve the nutritional value of its food and beverage offerings in schools. Moving from whole to low-fat milk cut costs by $340,000 (1.6 cents per pint). Adding more 100 percent juice and water to new glass-front vending machines sent beverage revenues up by 18 percent. And in a four-school pilot, overhauling the menu and vending offerings to focus on more healthful eating resulted in an increase in sales from vending machines.[77]

• When campuses in Texas's Midland Independent School District agreed to stop selling all competitive foods during the school day, sales of school meals increased, more than doubling the food services department's income.[78]

• North Community High School in Minneapolis, Minnesota, decreased soft drink sales and increased profits from vending machine sales by $4,000 by adding machines stocked with water, 100 percent fruit/vegetable juices, and sports drinks, while also limiting the availability of soft drinks to one machine for a limited time each day.[79]

• Fayette County Public Schools in Lexington, Kentucky, developed a request for proposal (RFP) for vendor contracts that paid higher commissions for healthful items, priced healthful items advantageously, and required an increase in the upfront payment to the school district from $500,000 to $900,000. Revenues increased in the first 6 months after implementation of the new program.[80]

School Physical Activity: Practices and Policies

Few schools offer opportunities for physical activity throughout the school day nor do they offer recommended amounts of physical education. Recently, schools have been confronted with having to make a choice between physical activity opportunities and more classroom time. The National Association for Sport and Physical Education's position statement recommends that elementary schools offer 225 minutes of physical education per week and that secondary schools offer 150 minutes per week — ideally with some instruction being offered every day. However, just 8 percent of elementary schools, 6.4 percent of middle/junior high schools, and 5.8 percent of senior high schools provide daily physical education.[81] While 48 states have laws requiring public

schools to teach physical education, those laws are rarely enforced. New York, for example, mandates 120 minutes of physical exercise per week, but a study of 51 New York schools found that only 25 percent met the requirement for second graders and only 40 percent did so for fifth graders.[82] An estimated 20 percent of all elementary schools have dropped recess in favor of more classroom time, according to the American Association for the Child's Right to Play.

Student participation in physical education appears to be declining overall, with the rate of activity varying greatly by gender and generally declining with age. According to the CDC, 42 percent of high school students had physical education every day for at least one semester in 1991. By 1999, that figure had dropped to 29 percent and has remained steady through the last published CDC report in 2003.[83] The CDC estimates that one in four children do not attend any physical education classes, and that less than half of all schools offer intramural activities and only 14 percent of these schools offer transportation home.[84]

Some of the decline in physical activity is due to schools' implementation of strategies designed to improve achievement outcomes. But the theory that spending more time learning academics in the classroom will lead to higher test scores and grades has not been proven. In fact, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests the opposite is true. In other words, allotting too little time to physical education may undermine the goal of better performance, while *adding* time for physical activity may support improved academic performance. For example:

• A highly respected study found that doubling the amount of time for physical education over a two-year period did not harm academic achievement, and may have even boosted reading scores.[85]

• According to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, evidence indicates that time spent in physical education does not decrease learning in other subjects. Youths who spend less time in other subjects to allow for regular physical education have been shown to do equally well or better in academic classes.[86]

• Several studies suggest that providing more time for physical activity (by reducing class time) can lead to increased test scores, particularly in the area of mathematics.[87,88] For example, in one of these studies, students placed in an experimental group engaged in 24 minutes of additional physical activity per week — and had a corresponding decrease in class time for academics. Mathematics test scores in this group were consistently higher than for students in a control group, who saw no change in time allocation.[89]

• Classroom-based physical activity integrated into science, math, history, or other subjects has been successfully implemented through several programs. One example is the Michigan Department of Education's program, *Brain Breaks*, which provides elementary school children with activities that are either integrated as a part of the class or are used as a transition between classes.[90] The data suggest that these types of breaks for physical activity can help children to be more focused, less disruptive, and better able to learn.

An additional benefit of adding time for physical activity is improved health for students. A 2004 report concluded that adding one hour per week of physical education time for first graders can significantly reduce body mass index for overweight and at-risk-for-overweight girls."

The Bottom Line: Time for a Change

Without question, many school practices and policies — cutting back on physical activity while promoting and selling competitive foods in schools — aggravate students' health and their readiness to learn. Ironically, these approaches seem to have little chance of being effective in achieving their stated goals — improving academic performance and enhancing schools' revenues. Instead, these practices undermine progress toward these objectives. Schools need to reconsider their utility given that these practices and policies will have negative health consequences for students, and will not, in the long term, help advance the school's mission of preparing each child to succeed as a productive citizen.

A Call to Action: Schools as Part of the Solution

The ultimate goal for schools is to provide high-quality education for all students. There are strong reasons to believe that combating poor nutrition and physical inactivity can help schools meet this goal by boosting the academic achievement of their students while simultaneously maintaining (if not improving) their own financial situation. Such actions are an important part of a comprehensive plan for becoming or staying a high-performing school. When groups of students make insufficient academic progress, interventions that support students' emotional and physical health — such as quality physical education programs, more nutritious food and beverage options, and classroom nutrition and health education — can be included as part of the school's improvement plan. There is no reason to wait to implement these types of interventions when the evidence is clear that having healthier students can lead to better learning and the preservation of school resources (both human and financial). Schools can take proactive steps to offer and promote consumption of nutritious foods and provide opportunities for students to engage in physical activity both during school and in after-school programs.

Schools Need Not Act Alone: The Importance of Collaboration and Partnership

Just as the problems that have led to poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and weight problems among youth are multifaceted, so are the solutions. Tackling these problems is the responsibility of every individual, every community, and every state in the nation. Public and private stakeholders at all levels must join in the effort. From parents to local health care providers, from community-based organizations to health plans and insurers, from public health departments to state and federal government agencies, a broad spectrum of players must come together to encourage children and adolescents to change their behaviors so that they can live long, healthy lives.

Action for Healthy Kids – A Collaborative Response

Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) is a public-private partnership that includes more than 40 national organizations and government agencies representing education, physical activity, health, and nutrition. Along with its partner organizations, AFHK is comprised of 51 state teams that have enlisted nearly 5,000 volunteers including school administrators, educators, health professionals, and other committed individuals. These AFHK teams are taking actions that work to improve students' eating habits and increase their physical activity while educating administrators, teachers, parents, students and others about the role of good nutrition and physical activity in academic achievement.

(Detailed information on the activities of the state teams is available at AFHK's web site: www.ActionForHealthyKids.org.)

To help schools implement these best practices, experts from AFHK's Partner Steering Committee and state teams have developed the following "top 5" list of near-term actions that can enhance children's health and readiness to learn:

1. Form a school health advisory council. Principals, superintendents, and board members do not have to change schools on their own. Instead, they need to engage a group of volunteers — including parents, students, medical professionals, business professionals, school administrators, youth group leaders, and law enforcement officials — to help assess the school, develop plans, and implement policies and programs that address nutrition and physical activity that make sense for the local school community.

2. Develop a comprehensive wellness policy. With the recent passing of the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act, all schools that participate in federal school meal programs will need to develop a local wellness policy that includes goals for nutrition education and physical activity. This "road map" needs to include guidelines for all foods and beverages sold on school campus as well as for teaching students how to make good decisions about what they eat. The policy should also address staff training needs. The effectiveness of the policy in meeting its objectives will need to be evaluated, with adjustments made as necessary.

3. Integrate physical activity and nutrition education into the regular school day. Teachers can start classes with fun calisthenics or dancing and can incorporate nutrition information and physical activity into reading, writing, math, science, and other assignments. For more information and ideas for approaches that work, visit the What's Working database at: www.ActionForHealthyKids.org.

4. Incorporate nutrition education and physical activity into after-school programs. Students who stay on campus after classes let out can do more than finish homework, play board games, and watch movies. Time should be set aside for physical activities that engage students in fun and innovative ways to get them moving and to increase their physical skills. In addition, after-school programs should provide access to healthy snacks and hands-on opportunities to learn about food and nutrition. Turnkey programs are available for schools to assist with implementation.

5. Encourage staff to model healthy lifestyles. A wellness program for faculty and staff can enhance school effectiveness by strengthening morale, reducing absenteeism, and cutting insurance costs. By exercising regularly and eating healthy foods, staff can also set a powerful example for students.

For additional information on how schools can make positive changes for student health, visit the Action for Healthy Kids web site (www.ActionForHealthyKids.org). The site offers many resources, including toolkits, program ideas, and case studies.

A Call to Action: Committed to Change — States Take Action

Setting Positive Goals

In October 2002, Action for Healthy Kids leaders and its partners developed "The Commitment to Change" based on the *Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*. The 12 goals outlined in this document represent "best practices" for school environments that support improving students' health and readiness to learn, and protecting schools from the risks and costs associated with poor nutrition and physical inactivity:

1. Provide age-appropriate and culturally sensitive instruction in health education and physical education that helps students develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors to adopt, maintain, and enjoy healthy eating habits and a physically active lifestyle.

2. Provide students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 with behavior-focused nutrition education integrated into the curriculum that is interactive and teaches the skills they need to adopt healthy eating habits.

3. Ensure that meals offered through all school feeding programs meet federal nutrition standards.

4. Adopt policies ensuring that all foods and beverages available on school campuses and at school events contribute toward eating patterns that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

5. Provide food options that are low in fat, calories, and added sugars, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat or nonfat dairy foods.

6. Ensure that healthy snacks and foods are provided in vending machines, school stores, and other venues within the school's control.

7. Prohibit student access to vending machines, school stores, and other venues that contain foods of minimal nutritional value and that compete with healthy school meals in elementary schools, and restrict access to such foods in middle, junior, and high schools.

8. Provide an adequate amount of time for students to eat school meals, and schedule lunch periods at reasonable hours around midday.

9. Provide all children, from pre-kindergarten through grade 12, with quality daily physical education that helps develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors, and confidence needed to be physically active for life.

10. Provide daily recess periods for elementary school students, featuring time for unstructured, but supervised active play.

11. Provide adequate co-curricular physical activity programs, including fully inclusive intramural programs, physical activity clubs, and after-school programs that include physical activity.

12. Encourage the use of school facilities for physical activity programs offered by the school and/or community-based organizations outside of school hours.

Action for Healthy Kids State Teams have developed action plans focusing on several of these goals, spurring change among states, school districts, and individual schools throughout the nation. For example:

Putting Goals into Action

• The Massachusetts state team worked with the MA Department of Education and MA School Food Service Association to develop and disseminate nutrition guidelines for foods and beverages sold in a la carte to all 1,893 MA school districts, positively impacting nearly 1,000,000 students.

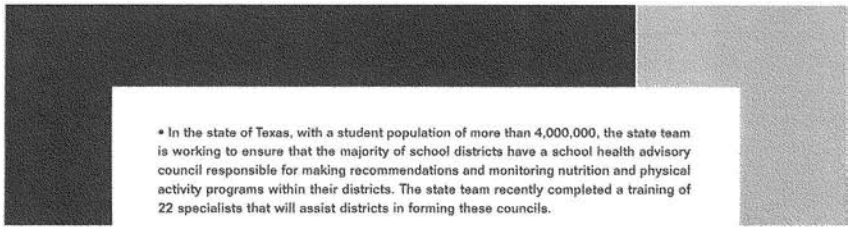
• The Connecticut state team is helping put fun back in the school day as it collaborates on "Connecticut at PLAY!", a physical activity challenge for Connecticut schools. "Connecticut at PLAY!" will encourage more than 15,000 students at more than 100 schools to be involved in physical activity at school.

• The Delaware state team developed and disseminated a la carte food recommendations that were implemented by 84 percent of school districts, impacting more than 105,000 students.

• The Alabama state team is leading change for more than 750,000 students in 1,529 schools, with its recommendations for increased physical activity at school, and healthy food choices in vending, school stores, school parties and school fund-raisers.

• The West Virginia state team, in consultation with the West Virginia Department of Education, has developed an innovative training program for principals. "Recipe for Success" trains principals, using practical strategies for improving physical activity and nutrition, to make sustained change in their schools. The state team's effort has led to the training of fifteen principals and will impact 15,000 students in West Virginia.

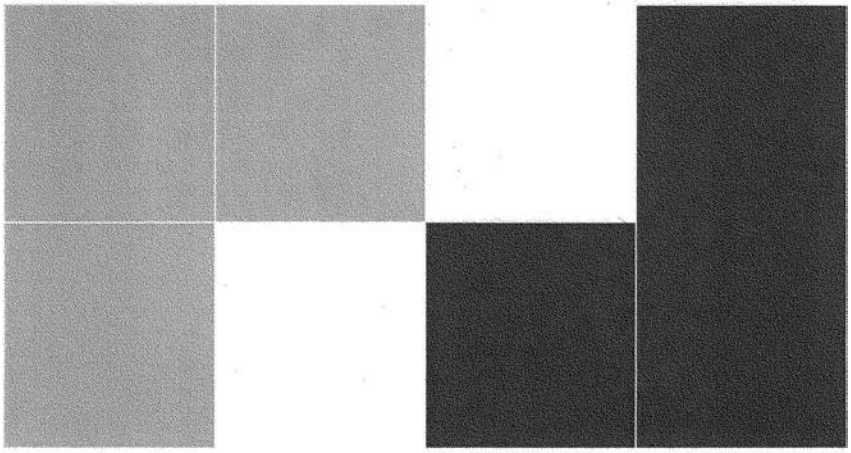
• The Indiana state team is mobilizing local coalitions through its identification of "Community Champions," who will in turn establish local programming. The state team has also developed materials on the benefits of recess before lunch and healthy vending options that have been shared with superintendents throughout the state. In one district alone, 13 schools with nearly 8,000 students have implemented recess before lunch as a direct result of the state team's action.



• In the state of Texas, with a student population of more than 4,000,000, the state team is working to ensure that the majority of school districts have a school health advisory council responsible for making recommendations and monitoring nutrition and physical activity programs within their districts. The state team recently completed a training of 22 specialists that will assist districts in forming these councils.

• The Ohio state team has worked to increase the number of children that participate in school breakfast programs. Over 150 schools throughout the state have initiated programs with another 50 to start in the upcoming school year. The work of the state team on this goal accounts for a 3.3 million increase in breakfast meals served to students this year.

• The Montana state team is encouraging parents to take action by providing grants to parent groups, in public and private schools, for efforts that will improve food and beverage choices and/or to enhance the physical activity opportunities in their school community. These parent-led, mini-grant projects will serve as "models" for other parent groups to follow in creating healthier school environments.



APPENDICES

Acknowledgments

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American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences
American Association of School Administrators
American Cancer Society
American College of Sports Medicine
American Diabetes Association
American Dietetic Association
American Federation of Teachers
American Heart Association
American Public Health Association
American School Health Association
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
Association of School Business Officials International
Association of State & Territorial Chronic Disease Program Directors
Association of State & Territorial Health Officials
Association of State & Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors
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National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education
National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity
National Dairy Council
National Education Association — *Health Information Network*
National Future Farmers of America Organization and Foundation

National Medical Association

National Middle School Association

National PTA

National School Boards Association

Parents Action for Children

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

School Nutrition Association

Society for Nutrition Education

Society of State Directors of Health, Physical Education and Recreation

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U.S. Department of Education — *Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools*

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services — *Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, and National Institute of Child Health and Human Development*

YMCA of the USA

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Proposal For National Animal Identification System

My name is Arlen "Bim" Nelson and I own and operate Bassett Livestock Auction at Bassett, NE with my partner Donnie Painter. I have been actively involved in discussions concerning NAIS since it's early stages and have been to Washington, D.C. (I'll be visiting on May 14th and 15th) several times to voice my concerns. Whereas, I do believe there is a need for a national program for health and food safety issues, I have some suggestions that would cover most concerns and certainly streamline and decrease most of the cost's that would be incurred with the proposed mandatory program.

Currently, every state has a brucellosis ("bang's") vaccination program in which the vaccine and metal identification ear tags are under complete control by licensed veterinarians. Each time a heifer calf is bangs vaccinated, she receives an ink tatoo inside the ear as well as the metal I.D. tag. That number is recorded in the state vet. office with the owner's name and address. Many times, stray cattle have been identified years later via this bangs vac. tag. However, the retention is very poor as most states award the tag contracts to the cheapest bidder.

So, my proposal is this: Let's make it mandatory that any heifer retained for breeding purposes must have an EID tag that is installed by a licensed veterinarian. I don't think it would be a bad idea to make bang's vaccination mandatory as well but that is debatable. Most of the current animal health problems, brucellosis, tuberculosis and BSE are long incubation organism's that show up in older, mature breeding cattle. If every cow and bull had an EID tag, tracking and tracing most of these types of problems would be much easier. It also sends a message to the rest of the world that we are trying to establish a national health program and improving the safety of our food products. Let's leave the feeder cattle age and source program voluntary, as it now exists.

Breeding and slaughter cattle make up about 10% of sale receipts. It would seem much easier to start and fund a program that goes from zero to ten rather than zero to one hundred. Let each state be accountable for and maintain this data bank. It's already in place. Currently, when breeding cattle go out of state, our auction market veterinarian is required to record the numbers from a metal I.D. tag as well as her backtag number (a paper tag that is issued by the state vet. office and is glued on while pregnancy testing) and file a report to the state of Nebraska vet. office as well as with the state of destination's vet. office. Most of what we need for a NAIS program already exists if we use this approach. Let's take the next step and replace the current tags that have poor retention with an EID. If a cow lost her EID tag and the owner could provide age and source information to suit their vet. and are branded, he could replace the lost tag. If not, she would be sold for slaughter only.

I think you can see this program would have alot of integrity by involving the vet. association and we could utilize an existing tracking program that wouldn't need much revamping and is national. The cost would be much more attractive for this approach. Tagging existing herds will take time and can be done to insure source information but will not be perfect. So, the sooner we start this program, the easier it will become.

I know that this proposal is not perfect and doesn't cover all of the "worst case senario's" but it's a place to start and we can improve on it as we go.

I have visited with former state veternarians and cattle industry leaders that feel this approach makes sense. I hope you will too.

I have also attached an email from Dr. Larry Williams, former head of NE State Veterianrian Office, concerning group lots, cattle that are raised on the ranch, are sold in load lots, are not co-mingled with other cattle and being able to age and source verify them. I also have ideas on how to treat feeder cattle that are in a brand area and are hot iron branded for age and source verification purposes.

Sincerely,

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Action for Healthy Kids.



Progress or Promises?

What's Working For and Against Healthy Schools

An Action for Healthy Kids Report Fall 2008

About Action for Healthy Kids

A public-private partnership of more than 60 national organizations and government agencies representing education, health, fitness, and nutrition, Action for Healthy Kids addresses the epidemic of overweight, sedentary, and undernourished youth by focusing on changes in schools to improve nutrition and increase physical activity. More than 10,000 volunteer educators, health professionals, school administrators, parents, and others take action at the national, state, school district, and school building levels through Action for Healthy Kids Teams in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

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Action for Healthy Kids draws upon the expertise and contributions of numerous national organizations, government agencies, Action for Healthy Kids Teams, and individuals committed to creating schools that promote sound nutrition and physical activity. The following members of Action for Healthy Kids Partner organizations, Team leaders, and other experts provided valuable support and guidance, information, and critical review for this report:

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Schools are wrestling with competing priorities, fiscal limitations, and the challenge of providing youth-appealing healthy foods that kids will actually eat. Meanwhile, parents remain an under-utilized, under-accessed resource, and the question persists as to whether the real change agents are yet on board.

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Needed now: clarity and consistency. For its part, Action for Healthy Kids' path is clear: a commitment to nutritional quality and physical activity in schools; a redoubled focus on underserved communities; enlisting parents as advocates; closer collaboration with school leaders; support for wellness policy implementation and evaluation; and stakeholder mobilization overall.

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Executive Summary: Progress or Promises?

School wellness — the belief that schools can and must promote and encourage healthy eating, physical activity, and nutrition and physical education as part of the solution to the childhood obesity epidemic — is an issue that impacts and engages a variety of stakeholders who have a role in leading, advocating for, and implementing wellness initiatives.

This report presents current perspectives of these stakeholder groups — school administrators, parents, educators, nutrition and health professionals, wellness advocates, federal and local government agencies, community groups, school board members, students, and others — on the progress that has been made and the gaps that still exist. It is being published to provide a snapshot of the state of school wellness after more than five years of work by Action for Healthy Kids, and others, at the national, state, and grassroots levels.

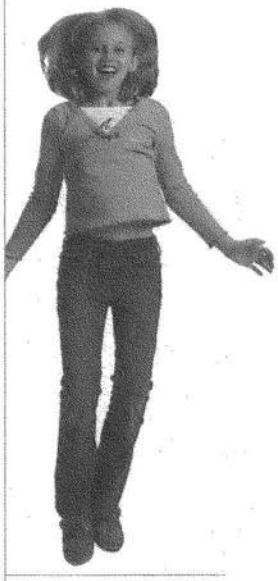
In preparing this report, Action for Healthy Kids assessed on-the-ground achievements large and small; examined initiatives in place and changes effected; and carefully evaluated the tasks remaining. We also undertook two efforts to obtain new information. First, we conducted research with stakeholders throughout the nation. And second, we conducted a series of in-depth interviews with a group of authorities from the education and health fields — professionals whose experiences touch on the complex issues involved in achieving school wellness.

The situation.
A growing body of evidence indicates that poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and obesity are associated with lower student achievement. These factors also contribute to many health problems and set children up for poor health throughout their lives — at a cost to them, their communities, and society.

Beyond the issue of excess calories, concern exists about poor nutritional quality, which leads to nutrient deficiencies that can affect learning and health and contribute to common illnesses such as flu, not to mention a range of chronic diseases. Furthermore, research indicates that physical education and regular physical activity can improve students' ability to learn by enhancing concentration skills and classroom behavior. Healthy kids make better students, and healthy kids make better communities. Bottom line: it is in schools' interest to help provide healthy, active environments.

The good news.
Over the last five years, Action for Healthy Kids and many others have elevated awareness at all levels about the importance of nutrition and physical activity, and spearheaded new initiatives in schools and communities across the country. In concert with other organizations, we have taken important steps — large and small — toward addressing the childhood obesity crisis.

From the innovative activities of Action for Healthy Kids' Teams to the fact that school wellness is now a subject of national dialogue and focus, there is cause for optimism. And the passage of federal legislation mandating local wellness policies —



A growing body of evidence indicates that poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and obesity are associated with lower student achievement and poorer health.

Despite accomplishments and the welcomed addition of school wellness on the radar screen, troubling gaps exist.

a response by Congress to the alarming surge in childhood obesity by identifying a key role for schools in its prevention — will be looked back upon as perhaps the launching pad for the school wellness movement.

Despite accomplishments and the welcomed addition of school wellness on the radar screen, troubling gaps exist. If the goal of creating a healthy, active environment at school for all American children is indeed to become reality, these gaps must be closed.

Gaps in perception. Action for Healthy Kids' research shows that superintendents, school board members, teachers, school nutrition personnel, parents, community health professionals, and even students diverge significantly — not only in how they view the issue of school wellness, but in how they interpret the effectiveness of efforts to address it. Those charged with school governance and leadership roles tend to be much more optimistic than those with day-to-day school wellness implementation responsibilities. Until these stakeholder perceptions are more closely aligned, supported by meaningful data from district- and statewide monitoring efforts, progress in advancing the current state of school wellness will likely be affected.

Gaps in attention and access to healthy food choices — and in improving nutritional quality. Most of the attention to improving school nutrition has focused on foods and beverages to avoid — that is, nutrients of which youth should have less. This focus has left missed opportunities to improve the quality of foods and beverages at school. Schools have achieved mixed results in creating healthy, appealing school meals, the source of most nutrition at school. Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Department of Agriculture determined that school meal programs had improved their nutritional content since the mid-1990s, but many offerings still lack tasty, youth-appealing fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat milk and milk products.

Add to this picture the availability of unhealthy food options through vending machines, school stores, and snack bars, and there is little wonder why youth continue to consume inadequate nutrients in the school environment. As long as schools provide access to unhealthy, low-nutrient food options, kids are likely to continue to choose them.

A further hurdle preventing youth from consuming nutrient-rich foods is their simple lack of interest in doing so. This hurdle seems especially challenging given that many stakeholders, kids included, believe that schools offer limited access to tasty and appealing healthful food options.

Removing high-density, low-nutrient foods from schools must be a continuing priority; however, the nutritional quality of all foods in the overall school environment — and the need to engage and educate youth in making better food choices — must also be key parts of the solution.

Gaps in physical education and school-based physical activity opportunities. There is general consensus among national education, health, and medical organizations that quality, daily physical activity can be a beneficial component in addressing childhood overweight and obesity. Moreover,

evidence shows that children who are physically active and fit tend to perform better in the classroom, and that daily physical education does not negatively affect academic performance.

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education recommends that children engage in at least 60 minutes of age-appropriate physical activity most or all days of the week, but few children meet these recommendations. Unfortunately, insufficient funding and staffing for physical education programs have cut physical education from school schedules. Few schools provide daily physical education for all students, and only about seven in ten elementary school children have recess every day. Equally troubling, participation in physical education declines as students progress through school.

Gaps in policy implementation. Although the federal wellness policy mandate was an essential and potent lever for engaging state education agencies and local districts, it represents just a first step. Many school districts across the nation do indeed have policies in place, and nearly 70 percent of those policies do meet the minimum federal requirements. However, there are many shortcomings in both policy content and implementation. For example, fewer than half of local wellness policies have requirements for physical education staff certification or development. A similar gap exists in the food-service arena, where fewer than 30 percent of states offer school nutrition directors and food service managers state licensure, certification, or endorsement. Importantly, a review of local wellness policies by Action for Healthy Kids in fall of 2006 showed that the majority did not fully address policy implementation and evaluation.

Gaps in policy monitoring and evaluation. Tracking of local wellness policy implementation is as important as development of the policy itself, yet monitoring and evaluation are not given the attention necessary, and in many districts are virtually nonexistent. It is particularly telling that so far only one state — Kansas — has enacted ongoing monitoring of wellness policies, reflecting a shortcoming in nationwide efforts to create healthy learning environments. Clearly, effective systems for monitoring and evaluating policy implementation would enable stakeholders to more accurately assess progress, and, importantly, develop and improve ongoing, targeted intervention strategies.

Gaps in interest and in perceived responsibilities. While there is broad agreement that children's physical inactivity and poor nutrition are important public health concerns, many schools — and administrators and educators within those schools — do not view students' health and wellness as part of their core mission. Given the other pressing priorities that schools must address, not all educators see promoting students' nutrition and physical activity as part of their job. This is a disconnect that we must recognize, and continue to address.

One promising approach in school wellness is weaving physical activity and healthful eating into the fabric of the school culture — for students as well as school staff. Wellness advocates agree that, to effect significant change, wellness needs to be integrated within the overall school

Given the other pressing priorities that schools must address, not all educators see promoting students' nutrition and physical activity as part of their job.

improvement plan — and traditionally, it is not. Can schools ever be community centers for lifelong learning, in which lessons about and practices supporting better nutrition and physical activity are a key part? Some authorities suggest they must.

Gaps in parent engagement. Although there is growing concern among many parents and adult caregivers about the effects of poor nutrition, inactivity, and obesity, this concern has not consistently translated into meaningful engagement with schools.

Research indicates that schools are not getting much support from parents when it comes to encouraging children to be physically active every day or to consume healthful foods and beverages. Potentially contributing to this situation is the fact that neither parents, nor school health professionals, nor community health providers feel that schools are providing adequate information to parents on the importance of daily physical activity or sound nutrition — even if they recognize that schools alone should not bear this responsibility.

Research further indicates that although they care deeply about their children's health and well-being, parents often feel ill-equipped to support schools' wellness efforts. Evidence further suggests that parents, including those in underserved communities, are interested in serving as wellness advocates, but they often don't know enough about the wellness climate and processes within their schools to take specific actions.

We need more creative solutions for engaging parents in improving school wellness policies and practices — and for reinforcing healthy eating and physical activity habits at home.

We are entering a phase of the school wellness journey where the more challenging systemic hurdles now have to be surmounted — the resource-intensive ones that cost money.

Gaps in addressing underserved communities. The environments in which many American children live do not make it easy for them to engage in healthy behaviors. This is especially true for children in underserved and high-risk areas who have been hit hard with multiple health disparities. Poor nutrition and physical inactivity exact a disproportionate impact on low-income communities, which experience a higher incidence of undernourished, sedentary, and overweight youth and over-burdened school systems.

Fueling the problem in disadvantaged communities is that many children and stressed families face other factors that compound unhealthy environmental influences, such as a lack of resources for both nutritious foods and physical activity; a lack of nearby grocery stores where they can buy fresh fruits and vegetables, whole-grain foods, fat-free and low-fat dairy products; outdoor environments that are unsafe for physical activity; and a lack of access to physical activity programs due to both financial disparities and transportation issues.

These are facts of concern to all Americans, with their serious implications relative to learning, health, productivity, economics, and equity.

Gaps in systemic support. Authorities interviewed for this report suggest we are entering a phase of the school wellness journey where the more challenging systemic hurdles now have to be surmounted — the resource-intensive ones that cost money. For example, many schools simply are not equipped to encourage or accommodate a commitment to school wellness. School priorities

such as testing take precedence over virtually every other concern. This is compounded by inadequate time in the school day to address core wellness needs. Further, a shortage of physical education teachers and lack of funding for basic equipment pose significant barriers for both physical education classes and other school-based physical activity programs.

In parallel, school food services are strained on multiple fronts. Food-service staff may not be adequately trained and often are poorly paid. Yet they are charged with the responsibility of feeding thousands of children per meal with minimal budgets and limited time and facilities — all directly impacting the quality of meals. Schools tend to make up budgetary shortfalls by offering popular but mostly low-nutrient competitive foods that do not meet USDA nutritional requirements. And as food prices continue to rise, the challenges are exacerbated.

The urgent need for change. Action for Healthy Kids believes that a healthy future for America's schoolchildren largely hinges on bridging these gaps. The challenges enumerated here represent an urgent "to do" list for the foreseeable future, not only for our organization, but for others who share in this commitment. Addressing these gaps is part of the necessary process that leads to progress.

Real change has begun, and more is within reach. Short- and long-range realities alike demand policy, environmental, and behavioral change, as well as expanded communication and outreach. But longer-term issues involve effecting systemic change — creating incentive structures for school leaders, health professionals, and states; re-thinking the funding and purchasing patterns of school meals; solving of complex issues of school-day scheduling; and, of course, working diligently to uncover further funding to support critical school wellness efforts.

The bottom line is that, to fulfill the mandate of school wellness, change is still needed at all levels of the education system — building, district, state, national — and among a wide range of stakeholders — school administrators, educators, school staff, parents, students, community, and other decision-makers. Schools cannot do it alone, and, to tackle wellness, they need broad, specific, and continuing support from all sides and all constituencies.

Action for Healthy Kids as convener and catalyst. Action for Healthy Kids realizes that we must also contribute more. Our next five years will be marked by close collaboration with stakeholders in a committed effort to accelerate change in American schools. That commitment will take the form of a redoubled focus on schools in underserved communities; an emphasis on helping more parents become wellness advocates; a commitment to promoting nutritional quality; working to ensure adequate physical activity opportunities for students; closer collaboration with school leaders; and support for wellness policy monitoring and evaluation.

With clarity of vision and consistency of mission, Action for Healthy Kids will continue to work to uncover, encourage, and channel the leadership necessary in effecting change — and support that leadership with vital information, tools, and insights. ✹

Research results, reports, and many other references touched on in this report can be accessed in greater detail at Action for Healthy Kids' website, **www.ActionForHealthyKids.org**.



Schools cannot do it alone. To tackle wellness, they need broad, specific, and continuing support from all sides and all constituencies.

School Wellness and the Imperative of Leadership

by David Satcher, MD, PhD

Imagine an American school environment in which every child has access to proper nutrition and regular physical activity. Think of all the positive benefits for student health, well-being, and classroom performance.


David Satcher, MD, PhD

It may sound simple, but school wellness is anything but. Yes, there has been a good deal of progress made over the last few years. But it's not just progress we're focusing on now. It's the remainder of the journey.

Clearly, at a national level, as this report is published, organizations and individuals that work with schools have taken on school wellness as a major topic of dialogue. Wellness has become a focus of national meetings. It is the subject of articles in education journals. Undeniably, awareness of the imperatives of school wellness is there, and building.

Today, we better understand the roles that modeling healthy eating and encouraging regular physical activity play in reducing childhood obesity. That's a huge step forward. And it goes without saying that the 2004 Congressional passage of a mandate requiring local school wellness policies was a major milestone.

We have asked schools to make some major changes in the way they do business, and this is not an easy thing for schools to do. Resources are scarce; support is stretched; and the individuals "in the trenches" are often fighting an uphill battle. But what I see out there today is dedication, and I see it building — committed educators and school administrators determined to help every child develop lifelong habits of physical activity and balanced nutrition.

Are some districts, regions, and states better able to do this than others? Of course. School wellness as a way of educational life comes harder, and slower, to some schools than others. But it's coming.

Despite cause for optimism, though, the hurdles are substantial. Systemic challenges range from insufficient resources to the problem of finding time in already overcrowded school days. Equally troublesome "everyday" and human barriers include conflicting school priorities, general resistance to change, an absence of creative thinking among all the constituencies involved, a chronic lack of planning, and the difficulties of monitoring changes as they happen.

Recent figures quantify the urgency. According to the *New England Journal of Medicine*,* in our nation "average weight is progressively increasing among children from all socioeconomic levels, racial, and ethnic groups, and regions of the country." Today, one-third of all children and adolescents are overweight or obese. To use the word epidemic is not to overstate. The implications are grave, but the tide can be turned.

The catalyst, from my observation, is leadership. Whether it's a superintendent, a principal, a motivated school board member, an active and interested parent, or all of the above, school wellness has to start with one committed individual or constituency. And the involvement, support, and partnership of the community at large is crucial, something that is especially challenging in underserved communities.

There's also cause for celebration now, though. I'm genuinely pleased with how U.S. education leadership has responded in terms of programs and initiatives of which school wellness is the centerpiece. By doing so, they're saying, "We understand the problem. We 'get' that school wellness is important." Anyone who has worked in the area of social and cultural change knows that's a huge step.

I'm pleased also with how clearly we have established that there's a connection between health and learning, and that supporting the goal of better nutrition and physical activity means supporting better academic performance. The fact that they go hand in hand should have been intuitive, but it wasn't. Since the publication in 2004 of Action for Healthy Kids' own *The Learning Connection* report, the links among nutrition, physical activity, and academic performance are now becoming more widely acknowledged and further bolstered by new supporting data.

I'm equally gratified that some school wellness advocates, including Action for Healthy Kids, are beginning to increase the focus on

*David S. Ludwig, MD, PhD. "Childhood Obesity: The Shape of Things to Come," *New England Journal of Medicine*, December 6, 2007, p. 2325.

disadvantaged communities. The problems of overweight and obesity, as well as undernourishment, are serious threats to the well-being of underserved communities, and to the individual futures of children born into them. And it is important to note that, while the childhood obesity epidemic affects children from all racial and ethnic groups, it isn't uniform for all groups — this is an increasingly urgent problem among African American and Hispanic youth particularly. A nation like ours ignores such communities at its peril, because, apart from the human price, the healthcare costs of resulting disease and disability in years to come will be astronomical if we don't effect change.

I salute the thousands of Action for Healthy Kids volunteers, as well as volunteers and staff of other organizations working in this arena. They have stimulated many of the substantive school wellness achievements to date. And all these same players are needed to shoulder the myriad tasks involved in further advancing the cause of school wellness in the months and years to come.

Going forward, we must accelerate change in every community across America by engaging more schools, more parents, more students, and more community leaders. We must continue to collaborate with partners to develop innovative solutions, especially in pushing for full implementation and monitoring of local wellness policies.

If we fail to act, we endanger the future well-being of America's youth, and, I dare say, of America itself. Our children deserve healthier learning environments — schools that promote lifelong habits of healthful eating and active lifestyles.

Is that too much to ask? Most school wellness advocates think not. Do policy-makers fully understand the benefits of school wellness? I'd say they certainly understand them better now than they did five years ago. About that, I'm encouraged, but far from satisfied. To further the cause, communication with policy-makers — as well as with concerned leaders, interested lay people, the public health community, and current and would-be partners — is a full-time job.

The urgency of making school wellness a higher priority for our society is largely the rationale behind this wide-ranging, and I think important report. I urge you to read it in its entirety.

We must accelerate change in every community across America by engaging more schools, more parents, more students, and more community leaders.

David Satcher, MD, PhD
16th U.S. Surgeon General
and Founding Chair of
Action for Healthy Kids

Director of the Center of
Excellence on Health Disparities
at Morehouse School of Medicine

The Background: Why School Wellness Matters

Poor classroom performance; a reduced ability to learn; chronic health conditions; social discrimination; and the cost-impact on society are but a few of the consequences of ignoring school wellness imperatives.

School wellness is important. But why? Simply put, student health and classroom performance suffer when students do not eat well or get enough physical activity; therefore it is in schools' interest to help provide healthy, active environments.

The environments in which most American children live do not make it easy for them to engage in healthy behaviors.

As recognized by the U.S. Surgeon General, schools are one of the best settings in which to halt the alarming impacts and implications of poor nutrition and physical inactivity on American youth. These behaviors have many harmful consequences to children's short- and long-term health and ability to learn.

It all comes back to learning. A growing body of evidence indicates that poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and obesity are directly associated with lower levels of student achievement. For example, a recently published article in the *Journal of School Health* (Florence, et al.) found that fifth-grade students with poor nutritional quality were significantly more likely to underperform academically.

The Learning Connection: The Value of Improving Nutrition and Physical Activity in Our Schools, an Action for Healthy Kids report, summarized research that shows a direct link between academic achievement and nutrition, physical activity, and weight. Those findings include:

> Well-nourished students tend to be better students, while poorly nourished children exhibit weaker academic performance, and score lower on standardized achievement tests.

> Poor nutrition and hunger translate into inadequate intake of essential vitamins, minerals, fats, and proteins that are necessary for optimal cognitive function.

> Physical activity and physical fitness are associated with improved cognitive function, stronger academic achievement, increased concentration, and better test scores.

> Obesity and poor nutrition are correlated with reduced academic achievement and a greater number of behavioral problems, potentially due to a greater-than-average number of absences, social stigmatization, or poor self-esteem.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognizes that "the academic success of America's youth is strongly linked with their health. In turn, academic success is an excellent indicator for the overall well-being of youth, and is a primary predictor and determinant of adult health outcomes."*

What are kids up against? The environments in which most American children live do not make it easy for them to engage in healthy behaviors.

High-calorie, low-nutrient foods — non-nutritious snacks, sweetened beverages and sodas, fried foods — are readily available to most American children. As a result, most youth routinely consume such unhealthy foods.

*See "Student Health and Academic Achievement" at www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/health_and_academics/index.htm.

Responding to the Call

Five years of steady progress.

In 2001, the U.S. Surgeon General's Office released the landmark report stating that the consequences of overweight and obesity could reverse many of the health improvements that the nation had achieved in recent years. In outlining community-based strategies to address this vital health problem, the report highlighted schools as one of five key settings where initiatives should be focused. Action for Healthy Kids was founded in 2002 in response to the Surgeon General's imperative to work with schools to fight childhood obesity.

Since its inception, Action for Healthy Kids has brought together more than 60 organizations and government agencies as well as 51 Teams nationwide that have engaged more than 10,000 volunteers. All of its initiatives are dedicated to improving nutrition, increasing physical activity, and reducing overweight by changing school environments. In 2007, for example, Action for Healthy Kids Teams reached more than 71% of the nation's school districts — representing nearly 37 million K-12 students — with outreach, support, and information related to school wellness.

Action for Healthy Kids and its Partners have elevated local awareness about the importance of nutrition and physical activity, and spearheaded new initiatives in schools and communities around the country. In concert with other organizations, Action for Healthy Kids has taken important steps toward addressing the childhood obesity crisis — galvanizing invaluable support from a wide range of educational and community constituencies.

Great strides, harsh realities.

Despite progress in terms of awareness, commitment, and effective initiatives large and small, more than five years after the founding of Action for Healthy Kids, poor nutrition and physical inactivity remain a serious threat. Under-funding of school wellness initiatives, along with sustainability issues and lack of accountability mechanisms, continue to undermine the promise for healthier learning environments.

Poor nutrition and physical inactivity exact a disproportionate impact on underserved communities, which experience a higher incidence of undernourished, sedentary, and overweight youth and over-burdened school systems. This is a fact of concern to all Americans, with its serious implications relative to learning, health, productivity, economics, and equity.

All of these hurdles are surmountable, and are recognized and embraced by Action for Healthy Kids and its Partners merely as part of the process that leads to progress. For Action for Healthy Kids that progress will take the form of a focus on engaging all concerned constituencies by encouraging the making of better food choices, and creating environments that get — and keep — kids moving.



Only 2 percent of school-aged children consume the recommended daily number of servings from all major food groups, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

This leads to excess calorie consumption and nutritional deficiencies.

How bad is the problem? One national health survey (NHANES III) reveals that almost one-third of calories consumed by children and adolescents aged 8 to 18 years come from foods with low nutrient density, such as saturated fats, added sugars, candy, sweetened beverages, desserts, and salty snacks.

Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (SHPPS 2006) indicate that nearly half (48 percent) of high schools, 25 percent of middle schools, and 12 percent of elementary schools allow students to purchase foods and beverages high in saturated fat, sodium, or added sugars from vending machines, school stores, or snack bars during lunch period. Additionally, 54 percent of schools sell high calorie, high fat cookies, candy, or other baked goods as part of fundraisers for school organizations.

Nor do most children routinely consume healthy foods recommended by the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Only 2 percent of school-aged children consume the recommended daily number of servings from all major food groups, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. According to the 2007 National Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance, only 14 percent of adolescents in grades 9-12 consume three servings of milk per day, while only 21 percent consume at least five servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

Children living in low-income, minority, and urban communities are at particular risk of poor nutrition. The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance links minority status to less healthy eating patterns. And another study, of Minnesota urban youth, points out disparities in obesity and eating patterns by ethnicity and socioeconomic status (Neumark-Sztainer, et al.). And an overall relative lack of nutrition education compounds children's inability to make healthy food choices in general.

It's not one problem. It's two. The negative effects of poor nutrition and excessive calorie intake are compounded by the fact that the majority of American children do not engage in enough physical activity. Few meet the recommended 60 minutes of age-appropriate physical activity most or all days of the week. Specifically:

> More than one-third of students in grades 9-12 do not regularly engage in physical activity, according to the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE).

> According to the CDC, 62 percent of children aged 9-13 years do not participate in any organized physical activity during their non-school hours.

With competing priorities such as testing and tight budgets, schools today are offering fewer and fewer opportunities for physical activity. For example, NASPE reports that the percentage of students who attend a daily physical education class in school dropped to 28 percent in 2003, from 42 percent in 1991.

And as for physical education, NASPE recommends 150 minutes of P.E. per week for elementary students and 225 minutes per week for middle and high school students. In reality, very few schools provide daily physical education for all grades throughout the entire school year. According to 2006 findings of a national survey on school health that the CDC conducts every six years (SHPPS) that figure is a stun-

ningly low 4 percent of elementary schools, 8 percent of middle schools, and 2 percent of high schools.

Here again, children living in low-income, minority, urban communities are also at higher risk for inadequate physical activity. Data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services show children's participation in physical activity decreases with family income, and that Hispanic and African American children particularly are the least likely to exercise.

Alarming numbers. Today, more than one-third of our children and adolescents fall into the top two categories for weight that the CDC has defined. For children, these categories are defined as "overweight" and "obese."

Levels of overweight among children have risen rapidly. In the last 30 years, according to the CDC, the percentage of overweight children aged 6 to 11 has nearly tripled, and the percentage of overweight adolescents aged 12 to 19 has more than tripled. The results of a study summarized in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (Ogden, et al.) indicate that more recently, rates of childhood obesity have remained level. However, although the results show promise, they do not indicate a reversal of the obesity trend, as more than one-third of the children and youth in the study were considered overweight.

Given their higher risk for poor nutrition and physical inactivity, it is not surprising that children in low-income minority and urban communities are at greatest risk for overweight. Numerous analyses have confirmed that the prevalence of overweight is higher in these areas.

Poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and overweight among American children contribute to many health problems and set children up for poor health throughout their lives — at a cost to them, their communities, and our society. Underscoring this point, a report from the Conference Board suggests that obesity is costing U.S. businesses $45 billion annually in medical expenses and lost productivity. Moreover, other serious illnesses that are becoming more prevalent among children — including heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and asthma — are also associated with obesity.

Yet more health consequences. Beyond excess calories, poor nutrition can lead to nutrient deficiencies in children. Such deficiencies can contribute to a number of chronic diseases, or leave children without protection from various conditions.

For example, a child's failure to consume the recommended intake of calcium can increase his or her risk of fractures and osteoporosis as an adult. Adequate calcium intake plays a beneficial role in reducing the risk and/or consequences of a number of other conditions as well, including colon, breast, and ovarian cancers, hypertension, lead poisoning, and obesity.

Overweight itself frequently becomes a chronic condition. Overweight children tend to stay overweight through adolescence and become obese adults.

In the end, though, perhaps the most immediate consequence of overweight that children feel is social discrimination, according to the U.S. Surgeon General in a 2001 report on childhood obesity. This, in turn, has been linked with poor self-esteem and depression. ✹

Children living in low-income, minority, and urban communities are at particular risk of poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and obesity.

The Snapshot: The State of School Wellness Today

Two years after the federal school wellness policy mandate, what are kids eating, what aren't they eating, and why? What is happening with physical activity and physical education, and how must this change? What actions, on the part of states and others, has the federal mandate spurred? What are the hindrances?

What are kids eating at school? Recent research in peer-reviewed journals, including the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* and the *Journal of School Health*, as well as findings from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2006 School Health Policy and Programs Study (SHPPS, released every six years) and the United States Department of Agriculture's School Nutrition Dietary Assessment (SNDA-III), paint a picture of the school food environment.

Over the past five years, most of the efforts to improve school nutrition have focused on limiting or restricting competitive foods, and for good reason. Unhealthy temptations — cookies, soda, chips, and other low-nutrient foods — abound. The 2006 SHPPS survey revealed that about 45 percent of elementary schools, over 56 percent of middle schools, and some two-thirds of high schools offer such choices. And almost 60 percent of high school students can buy soda in the cafeteria at lunch (Johnston, et al.).

The SNDA-III study determined that students who participated in the school lunch program were less likely to consume competitive foods than those students who did not participate. For elementary, middle, and high schools, most of the competitive foods were eaten at lunch. The most common choices were candy, baked goods, soda, and chips — all low in nutrition and high in calories. Students consuming competitive foods had more than 150 calories from these low-nutrient foods on any given day.

Students have many options to buy food during the school day. According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, almost 90 percent of high schools, over two-thirds of middle schools, and almost one-third of elementary schools sell competitive foods through vending machines,

A Genuine Milestone

It is impossible to assess the state of school wellness today without acknowledging the landmark federal legislation known as the U.S. Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. In this act, Congress responded to the alarming surge in childhood obesity by identifying a key role for schools in its prevention. The act called for development of a local wellness policy in most school districts in America. School districts had until July 2006 to put their policies in place. These policies are to include:

> Goals to promote student wellness, nutrition education, and physical activity.
> Nutrition guidelines for school meals and for other foods available at school.
> A plan and a person responsible for monitoring the policy.
> Creation of a local guidelines committee, which would include not only representatives of local schools but also parents and other community members.

Despite its sweep and specificity, the act has serious limitations. It lacks funding and requirements for local accountability, standards and guidelines for implementation, and systems and standards for monitoring and evaluation to consistently track and measure progress. For more information, visit **www.ActionForHealthyKids.org**.



Children who participate in the school lunch program are less likely to consume competitive foods.

Cost is a major barrier to providing healthy, tasty, youth-appealing items such as cut fruit, fresh salads, or flavored milk in plastic containers.

school stores, or snack bars. Nevertheless, schools are making efforts to provide healthy options among competitive foods sold. For example, the 2006 SHPPS survey found more schools offering milk as a beverage in vending machines, school stores, and snack bars (28 percent of middle and 51 percent of high schools), while water sales in vending machines increased to 46 percent from 30 percent in 2000.

Another study found that 63 percent of middle and high school students attend schools that offer some type of fruit and/or vegetable from vending machines, school stores, or snack bars and carts (Delva, et al.). The same study found that students in low-income communities have less access to healthier snacks, as do African American middle school students.

A more complex challenge. According to the 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, children and adolescents continue to consume less than the recommended amount of critical nutrients like calcium, magnesium, and Vitamin E, to name a few. However, students who do participate in the school lunch program have better nutrient intake than those not participating.

The great majority of students (87 percent) attend schools that participate in the USDA-reimbursable National School Lunch Program, according to data reported in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (Delva, et al.). USDA data indicated that in 2007 the average daily participation rate for school lunch was 30 million students.

Schools appear to have achieved mixed results in creating healthier school meals. A recent review (Leviton) found school meal programs have improved their nutritional content since the mid 1990s. SNDA-III found that more than two-thirds of school meals examined met standards for vitamins, minerals, protein, and fiber. However, most lunches did not meet standards for fat, saturated fat, or sodium. Notably, only 6 percent to 7 percent of schools had lunches that met all the USDA set standards; clearly, much more work is needed before we have all schools offering meals that meet both nutritional and taste standards.

Getting youth to eat healthier options at school has several challenges. Qualitative research done by Action for Healthy Kids with minority youth in 7th and 8th grade uncovered a major barrier to students making healthy choices at school: access to tasty, appealing, healthier options. School nutrition professionals are trying to provide healthful and tasty student-appealing products (e.g., cut fruit, fresh salads, or cold fat-free flavored milk in plastic containers), but cost is a major barrier. Also, stu-

Voices: A Wealth of Perspectives, Opinions

In preparing this report, Action for Healthy Kids identified a number of individuals whose expertise spans the fields of child health and school wellness, and talked with them to gain their insights about the state of school wellness today. During extensive interviews, these authorities reflected upon progress in school wellness thus far; on continued challenges in the advance of school wellness; and on what remains to be done by stakeholders at the local, state, and national levels. The thoughts of the individuals at right are shared throughout the report. >>

dents are accustomed to eating low-nutrient, high-calorie competitive foods and fast foods, which makes introducing healthier items more challenging.

Schools have generally made efforts to offer more healthful choices as part of school meal offerings. According to 2006 SHPPS data:

> About two-thirds of schools offer students a daily choice between two or more types of fruit or 100 percent fruit juice and between two or more vegetables.
> Most schools offer a choice of either low-fat or fat-free milk, and a third of schools offer both of these healthy choices, as well as whole-grain foods.
> Significantly more schools used healthy food preparation practices in 2006 than in 2000.

What about daily physical education and school-based physical activity programs?

Research has shown that daily physical education does not detract from academic performance.* Still, as revealed by the 2006 SHPPS survey, surprisingly few schools provide daily physical education for the entire school year for all students. Just as alarming, studies show that participation in physical education actually declines as students go through school (Johnston, et al.).

> Physical education requirements, as well as actual student participation rates, decline substantially between 8th and 12th grades.
> Principals participating in one survey estimated that over 90 percent of 8th graders actually took physical education, compared to only 34 percent of 12th graders.

SHPPS also found 32 percent of elementary schools do not offer daily recess for all students and 52 percent do not offer intramural activities or physical activity clubs for students. Also notable is that participation in varsity sports was lower among students from low-income families and African American and Hispanic students.

Physical Education vs. Physical Activity

Physical education is a planned, sequential program of curricula and instruction that helps to equip students with the knowledge, skills, capacities, values, and enthusiasm to maintain a healthy lifestyle into adulthood. Physical education is designed to promote physical fitness, develop motor skills, and prepare students to participate confidently in team and individual activities.

By comparison, **physical activity** is bodily movement of any type; productive physical activity is the product of a quality physical education program. Opportunities for physical activity during the school day include time spent in physical education class, classroom-based movement, recess, walking or biking to school, and recreational sport and play that occurs before, during, and after school.

Physical education should not be compared to or confused with other physical activity experiences such as recess, intramurals, or recreational endeavors. The unique goals of physical education are the development of physical competence, health-related fitness, cognitive understanding, and a positive attitude toward physical activity so that individuals can adopt and maintain a physically active and healthy lifestyle.

Source: National Association for Sport and Physical Education

* See "Active Education: Physical Education, Physical Activity and Academic Performance," a fall 2007 Active Living Research Brief, available at www.activelivingresearch.org/alr/alr/files/Active_Ed.pdfbrief.

Katherine Kaufer Christoffel, MD, MPH, director of the Center on Obesity Management and Prevention at Children's Memorial Hospital, professor at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, and Action for Healthy Kids board member. **Guillermo Gomez**, Chicago director for the Healthy Schools Campaign. **Julia Graham Lear**, PhD, research professor in prevention and community medicine at George Washington University and director of the Center for Health and Health Care in Schools. **Madeleine Levin**, MPH, senior policy analyst for the Food Research and Action Center in Washington, D.C. **Robert Murray**, MD, director of the Center for Healthy Weight and Nutrition at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, pediatrics professor at Ohio State University's school of medicine, and chair of the Council on School Health for the American Academy of Pediatrics. **Howell Wechsler**, EdD, MPH, director of the Division of Adolescent and School Health of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). **Gene Wilhoit**, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO); formerly director of the Arkansas Department of Education and commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Education.

The SHPPS survey does document progress, however. States that require elementary schools to provide students with regularly scheduled recess increased to 12 percent in 2006 from 4 percent in 2000. Among school districts, the percentage with this requirement rose to 57 percent from 46 percent.

Growing public awareness. In general, public awareness has substantially shifted toward recognition of the dangers of obesity and the health benefits of balanced nutrition and adequate physical activity for children, according to the authorities interviewed in preparing this report (see page 19).

"There's awareness that the next generation may even have a shorter life span because of obesity — and people are passionate about not letting this happen," maintains Madeleine Levin of the Food Research and Action Center, a nonprofit organization working to eliminate hunger and malnutrition in the United States.

Interestingly, awareness of the problem of childhood obesity exists even among communities where residents may otherwise lack access to health information. Guillermo Gomez, Chicago director for the Healthy Schools Campaign, which works to create healthy school environments, says that parents in low-income minority communities increasingly understand that obesity is a dangerous and disproportionate burden on their communities. Importantly, they see these health disparities as a social justice issue, according to Gomez.

Federal mandate spurs action. Regardless of limitations, many of the experts interviewed consider the federal mandate to implement local wellness policies in the fight against obesity (see sidebar, p. 17) an essential and potent lever for engagement and action at the level of both state education agencies and local districts.

Madeleine Levin of the Food Research and Action Center believes that many superintendents have moved to implement local wellness policies precisely because they realize the policies can guide the way to promoting healthy environments in the schools.

Howell Wechsler, director of the Division of Adolescent and School Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), sees the value of the wellness policy through another lens. "Having these policies really speeds you through the innovation process in a very dramatic way," he notes.

The local wellness policy mandate gave the Chicago Healthy Schools Campaign a way to mobilize Latino parents around school health. Guillermo Gomez reports that the campaign translated the policy mandate not only into Spanish but also into easily understandable layman's terms for parents. Parents, in turn, came out by the thousands to let the Chicago Public Schools know that they expected the wellness policy to be implemented. According to Gomez, "The policy was an opportunity because it said, essentially, 'Establish school wellness teams. It's not a choice.'"

But how effective are local wellness policies? To find out how school districts fared in the development of their local wellness policies, at the time policies were due on July 1, 2006, Action for Healthy Kids assessed 112 policies that had been approved. The sample included policies from 42 states representing schools in rural, suburban, and urban settings and from schools with medium and large student enrollments.

Action for Healthy Kids' researchers compared school policies against two benchmarks — the federal guidelines and an Action for Healthy Kids tool to measure best practices in school health as determined by an expert panel. The assessment uncovered that only 54 percent of district policies met the minimum federal require-

>> On progress thus far...

"I would characterize the changes as fairly dramatic thus far. We had certainly neglected school health, gotten away from good practices, but I see dramatic progress, with schools reinstituting physical activities, adding and expanding breaks, and many have instituted in-class activities. 'Junk-food removal' has been an area of great improvement, as has the removal of carbonated soft drinks and candy vending machines. So I'd say in a relatively short time the changes have been dramatic — despite the huge changes still left to be effected."

Gene Wilhoit

ments. On a promising note, about 80 percent of policies required community and family involvement in school health councils, bringing important support to schools.

Collecting additional local wellness policies bolstered this early snapshot: these data are pending publication. However, study author Alicia Moag-Stahlberg, MS, RD, founding executive director of Action for Healthy Kids, relays that schools will need considerable assistance to develop, fully implement, and sustain the wellness policies. Although in the re-assessment 70 percent of local wellness policies met the federal mandate, most policies did not fully address implementation and evaluation of the policies.

States are stepping up.
Given the lack of funds with which to implement the federal legislation, most individual school districts grapple on their own as best they can. As major school district funders, states have perhaps the most powerful leverage with which to encourage the creation of strong policies to promote school wellness and to encourage their adoption by school districts.

Indeed, states are beginning to step up and assume important roles in helping school districts develop, implement, and monitor their new local wellness policies. An October 2007 issue brief by the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) revealed some widespread efforts by states. As of fourth-quarter 2007:

> At least 48 states had developed guidance materials or adopted new laws, regulations, or policies that specifically address the federal legislation mandating school wellness policies.
> At least 40 states had produced state-specific policy guidance documents and resources to help local school districts create wellness policies.
> At least 19 state legislatures, state boards of education, and state agencies had adopted require-

Aligned with Other Initiatives

School wellness relates to and benefits from other comprehensive initiatives and approaches to improving students' health and well-being, including:

The Whole Child

The current direction in educational practice and policy focuses overwhelmingly on academic achievement. However, academic achievement is merely one element of student learning and development, and only a part of any system of educational accountability. The Whole Child is a public engagement and advocacy campaign launched by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), an Action for Healthy Kids Partner organization. The initiative encourages schools and communities to work together to ensure that each student has access to a challenging curriculum in a healthy and supportive climate. For more information, visit www.wholechildeducation.org.

Coordinated School Health

Many communities in the U.S. are pursuing a coordinated approach to school health — designed to improve students' health and their capacity to learn through the support of families, schools, and communities working together. The Coordinated School Health (CSH) model has eight interactive components, which include: Health Education; Physical Education; Health Services; Nutrition Services; Counseling and Psychological Services; Healthy School Environment; Health Promotion for Staff; and Family/Community Involvement. For more information, go to www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/CSHP/.

>> On the growing awareness of school wellness...

"There's a definite awareness now that the next generation may have a shorter lifespan because of obesity – and people are passionate about not letting this happen." **Madeleine Levin**

"Many parents in low-income minority communities now understand that obesity is a dangerous and disproportionate burden on their communities. They see these health disparities as nothing less than a social justice issue." **Guillermo Gomez**

ments intended to strengthen local wellness policy evaluation and school district accountability to the state or local level.

Numerous states have also passed laws or adopted regulations to establish wellness policy content regarding nutrition, physical activity, or both; have implemented innovative or systematic approaches to checking school district compliance with policies; have acted to encourage local districts to adopt a strong wellness policy; or have established statewide workgroups with the specific task of providing guidance on implementing federally mandated local wellness policies.

NASBE singles out Arkansas, Rhode Island, and South Carolina for adopting comprehensive strategies to promote school wellness by:

> Integrating local wellness policies into the general education accountability system.
> Adopting provisions to strengthen school district accountability to the community.
> Establishing additional wellness policy content requirements beyond the minimum federal requirements.

It is notable, however, that so far only one state — Kansas — has enacted ongoing monitoring of school wellness policies. The lack of such monitoring may well impede widespread implementation of these policies in the 49 other states.

Substantial change not yet widespread. Although states are getting on board and some districts are gaining traction with their wellness policies, real, substantial change is not yet widespread.

The CDC's Howell Wechsler says, "We were dealing with innovators at the turn of the millennium, and now we're deep into the early adopters." In other words, in 2001 school wellness was a pioneering innovation; now, seven years later, it's progressed to the stage of budding acceptance.

Other experts interviewed universally agreed that getting to the next level of change requires moving beyond simple awareness. The current need is to create wide availability of healthful foods and daily opportunities for physical activity in all schools — assuredly, a challenge.

Julia Graham Lear, director of the Center for Health and Health Care in Schools at George Washington University, has real concerns about progress at the school district level, where, she feels, it must happen first. Says Lear, cutting to the bottom line, "The work now is about where the real barriers are — the ones that cost money."

Howell Wechsler echoes a similar assessment. "The relatively cheap fixes," he says, "are done. We are starting to make good progress on them already. Taking out the high-fat chips and putting the baked chips in. It's getting done in many schools. But overhauling physical education and school lunches — fixing these is much more resource-intensive."

From his perspective working with a large urban district, Guillermo Gomez also perceives that overall progress has been slow. He laments how long it has taken for the information to filter down from the district level to the individual schools in the city of Chicago, and reports that, after being sent information, many principals, when telephoned, couldn't remember receiving it.

Robert Murray, chair of the Council on School Health for the American Academy of Pediatrics and a professor of pediatrics at Ohio State University, points out an additional challenge beyond the initial step of implementing a policy.

"The mandate to create a policy," he claims, "forced a national discussion about what we want for our children in schools in terms of nutrition and physical activity. And that's good. But the second wave of wellness activity is making those policies work toward a continuous improve-

>> On the relationship of wellness to learning...

"Educators themselves often don't make the link between health and education. They see their role as producing kids who are excited about learning, and giving them strong academic and life skills. But educators sometimes don't make the connection that health is a huge contributor to success in life. The irony is that as we've increased academic expectations, we've neglected the health and wellness side of things — which is a total contradiction." **Gene Wilhoit**

ment process in the schools. And that step is proving to be more difficult."

Katherine Kaufer Christoffel, pediatrics professor at Northwestern University, director of the Center on Obesity Management and Prevention at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago, and an Action for Healthy Kids board member, voices some optimism. She notes how changes can take time to occur because school district leaders balance so many challenging priorities. Still, she points out, "When time forces them [schools and school districts] to focus, I think the discussions are likely to be in the right direction — because there are more and more options for them to choose from that are on the healthier sides of the equation, and because there's continuing pressure from some parents, and expectations."

A bigger-picture, long-range perspective is offered by Gene Wilhoit, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, who says, both directly and encouragingly, "It's not easy to redesign learning processes to fit in new and emerging priorities, but it can be done. We can start to view schools as community centers for lifelong learning, in which lessons about better nutrition and physical activity are a key part. I'm optimistic that those kinds of new visions are being received more openly by the education community than they were just a few years ago." ✸

School District in Action: Indianapolis

"It all started with the acceptance that health and wellness are part of learning," says Audrey Satterblom, wellness coordinator for the Indianapolis Public Schools and a member of the Indiana Action for Healthy Kids Steering Committee. She's explaining her district's establishment of a coordinated school health program, largely in response to the federal local wellness policy mandate.

"For the first year after we developed a local wellness policy," says Satterblom, "it frankly just sat there," and implementation languished. Satterblom, as a former P.E. teacher and administrator with a passionate interest in wellness, advocated for an umbrella program that would allow development in Indianapolis of a wellness "curriculum" that would address everything from mental health challenges to sexuality to obesity. Her superintendent responded positively, as did the federal PEP (Physical Education for Progress) program, which provided a needed grant.

"When advocating for the establishment of this type of program," Satterblom says, "an educator needs to become totally involved, and needs to say, 'This is important, and I'm going to stand for this, and my school has to improve.'" And improve Satterblom's district has. Just one example?

"In the obesity area, as part of efforts to ramp up physical activity, our middle school now has moved to daily year-round P.E., which is a huge change from the old perfunctory nine-week course. That was a big move, especially in a time of budget cuts in other areas."

So how does Satterblom get kids motivated and excited about participating in the wellness curriculum?

"Well, it helps that it's mandatory," she responds, half-jokingly. "But as a former P.E. teacher, even before the days of wellness policies, my motivations were always academic ones. I knew that if my kids were healthy and active, they were going to read better. They were going to do math better. 'Action-based learning,' as I call it, just works," she says definitively. And more than 36,000 kids in Satterblom's district are the beneficiaries of her optimism and vision.

Dr. Eugene White, superintendent of schools in Indianapolis, is philosophical and realistic about the issues with which his district wrestles.

"Schools are facing more and more social challenges each decade, and a lot of responsibility has been shifted to us, things that weren't traditionally education's responsibility. But the fact is, schools are the American institution that has 'public' above the front door, and we have to take it on."

"You have to have someone who prioritizes wellness, and is given the ability to drive it."

But White points to Satterblom's ownership of the wellness issue in Indianapolis as one reason for its success.

"You have to have someone who prioritizes wellness, and is given the ability to drive it. Any time someone asks me about the success of what we're doing, I just keep going back to the ownership that Audrey took of the initiative. We would be dragging our feet like many other districts if she hadn't taken it upon herself to lead."

>> On the federal school wellness policy mandate...

"Having these policies really speeds you through the innovation process in a very dramatic way." **Howell Wechsler**

"Translated into Spanish, the wellness policy has given the Chicago Healthy Schools Campaign a way to mobilize Latino parents around school health." **Guillermo Gomez**

The Changing Food Environment

Much of the attention and work over the last five years in school wellness has been focused on the "wipe out junk food" strategy. And there has been some progress made. However, much less attention, and change, has been seen relative to the quality of diets for all youth.

In 2000, the number of schools making exclusive deals with soft drink companies was exploding. Today, these exclusive deals are nearly nonexistent and the soft drink industry has begun to regulate itself when it comes to products in the school environment. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2006 School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS) data reported that the number of schools that sold carbonated soft drinks, sports drinks, and fruit drinks during lunch period decreased from 68 percent in 2000 to 48 percent in 2006. And nationwide, in 2006 more than half of states required or recommended that schools prohibit the selling of junk foods à la carte, in vending machines, and in school stores and canteens.

As noted above, less attention and change has been seen relative to the quality of diets for all youth. Less than 2 percent of children and adolescents currently consume the minimum number of recommended servings from all food groups. This has led to low dietary intake of calcium, potassium, fiber, magnesium, and Vitamin E. The U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services' 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* include guidance about "Food Groups to Encourage," stating that youth need to consume more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat milk and milk products to meet recommended minimums for good health.

Broader Nutritional Challenge

Moreover, a recent study of low-socioeconomic urban youth aged 7-13 years examined diet quality, and found that the diets of more than 75 percent of participants failed to meet recommended servings for grains, vegetables, dairy, and fruit groups – with mean intake being significantly lower than recommendations. Twenty-five percent or more of the youth studied did not meet recommended amounts for iron, folate, and calcium. Ninety-three percent of children aged 9-13 did not meet Adequate Intake for calcium, nor did 76 percent of children aged 7-8 years.

Strategies to eliminate junk food have involved replacing high fat, high sugar, and/or high calorie items with lower-calorie fat and sugar counterparts, such as switching baked chips for regular. This does begin to address obesity by lowering calorie content. However, it does not address the broader nutritional challenge. These changes will allow for competitive foods to be available, which can lead to youth using them as an alternative to school meals, and continuing to consume inadequate nutrients. This strategy alone is insufficient to meet the imperatives of local wellness policies.

To that end, the Institute of Medicine released a report in 2007 about appropriate nutritional standards for the availability, sale, and consumption of foods at school. The report concluded that the federally reimbursable school nutrition

>> On policy/legislative solutions...

"You have to be able to get at the state level enough legislators to focus and say, 'Look, how are we going to get more physical education in when we don't have enough hours of instruction in academic courses? But it's not a matter of sending out a curriculum and exhorting people any more." **Julia Graham Lear**

programs should be the main source of nutrition at school and that competitive foods, if available, should consist of nutritious fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products.

Nutritional Quality: The Logical Next Step

Jennifer Weber is the manager of national nutrition policy for the American Dietetic Association. She describes the move to a focus on nutritional quality as a natural evolution – indeed the logical next step – in the field of school wellness.

"Obviously," Weber acknowledges, "we need to continue taking the least nutritious foods out of schools. Refocusing on raising nutritional quality can happen simultaneously to that. Yet we need to acknowledge that these tasks pose unique challenges. Getting people to understand and care about the nutritional quality of the foods kids eat in schools requires different strategies than simply educating them about foods to avoid."

Weber says that a principal hurdle is the belief on the part of many administrators and parents alike that once we've conquered junk food the job is done.

"Although it's a vital, even critical, topic," says Weber, "nutritional quality doesn't quite 'resonate' with educators, administrators, even parents in the simple, understandable way that 'eliminating junk food' does. Addressing over-consumption of 'junk food' is perceived as more urgent, and more directly related to childhood obesity, than overall diet quality. So overcoming that perception is an important hurdle. Kids' health, even more than that of adults, is dependent on consuming adequate nutrients. Nutritional quality is needed for proper growth, physical/mental development, and the prevention of chronic disease."

Weber says that it will be crucial in the coming months and years for school wellness advocates from every stakeholder group to remember, and constantly try to reinforce, that school wellness isn't just a matter of shifting the emphasis off the least nutritious foods; it's about shifting the emphasis onto healthier foods to reach the point where the foods that kids want to consume are the ones that they should consume.

"To me," Weber maintains, "that's the most valuable conversation that we can have, going forward."

School wellness isn't just a matter of shifting the emphasis off the least nutritious foods; it's about shifting the emphasis onto healthier foods.

>> On urgency...

"If there were ever some loud sirens out there, they're there now, when you begin to talk about the condition of our children and the rapid pace at which our health is declining." **Gene Wilhoit**

The Stakeholders: Illuminating Research Findings

Observations, opinions, insights, and recommendations from a wide range of participants across the board. Among them, there exist alignment and agreement that promise further progress, but also stark differences in perspective that hint at potential barriers.

Some see progress, some are not sure. In October and November of 2007, Action for Healthy Kids conducted research with education stakeholders to gain insights and perspectives on efforts to meet the nutritional and physical activity needs of schoolchildren.

Eleven national education and health organizations* participated in the research, surveying their members and constituents. Action for Healthy Kids also invited its own Team members to respond.

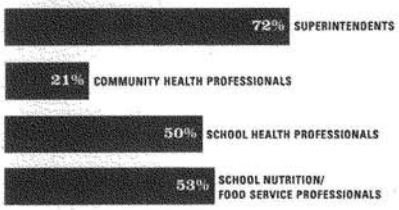
In total, some 2,400 individuals responded, from all 50 states, a group that included school leaders (superintendents, principals, school board members); school personnel (school nutrition and food service staff, physical education and classroom teachers, and others); public health professionals; school wellness advocates; and parents, students, and community members.

The respondents — who included those with the job of developing and implementing wellness policies, and those whose children and/or clients would be expected to benefit from such policies — offered their impressions not only of the state of school wellness today, but also of what the barriers are, who can move school wellness forward, and what it will take to do so.

What follows is a brief summary of selected research findings.

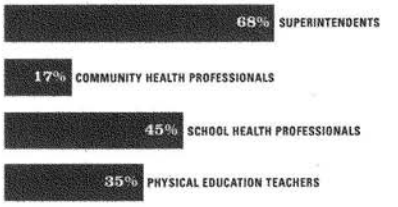
Do schools have effective wellness policies...

...encouraging proper nutrition?



Respondents differ in their opinions about the existence of effective policies to encourage proper nutrition. Seventy-two percent of superintendents (and 61 percent of principals) say that schools have effective policies to encourage proper nutrition. Seventy-nine percent of community health professionals feel the opposite. School health professionals and school nutrition/food service professionals are split — about half feel that schools have effective policies, and half don't.

...encouraging daily physical activity?

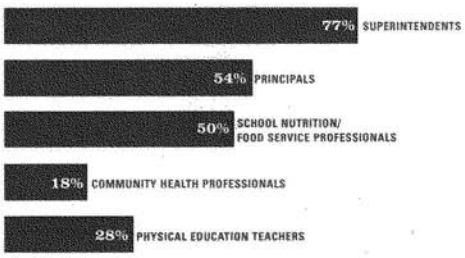


Opinions similarly diverge regarding policies to encourage daily physical activity. Sixty-eight percent of superintendents (and 59 percent of principals) believe schools have effective policies in place. Eighty-three percent of community health professionals do not. Almost half of school health professionals feel good about whether policies encourage daily physical activity. But only 35 percent of physical education teachers agree.

* Action for Healthy Kids Partners and other organizations participating in the research included: Afterschool Alliance; American Association of School Administrators; Center for Health and Health Care in Schools; Family, Career and Community Leaders of America; National Association for Sport and Physical Education; National Association of Elementary School Principals; National Association of Secondary School Principals; National Association of State Boards of Education; National Association of Student Councils; National PTA; National School Boards Association.

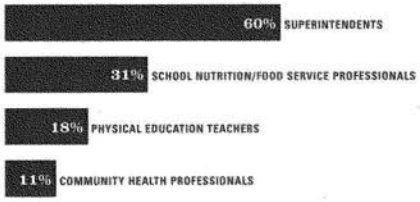
More information about the research results presented on these pages is available in "The State of School Wellness: Action for Healthy Kids Stakeholder Research" at **www.ActionForHealthyKids.org.**

Are schools implementing their wellness policies?



It depends on who is responding. Seventy-seven percent of superintendents and 54 percent of principals feel that most schools are doing an adequate job implementing their wellness policies. Half of school nutrition/food service professionals agree. But at least 72 percent of community health professionals and physical education teachers say no.

Are schools monitoring implementation and evaluating results?



Superintendents — many of whom may not be close to day-to-day aspects of implementation — are alone in largely feeling (60 percent) that most schools effectively monitor local wellness policy implementation and evaluate results. Most respondents in other groups disagree. Notably, over 65 percent of school nutrition/food service professionals say the job isn't getting done. More than 80 percent of physical education teachers and community health professionals concur.

>> On the next wave of wellness activity...

"The federal mandate to create a policy forced a national discussion about what we want for our children in schools in terms of nutrition and physical activity. And that's good. But the second wave of wellness activity is making those policies work toward a continuous improvement process in the schools. And that step is proving to be more difficult." **Robert Murray**

"The relatively cheap fixes are done. We are starting to make progress on them already. But overhauling physical education and school lunches — fixing these is much more resource-intensive." **Howell Wechsler**

Physical Education and Physical Activity: Vital Variables in the School Wellness Equation


Judith Young, PhD

As vice president for programs at the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (AAHPERD), Judith Young — the chair of Action for Healthy Kids' Board of Directors — has a bird's-eye view of the crucial roles that physical education and physical activity play in school wellness.

Young is careful to point out that "it's how we use the time that has been dedicated to physical education and physical activity that's important. And all of our guidance in school," she reminds us, "is preparatory to children leading a physically active life outside of school. Teachers, school boards, and other stakeholders need to keep that in mind as they make plans and shape policies."

Young maintains that current research data is more than strong enough to support increased attention to physical activity, in terms of its contribution to child development and academic performance.

"Kids who demonstrate higher levels of fitness are doing better academically," she asserts. "The evidence is increasingly there. And knowing that, an awful lot can be accomplished, even within the constraints we are all facing now — although heaven knows it could happen faster with more money available."

So what, in Young's view, is needed to propel us toward ramping up physical education and school-based physical activity programs?

"Obviously, the traditional things that have motivated schools have been both federal mandates and grant programs of various kinds. So the absolutely ideal incentive is something that combines both those things. This is as true in the P.E. and physical activity areas as on the nutrition side. However, the reality is that lawmakers on a local level are generally reluctant to impose requirements of any kind on schools — especially unfunded requirements. So as a result, it falls to activism and advocacy."

Young herself is one such advocate. At AAHPERD, she is aggressively working on federal legislation that ensures the workability of incentives like the U.S. Department of Education's Carol M. White Physical Education Program grants, as well as modifications to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education ("No Child Left Behind") Act that would incorporate more supports for P.E. and physical activity in schools.

Young is convinced that changes in the school day itself are inevitable, given the evolving requirements for physical education and/or physical activity in schools.

"You can't do something in the school day if there's no time dedicated to it. Those 30 minutes, the qualified, certified instructor, it all has to happen somehow. And frankly, up to now it's all been neglected as the acknowledgment of the importance of physical activity in our society has waned; we've got to replace it with something systematic. And no, every kid doesn't need to be an athlete, or spend time doing tedious calisthenics – they just have to understand the things they have to do to keep themselves healthy. The best part is that we can have a ripple effect on families by teaching kids these things."

Young is careful to stress that stakeholders' focus has to be on "both sides of the coin" — better nutrition plus physical activity and physical education.

"It can't be one without the other," she says. "They're mutually supporting. Kids learn quickly that healthier eating supports their involvement in exercise and activity, and vice-versa. It's really a complex of interacting variables.

"To P.E. teachers out there trying to make progress," she says, "my advice is do your job. Teach as if it's life-and-death, because it is. Kids have to understand how to get healthy, and keep themselves healthy as they grow. Period. As for parents, they have to think about physical activity, and getting their kids eating better and moving more systematically than they perhaps ever thought they had to. Support has to come from all sides."



Most school superintendents and school nutrition professionals feel that schools provide healthy, youth-appealing foods and beverages, while two-thirds of teachers, parents, and community health professionals disagree.

What about nutrition education?

When asked whether they agree that most schools are doing a good job of educating students about the importance of sound nutrition, 83 percent of superintendents and 64 percent of principals feel that they are. However, fewer than half of school nutrition/food service professionals (45 percent), school health professionals (43 percent), physical education teachers and parents (both 42 percent) agree. And only 34 percent of students and 26 percent of community health professionals feel schools are providing adequate nutrition education.

Are schools providing healthy foods and beverages that appeal to kids, and limiting access to those that are high in calories and low in nutrients?

Over 80 percent of superintendents say yes, as do 90 percent of school nutrition and food service professionals. But only about a third of teachers, parents, and community health professionals agree. About half of school health professionals, school board members, and principals think that schools are doing a good job.

What about physical education and physical activity?

About half of school board members, superintendents, and principals agree that most schools provide quality daily physical education programs for all students. Other groups disagree. Nearly 80 percent of physical education teachers feel that improvement is needed, as do at least 70 percent of parents and students, and 87 percent of community health professionals.

Similarly, over half of school administrators (superintendents and principals) and board members believe schools have effective policies to encourage daily physical activity, while two-thirds or more of P.E. teachers, parents, students, and community and state education and health professionals disagree.

Respondents give schools somewhat more credit for doing a good job of educating students about the importance of daily physical activity. Some 40 percent of parents and physical education teachers think that schools are doing a good job. Community health professionals are most doubtful, with only 20 percent saying an adequate job of educating students about the importance of daily physical activity is being done. (See page 19 for information about the distinction between physical education and physical activity.)

>> On barriers to advancing school wellness...

"Finding time to insert wellness-related activities such as nutrition education and physical activity into the calendar is challenging. You can't blame teachers and districts for wanting to spend more time on math and science." **Howell Wechsler**

Front-Line School Nutrition Wisdom

Katie Wilson, SNS, is president of the School Nutrition Association, and works as the food services director of the Onalaska School District in Wisconsin. Asked what she would do if she had the power and resources to make a single change to enhance the state of school wellness in America, she answers, "I'd institute a K-12 standardized national curriculum in nutrition education."

Working on the front lines of both school nutrition policy and daily school food service operation, Wilson has an unusually clear view of possibilities, challenges, and frustrations on the nutrition side of the wellness equation.

"There is indeed frustration out there," she says. "Parents are trying to do the things, nutritionally, that we're advising, and then the school sends home a flyer about a pizza fundraiser, and the parents get totally confused with, and angry about, the mixed messages.

"Kids, meanwhile, are saying, 'Look, you're restricting all these foods, and encouraging us to eat certain other foods, but you're not saying why.' They're telling us in so many words that the nutrition education component is lacking. And I couldn't agree more."

Wilson says the kids have really hit the nail on the head. Nutrition education is absolutely a missing link. Everything from comprehending labeling to understanding food-related terminology like "whole grain" is part of the nutrition education that should be happening, but largely isn't, she says. To critics who say there's no proof that nutrition education works, Wilson argues that common sense dictates it can and should be tried.

Meanwhile, as a food service director, Wilson's biggest challenges are fiscal, plain and simple. It's the sheer difficulty of conceiving and executing genuinely healthy school lunches within the budget available.

"I'm getting $2.57 to work with," says Wilson. "You go to Starbucks and show me what you can get for $2.57! Would I like to participate in 'Farm-to-School'? Absolutely. I know a baby carrot from the farm tastes completely different from the one I buy from a vendor. But show me the local farmer who'll bring me enough green beans daily for 6,000 kids."

"Meanwhile," she continues, "a local private school is doing organic lunches for students — and I have to explain to my parents who come to me that (a) they're independently funded, (b) the parents themselves volunteer to prepare and serve the lunches, and (c) the kids there have an hour for lunch compared to my 20 minutes. The limitations we are working under are substantial."

As for healthy, kid-appealing foods, Wilson says she has a 100 percent-healthful brown-rice stir-fry that's made from scratch and, as she herself says, "tastes awesome." But she notes, "I have 200 kids sign up for lunch that day, as opposed to 500 on a chicken-nugget or pizza day. I can't do it very often because my reimbursement is made on the basis of total meals served, and it brings down my numbers. I'm trying, but the cards are really stacked against food service professionals at this point."

On the professional front, Wilson's biggest focus right now is on credentialing — standardizing requirements for food service personnel. "There are, right now," she reports, "no nationwide standard requirements regarding education, experience, or expertise for running a food service program. And most states have no standards, either. For goodness sake, even instructional aides and school bus drivers are licensed!"

The School Nutrition Association has a national certification that it offers, requiring an exam and minimum hours of training. "We can't mandate it," Wilson says, "but we can talk to legislators about it, which we're doing vigorously." She insists that school nutrition professionals are committed to contributing positively to student wellness.

"I don't know a school nutrition professional who would not want to do what's best for kids. So many of us are in this business because that's what we care about, no matter what our training level. We have some very dedicated and bright school nutrition directors in this country who have absolutely changed the way school lunch works."

The majority of all stakeholder groups that responded to the survey believe that schools are under-resourced to effectively strengthen school wellness.

Are schools engaging wellness teams?

The federal wellness policy mandate requires schools to establish an advisory group of individuals including parents, students, and representatives of the school food authority, the school board, school administrators, and the public to serve as a wellness policy team. Well over 60 percent of school nutrition and health professionals, physical education teachers, other teachers, community health professionals, and parents feel that most schools are *not* effectively engaging wellness teams. But almost half of school principals and two-thirds of superintendents say they are.

Do schools have adequate resources to improve school wellness?

The majority of all stakeholder groups that responded to the survey believe that schools are under-resourced to effectively strengthen school wellness. Two-thirds or more of school administrators, school board members, school health and nutrition professionals, and P.E. and classroom teachers say schools do not have adequate resources. Interestingly, respondents "outside" the school system perceive the lack of resources even more acutely than do those who are "inside." Over 75 percent of community health professionals feel that schools do not have adequate resources, and 85 percent of state health professionals agree.

As noted below (see page 35), respondents feel resources are needed for more staff, equipment, materials, improved school food, and training.

Are parents supporting school wellness efforts?

Schools do not appear to be getting much support from parents when it comes to encouraging children to be physically active every day. Over 70 percent of every group responding — including 73 percent of parents themselves — disagree that parents do a good job of encouraging their kids to be physically active every day.

Respondents are also not convinced that most parents encourage their children to consume healthful foods and beverages. Over 60 percent of all groups responding — including 72 percent of parents themselves — contend that improvement is needed.

Conversely, are schools supporting parents' efforts?

Neither parents, nor school health professionals, nor community health providers feel that schools are pro-

>> On the power of sharing information...

"Educate the public about the fact that policy tools exist for them to participate in policy-making and decision-making. Once parents in a local school district get hold of the policy and create some goals around it, they take ownership of implementing it and start influencing others – the principal, athletes and coaches, PTA members. They think, 'Hey, we don't have to have a fundraiser with jelly doughnuts!' Once parents realize what the policy is, and that they can actually do something, they tend to go off and do it."

Robert Murray

viding adequate information to parents on the importance of daily physical activity or nutritious eating habits. At least three out of four P.E. teachers, other classroom teachers, school health professionals, and community and state health professionals feel schools are not providing adequate information to parents on the importance of daily physical activity. The numbers are similar when it comes to schools providing guidance to parents on sound nutrition: 69 percent of parents, 72 percent of school health professionals, 61 percent of school nutrition/food service professionals, and 81 percent of community health professionals say schools are missing the opportunity to do more, as do half of school administrators and two-thirds or more of educators and school staff.

So who, exactly, supports school wellness?

> Physical education teachers are judged most supportive overall, with 67 percent of all survey respondents rating them as "very supportive" and 27 percent as "somewhat supportive."

> School health professionals come next, with 64 percent of respondents rating them as "very supportive" and 27 percent as "somewhat supportive." School administrators and school board members are also perceived as supportive but less so: about a quarter of respondents rate both groups as "very supportive" and just over one-half of respondents rate them as "somewhat supportive."

> Respondents perceive people outside the school system as less supportive of the advancement of school wellness. Community leaders, government leaders, and business and industry leaders are rated as "not supportive" of the advancement of school wellness by 19, 26, and 30 percent of respondents, respectively. Respondents also have some reservations about support for school wellness among students, parents, and other caregivers. Sixteen percent of respondents view students and parents/caregivers alike as "not supportive" of school wellness in general.

> And while some two-thirds of respondents rate students and parents/caregivers as "somewhat supportive," only small percentages of respondents rate each group as "very supportive" of the advancement of school wellness.



Physical education teachers are judged most supportive of school wellness overall, with 94 percent of all respondents rating them as "very" or "somewhat" supportive.

>> On documenting and disseminating best practices...

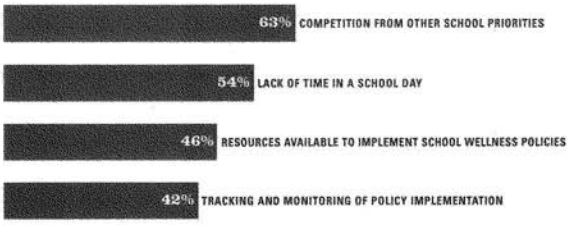
"What people don't realize is that there's a very strong and growing minority of schools where they are getting their act together in terms of wellness, and we need to do a better job of informing people about that." **Howell Wechsler**

"We need to extend the reach of the information that's available and has been produced. Reports need to go to every superintendent in the country; webinars have to include school leaders and PTA leaders nationwide; podcasts should be used to reach stakeholders we're not reaching; we really need to amplify the force with which we're putting information out there." **Katherine Kaufer Christoffel**

School administrators by far are the best positioned to move local school wellness forward, according to survey respondents. Parents and other caregivers come in second, with school board members close behind.

What are the principal barriers to school wellness?

From a list of eight potential barriers to school wellness, respondents rate the following as the most significant:



Respondents rate other barriers, listed below in order of significance from most to least:

> Inadequate tools and "know-how."
> Difficulty implementing existing school wellness policies.
> Lack of effective, evidence-based interventions.
> Insufficient quality of existing school wellness policies.

Closing Perception Gaps

Gaps in perception exist among school leaders (superintendents, principals, board members) and educators/staff who must implement policies for improved nutrition and physical activities. Specifically, those with school governance and leadership roles are more optimistic than those with implementation roles. Those "inside" the school system are generally more optimistic than those "outside" the system. Also notable is that parents are not aligned with school leaders in their perceptions of the state of school wellness.

Better systems for monitoring and tracking policy implementation would enable stakeholders to more accurately assess progress with school wellness and also aid in developing targeted intervention strategies and building the case for adequate resources.

>> On the speed of change...

"Overall progress has been slow. It's taken a long time for information to filter down from the district level to the individual schools in the city of Chicago." **Guillermo Gomez**

"Change takes time — simply because school district leaders balance so many challenging priorities." **Katherine Kaufer Christoffel**

Who can move school wellness forward?

From among a list of 11 stakeholder groups, respondents ranked those they perceive as best positioned to move local school wellness forward. Respondents indicated that school administrators by far are the best positioned to move local school wellness forward. Parents and other caregivers come in second, with school board members close behind parents. School nutrition and food service professionals, teachers, physical education teachers and professionals, government leaders, and school health professionals are also ranked as well positioned, but trail the top three groups.

Notably, few respondents rank students, community leaders, or business and industry leaders as being in the strongest position to move school wellness forward.

What is the best way to achieve positive changes in wellness?

This open-ended question generated almost 2,300 answers. In order, the most frequent responses from all stakeholder groups include:

> The need for more money and resources, including time, staff, and materials.

> Changes to school menus — higher-quality foods, more local fruits and vegetables, more low-fat dairy items, fewer processed foods.

> The need to improve and increase physical education — more teachers, classes, and equipment.

> Increased parental involvement on wellness teams and via at-home support for sound nutrition and physical activity practices.

> Better leadership support at all levels — from the school building to nationally elected officials.

> Coherent, effective school- and district-based teams, featuring collaboration among school administrators, boards, and staff, and involving parents and community members.

> More communication and outreach, based on strategies to raise awareness, and support and educate stakeholders at all levels.

> Legislation mandating changes at national, state, and local levels.

> The need to better plan, implement, and evaluate policies and resulting progress.

Also frequently cited were responses concerning: shared and supported vision at all levels; making health and wellness a higher priority of equal importance to the mandates under No Child Left Behind; integrating nutrition and physical activity education and experiences into the curriculum; holding schools and states accountable for implementation of plans that get results; placing legal limits on foods sold outside of school meals; and the need for more and better adult role models inside and outside of school. ✹

In addition to money and resources, stakeholders believe that changes to school menus, increased physical education, increased parental involvement, and better leadership support are the best ways to improve school wellness.

>> On advocating for change...

"There is strength in the combination of the federal local wellness policy and community members advocating for it. You have your nutrition and physical activity advocates in every school community, and you empower them with the fact that state laws say certain things are allowable and certain things are not." **Howell Wechsler**

The Successes: Good News

Strides are being made — as constituencies get engaged... as Action for Healthy Kids Teams expand efforts... and as school districts take action.

There are positives when it comes to school wellness. In fact, there are many stories of promise and even breakthroughs — and countless lessons learned in the field to date.

For more than five years, Action for Healthy Kids Teams across the country have been working to promote school wellness, shoulder-to-shoulder with the entire range of stakeholders that must be engaged in order to make further progress. These volunteers — school administrators, teachers, community leaders, public health professionals, and parents — have applied their energy, creativity, and commitment to supporting schools in their efforts to offer students healthy food choices and opportunities for physical activity.

The case studies summarized briefly here — all of which are available as more detailed narratives in the form of Action for Healthy Kids field reports — illustrate what is possible in schools, as well as some of the lessons that Action for Healthy Kids Teams and volunteers have learned as they have worked with schools to test new ideas to promote school wellness. The stories share a common theme: how to engage the stakeholders most essential to creating and sustaining change in the schools — be they school leaders, parents, or students.

Engaging Parents

Michigan Makes Parents Part of a Comprehensive Strategy
Michigan Action for Healthy Kids helped the state's Department of Education set up "Parent Champions for School Wellness" to bring parents into a comprehensive, statewide initiative to promote school wellness. The effort provided valuable information to parents about the federal school wellness legislation.

Colorado Creates Effective Parent Advocates
A grant award from Action for Healthy Kids made possible by Kellogg's Corporate Citizenship Fund enabled advocacy training via an original "Parents Are the Power" toolkit developed by the Colorado Action for Healthy Kids Team.

LESSONS LEARNED

> Remind parents that there is no one person or institution solely responsible for the childhood obesity crisis. Invite them to work together with schools and other community institutions.
> Ask parents to commit to a specific action, even if it's a small one. Give them a role and acknowledge their contributions.
> Do not preach; it is far more effective to ask parents to partner with you to overcome challenges, and to involve them in creative ways.
> Share responsibility with parents. A relationship of mutual respect will draw parents in and make them want to reinforce at home what kids are learning at school.
> Appreciate all parent contributions, even those that may seem minor.



Ask parents to commit to a specific action, even if it's a small one. Give them a role and acknowledge their contributions.

The case studies summarized here — and others — from Action for Healthy Kids Teams' work in the field, along with additional "What's Working" models, are available at **www.ActionForHealthyKids.org.**

Engaging School Leaders

Indiana Rewards Active, Healthy Schools with the "Healthy Hoosier School Award"
The Indiana Action for Healthy Kids Team devised the "Healthy Hoosier School Award" to recognize schools that have put policies and programs in place to help create healthy students. To apply for the award, school principals must submit an application that requires extensive information regarding their school's food and physical activity environment including details on school lunch policies, whether the school has on-campus health personnel, and whether vending machines are turned on during classroom hours.

LESSONS LEARNED

> Understand that recognition is important to school leaders. School administrators appreciate acknowledgment for good policies and programs.
> Engage district leaders with the outcome that's important to them: improved academic achievement. Show them the links between academic performance and good nutrition and physical activity.
> Acknowledge the time constraints and competing priorities that district administrators face.
> Solicit leaders' opinions and feedback each time they're presented with a new concept or tool. Ask them how they think they'll apply it in their own settings.

Ask students to identify the problems and to create solutions that make sense to them. Ownership matters.

Engaging Students

Massachusetts Lets Students Take Charge
In the fall of 2004, the Massachusetts Action for Healthy Kids Team launched "Students Taking Charge," an initiative to engage students in creating healthy school environments. The Team awarded six grants of up to $1,000 to help students develop, evaluate, and refine a toolkit about nutrition and physical activity in the school environment. The Massachusetts Department of Education helped get the call for applications out to student governments throughout the state. Student council members reviewed and made suggestions to improve the toolkit.

Texas Students Take Charge, Too
Utilizing the "Students Taking Charge" toolkit developed by the Massachusetts Team, Texas Action for Healthy Kids launched an initiative that was funded by the 2007-2008 Action for Healthy Kids Team Grant Program made possible by

>> On committed school leadership...

"Most change happens because of the impassioned leadership of one individual. We're going to have to tap into those superintendents at the state and district level who 'get' it, and perhaps even the retired ones who 'get' it. They can help their peers understand that all superintendents will eventually be held accountable for school wellness." **Howell Wechsler**

Kellogg's Corporate Citizenship Fund that would create student advocates in the following school districts: Grand Prairie, Alamo Heights, Irving, and Pasadena. The program kicked off with a student summit in August of 2007 that trained students in creating a healthier school environment.

Iowa's Student Wellness Summit

In the summer of 2007, Iowa Action for Healthy Kids held its second annual Student Wellness Summit, titled YEAH! (Youth Empowered Ambassadors for Health). Over 150 participants representing 25 school districts throughout the state attended the summit. All student-led teams that included at least one staff member were given the opportunity to apply for a $500 mini-grant to help implement student-led wellness initiatives. To date 30 grants have been given out to schools to increase the health literacy of Iowa youth and empower them to advocate for healthier school environments. The project was funded by local organizations including the Wellmark Foundation, the Iowa Medical Society Alliance, and the Midwest Dairy Council.

LESSONS LEARNED

> Trust students to take school policies on and empower them to do so — don't just pretend they are in charge.
> Connect with student councils and student governments to find the "do-ers" in the student body.
> Realize that students will be more honest, frank, and matter-of-fact about their school environment than adults will. Adults may "edit" or be more polite about answers to questions.
> Ask students to identify the problems and to create solutions that make sense to them. Ownership matters.
> Ask students what they're willing to do. Enlist them in the discussions of how to implement behavior change. After all, they are the ultimate stakeholders.

Teams at Work

A majority of Action for Healthy Kids Teams work directly on local wellness policies, and:

> **76%** focus on helping districts develop, implement, and monitor local wellness policies.
> **4%** have developed wellness policy guidelines and/or made recommendations for local districts.
> **82%** have conducted training workshops for key stakeholders including school administrators, educators, and parents.
> **71%** have published a toolkit, policy model, and/or how-to information.
> **92%** report that districts in their states developed local wellness policies based in part on action undertaken by Teams and on materials and support provided by Action for Healthy Kids.

Teams have engaged on the local, state, and national levels:

> **50%** have offered mini-grants to school buildings and/or districts to assist with implementation of local wellness policies.
> **90%** have implemented strategies enacted at the state level; **82%** at the district level; **59%** at the school building level.
> **84%** have had a representative who served on and/or provided input to key state advisory committees or commissions.
> **100%** have contributed resources to the Action for Healthy Kids national resource database for use by other Teams and the public.

Data above were gathered during the 2006-07 school year.

>> On monitoring...

"In order to achieve continuous quality improvement in school wellness – the next step after policy implementation – states will likely have to mandate monitoring. Without a mandate to monitor progress, my fear is that schools just won't do it." **Robert Murray**

School District in Action: Pinellas County, Florida

Take baby steps to "wean" students into wellness and get them where they need to be little by little.

Pinellas County, Florida is rapidly becoming a "poster child" for school wellness innovation. The Pinellas County Schools Food Service "Salad Program" was recognized by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Pinellas public school lunches were ranked first in the state and tied for second in the country in promoting the health of children.

Meanwhile, Pinellas County's Teen Cuisine "Quick Bites" video was honored with a Telly Award, which honors excellence in local, regional, and cable TV commercials, and non-broadcast video. The "Quick Bites" video series promotes healthy eating habits using middle school students and professional chefs in a cooking-show format.

Peggy Johns is supervisor of pre-K to 12 health education in Pinellas and a member of the Florida Action for Healthy Kids Team.

"Nutrition education is really working here," she says, "but it's because with us it's for the long haul. You just can't go in, give a couple of lessons, and boom, it's done. You have to have support and education K through 12. It takes a number of years to really establish the groundwork for healthier eating and behaviors. Gradual steps are more sustainable than looking for drastic change overnight."

That gradual approach to change is applied even in the cafeteria, Johns says.

"We didn't completely eliminate fried French fries in the high schools. What we did was say, okay, we're going to control portion size — no more than 4.5 ounces. And students can only have one serving — no more of this à la carte stuff where they buy three servings of French fries and that's their lunch.

"Same with vending machines. If we have a contract with a vendor, we're not going to eliminate all sugared sodas. We negotiate a smaller percentage, maybe 30%, of sodas. But again, we limit the serving size — it can't be over 12 ounces. No more of those 20 ounce cans and bottles. So we're taking baby steps to 'wean' students into wellness, and get them where they need to be little by little."

Dr. Clayton Wilcox, Pinellas County's superintendent of schools, says that administrators are "driven by the tyranny of the urgent." In other words, putting out fires. He maintains that, in his opinion, having a full-time staff member like Peggy Johns to focus on health and wellness issues is, for larger districts, essential.

"Administrators are driven by the tyranny of the urgent."

"If you don't have somebody whose sole or principal responsibility is wellness, I think it becomes difficult. From a superintendent's perspective, you need a champion, and you need to support that person. Doing so is really a way to make a huge wellness impact in your district."

Is Wilcox optimistic about the future of school wellness?

"Absolutely," he responds. "There's no institution that is so uniquely positioned to make an influence on the future as those of us who are charged with, and challenged to, educate kids. Education has risen to the occasion every single time it's been asked to. I don't think school wellness will be an exception."

>> On school breakfast...

"Making breakfast part of the school day would be on the top of the list of strategies I would undertake first and foremost to help school wellness. It's very, very doable to serve breakfast in the classroom; there are schools that are doing it all over the country right now. Little ones, rural ones, urban ones. We don't have to say we have to change the whole system – we can do that one thing right now and it would make a huge difference." **Madeleine Levin**

School District in Action: La Mesa, California

"There is no one-stop solution to the enormous problem of childhood obesity. Schools clearly have the ability to help kids develop positive health habits. But the city, meanwhile, has the ability to improve the built environment — for instance, by making the community more walkable. Neither side has the resources to get the job done working independently."

Yvonne Garrett, director of community services for the city of La Mesa, California, is providing a vivid example of how many solutions to tackling the school wellness issue are joint ones — in this case, a tandem effort between the city and La Mesa Spring Valley School District.

La Mesa is just one of the cities nationwide receiving support from a partnership between the American Association of School Administrators and National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The aim is for cities and school districts to partner to develop local overarching wellness plans — plans that are the deliberate product of close collaboration between senior-level staff from the municipality, the school district, and other community partners. Other cities competitively selected for this initiative include: Charleston, South Carolina; Jackson, Tennessee; Oakland, California; San Antonio, Texas; and Savannah, Georgia.

To La Mesa's Garrett, it makes all the sense in the world.

"Up to this point, our community has not looked at childhood obesity as a 'global' issue — that is, as everyone's concern. Yet it's obviously a multi-pronged problem — so bringing all the key players to the table and trying to identify mutual solutions is just an efficient use of resources."

In La Mesa, municipal leaders and school administrators alike are receiving the benefit of consultation with national experts in the areas of local wellness policies, childhood obesity, healthy eating, active living, and school health councils.

One possible action-step is the establishment of a "walking-to-school" culture in La Mesa. For their part, city officials will be looking at improving sidewalks to ensure student safety along the routes. To reciprocate, the school district is supporting the city's own wellness-encouraging efforts by opening up schools to be used as community centers to promote higher levels of physical activity across the community. It's win-win for both sides.

"What we're establishing here is truly a local partnership with a single vision of how we can share expertise and resources to tackle school wellness and city wellness as one."

"Cities can't attack the wellness problem alone," Garrett says, "but neither can schools. What we're establishing here is truly a local partnership with a single vision of how we can share expertise and resources to tackle school wellness and city wellness as one."

>> On community involvement...

"I have never seen a community that demands high expectations of a school and have that school not deliver on it. I have seen some enlightened superintendents and educators bring about excellence despite a community, but it's very hard. It's so much easier to bring about changes if the community understands and is committed to making a difference in the lives of children. It gives the superintendent a clear message, and it gives the teachers direction and excitement." **Gene Wilhoit**

The Hurdles: Remaining Challenges

Schools are wrestling with competing priorities, fiscal limitations, and the challenge of providing youth-appealing healthy foods that kids will actually eat. Meanwhile, parents remain an under-utilized, under-accessed resource, and the question persists as to whether the real change agents are yet on board.

School wellness should be "built in." The central challenge in school wellness is making it part of the school culture and the overall school environment.

Wellness advocates agree that, to effect whole change, wellness needs to be an element within any overall school improvement plan. And in the end, it is this approach that, given the link between health and learning, will help schools reach their academic goals.

It is happening in some states and some districts. But given the importance of nutrient-rich foods and daily physical activity to children's health and academic achievement, why hasn't change swept through schools throughout America? Why aren't our children healthier and more fit?

"Schools have regrettably ignored health and wellness issues in many cases," says Gene Wilhoit, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, "while at the same time putting greater emphasis on core content areas like math and science, and of course demanding accountable academic performance.

"We have to get schools to the point where they understand a child's success will not be achieved in these traditional areas without good health, and that means nutrition and physical activity. Period."

Schools face many challenges, but the consensus of the education and health authorities consulted for this report points to one important reality: schools cannot alone improve student health. Over and over, these experts emphasize that schools do not operate in isolation from their community environments.

"School is simply where we see broader community things playing out, and it is really important to keep that in mind — to act on that and not think schools are on their own," warns Julia Graham Lear of the Center for Health and Health Care in Schools.

Katherine Kaufer Christoffel, pediatrician and Action for Healthy Kids board member, concurs. "You can't create an impervious bubble within the schools," she asserts, "because they exist in communities, the children live in the communities, the teachers live in the communities... so in order to have integrated change across these different sectors, we have to be working within and across sectors."

The sentiment is echoed by Madeleine Levin of the Food Research and Action Center. "Schools can only influence the community so much," she asserts. "It takes the involvement of parents, community leaders, and government agencies — they too are a huge part of the solution."

Problem is compounded for low-income, underserved populations.

Schools in disadvantaged communities face factors that compound unhealthy environmental influences: a lack of resources and stressed families. Levin observes that in low-income neighborhoods, even if parents want to pack a healthy school lunch for their children, there often are not grocery stores nearby where they can buy fresh fruits and vegetables, whole-grain foods, low-fat dairy products, or other healthy foods.

Christoffel points to other environmental influences, too: "You can't ignore the immediate environments



We have to get schools to the point where they understand that a child's success will not be achieved without good health, and that means nutrition and physical activity.

Most parents simply don't know enough about the wellness climate and processes in their schools to take specific actions.

of the schools. There's more and more research about how many fast food restaurants there are within a hundred yards of many schools, and it's sobering."

It bears repeating. Average and low-income families are under particular stress. Madeleine Levin notes how many Americans are working longer and longer hours just to keep their income stable. This, she explains, invariably affects what happens to children before and after school. Kids are not coming to school having eaten a nutritious breakfast, a meal that research shows particularly enhances learning.

"The majority of American families," Levin observes, "just do not have schedules that allow them to all sit around the table together and eat breakfast. This is true," she says, "even where the cost of a healthy breakfast isn't a barrier — which it is for millions of poor families."

Parents and schools: mutual reinforcement is crucial. Recognizing parents' primary role in their children's health, Action for Healthy Kids' stakeholder research questions probed parents' role in encouraging healthy habits in their children.

Schools are not getting much support from parents, according to the survey respondents, among whom several hundred were parents. As noted earlier in this report (see page 32) the vast majority of respondents, including parents themselves, feel that most parents do not do a good job of encouraging their children to be physically active every day or encouraging their children to consume healthful foods and beverages.

Research respondents suggest that parents need help to support schools' efforts. Neither parents, nor school health professionals, nor community health providers feel that schools are doing enough to provide information to parents on the importance of daily physical activity or sound nutrition — even if they recognize that schools alone should not bear this responsibility.

Obviously parents in all communities, including underserved communities, care deeply about their children's health and well-being. A separate, recent Action for Healthy Kids research study* found that African American and Hispanic parents in low-income, urban settings feel that local schools and parents have a joint responsibility to influence children's eating and physical activity attitudes and behaviors.

Further, and more importantly, these parents are interested in serving as wellness advocates. The research indicates, however, that parents are looking for more information and education about school wellness. Most parents simply don't

>> On the food environment at school...

"Why should there be any unhealthy foods and beverages in schools? Surround kids with healthy foods and healthy food choices, making them easy for children to get; create an environment where the choices at school are all healthy. If you really listen to kids, there are healthy foods they like." **Madeleine Levin**

know enough about the wellness climate and processes in their schools to take specific actions.

This knowledge gap also was evident in a nationwide poll conducted by Action for Healthy Kids,** showing that parents from all areas of the country are unaware of local wellness policies. Many wrongly assume that schools are providing adequate nutrition and quality physical activity opportunities to students every day.

Schools have competing priorities and mandates. School districts must contend with multiple pressures and priorities. In fact, competition from other school priorities is ranked the top barrier to implementing school wellness by stakeholder research respondents, over 60 percent of whom termed it a "significant" hurdle.

Superintendents, in particular, have difficult jobs. They face the challenge of preparing students to perform well on standardized achievement tests mandated by No Child Left Behind legislation; fitting more and more educational content into school days of finite length; and above all, meeting ever-tighter budgets.

With district — and public — attention focused on test scores,

*Action for Healthy Kids focus group study with minority parents in low-income, urban communities, conducted with MEE Productions in 2006-2007.

**See *Parents' Views on School Wellness Policies*, at www.ActionForHealthyKids.org.

Parents in Action: Jefferson County, Kentucky

Even school districts with strong wellness programs and policies, like Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky, need parent involvement and advocacy to make them even stronger.

In 2006, Anita McLaughlin, in addition to being a registered dietitian, was the official parent representative on the committee assigned to develop the local wellness policy for the Jefferson County schools, as well as a member and former co-chair of the Kentucky Action for Healthy Kids Steering Committee. While the Kentucky legislature had recently mandated a clear and effective law that addressed the school day, it was McLaughlin's desire that the policy also be extended to after-school hours — specifically as regards snacks and beverages offered in vending machines.

"My experience," McLaughlin reports, "is that, while schools certainly care about wellness, they also desperately want the revenue they gain from vending machines that sell soft drinks and 'junk food.' That revenue can be significant, and I understand it often pays for things like sports equipment. But my contention is that wellness policies should apply to schools 24/7, not just during the school day. I just didn't want them turning on the vending machines after school, and 'undoing' all the good they did in keeping junk food and sugar drinks out during the school day. And I wanted the policy to reflect that."

When the provision that would have covered after-school hours was removed from Jefferson County's draft policy prior to its approval, McLaughlin got angry.

"I encountered resistance and pushback. But I was persistent."

Her subsequent advocacy took the form of everything from a letter-writing campaign to speaking at school board meetings at which the wellness policy was being reviewed.

"I encountered resistance and pushback," McLaughlin says. "But I was persistent. Some called me relentless and dogged. But I felt it was a very important provision, and somebody had to fight to keep it." McLaughlin's persistence paid off. The after-school vending-machine provision was restored to the final draft of Jefferson County's policy, and the policy has since been implemented. She points out that the support of other health professionals, particularly three physicians who spoke at the final school board meeting, was vital.

The lesson? Simply that schools may not always welcome parent engagement on issues of substantive change — and yet determined parents can make a difference.

"You know," McLaughlin observes, "if you have one set of standards for the school day, and then as soon as the bell rings you're selling soft drinks and candy, what kind of message does that send to kids themselves? It doesn't make sense. Somebody had to get that across."

>> On school food service hurdles...

"The fundamental structural issue we've got to deal with is how to make fruits and vegetables, whole grain products, and low-fat and fat-free dairy more economically attractive." **Howell Wechsler**

"School meal programs face many barriers to offering healthy foods. Ultimately they bear the responsibility, yet policymakers need to be realistic about the costs of providing healthy, high-quality food." **Madeleine Levin**

Incentives are not lined up so that putting wellness on the front burner makes business sense to school districts. The real master is the bottom line.

school leaders find it difficult to justify time to add, or even keep, existing activities such as health and physical education in the schedule.

With this pressure for test scores, the CDC's Howell Wechsler points out, "You can't blame [educators] for wanting to spend more time on math and science." In general, participants in Action for Healthy Kids' stakeholder research (see page 34) feel the same way: over half state that the lack of time in a school day is a significant barrier to school wellness implementation.

Small steps despite ever-present fiscal challenges. School districts need motivation to make school wellness a priority. Katherine Kaufer Christoffel warns, however, that "the incentives are not lined up so that putting wellness on the front burner makes business sense to school districts or schools... The real master is their bottom line."

But things can be done. School administrators can take relatively easy steps such as negotiating with a bottling or vending machine contractor to switch from soda to water and low-fat milk, or from salty snacks to less salty. But other types of changes that schools might need to make to promote wellness bump up against hard district realities.

Julia Graham Lear reminds us, for example, that many schools don't have the extra money for something as basic as on-site facilities for preparing fresh foods for school meal programs. And such essentials to high-quality programming as credentialed staff cost even more.

Robert Murray, of the American Academy of Pediatrics, questions whether organizations concerned with improving school wellness have done an adequate job figuring out how schools can make changes, given their financial constraints and concerns about efficiency.

"Once the superintendent and the board acknowledge the fact that school has to play a role and that steps need to be taken to help their students, it then becomes the financial officer of the district who really becomes the key player. I don't know that we've done a good job nationally of engaging financial officers," he maintains.

School food services are strained. Tight budgets have an obvious impact on school meals. School food services must be self-supporting, and in 2000 the U.S. Department of Agriculture reimbursed only 51 percent of the cost of a meal. One way school food service operations have offset this cost has been by selling popular competitive foods. As the nutrition criteria for these foods change, school food service must

>> On progress in stages...

"With school wellness, you have to pick your shots; get some wins; look for other small victories. Even if it doesn't lead to change right now, you're laying real groundwork. The big issues don't get resolved even in a decade. With tobacco, we're talking 20 years to effect real change, and with childhood obesity it will be even longer. It's hard to change the culture." **Julia Graham Lear**

sell more healthful options that often cost more and may not have as much student appeal as what is in the vending machines. Many school food service operations have become dependent on these sales in order to stay out of the red.

Further, school food service staff members need more training and often higher wages, several of our interviewees noted. This fact compounds the challenge of feeding healthy meals to thousands of children per meal with minimal budgets and limited facilities. Howell Wechsler points out that in most states there currently exist no certification requirements for school food service managers.

Impediments to nutritional quality.

There are numerous hurdles and challenges that must be addressed in order to meet goals connected to getting students to make better food choices.

School meals have evolved to use processed, prepared food items. Preparing higher quality, tasty, nutritious meals that would require more on-site production presents a need for training, higher skilled staff, and possibly new equipment.

Budgets for school food service are often inadequate for the rising costs of food and labor. A study published in the *Review of Agricultural Economics* (Wagner, et al.) documents that indirect costs paid by school food services to school districts negatively affect meal quality by decreasing funds to upgrade kitchens and train staff.

Action for Healthy Kids' focus groups with minority middle school students in urban communities* found that the largest barrier to making better food choices at schools is simply the poor quality and unappetizing nature of the options served, not their healthfulness.

As well, students and teachers have not always been receptive to many changes to improve school meals. School nutrition professionals have concerns that this will negatively affect participation rates and budgets further. And higher quality food products that are tasty and prepared and served in an appealing manner just cost more than current alternatives.

Augmenting these realities, nutrition and public health professionals** feel the biggest barriers keeping youth from consuming nutrient-rich foods are their lack of interest in doing so, since the status quo is seen as no problem. These professionals cite additional barriers: the lack of access to tasty and appealing healthful food options; the lack of support from parents; and a school environment that's generally not conducive to healthy eating.

Importantly, blame is not being placed on any group. A good deal of the challenge rests in the simple financial reality of how much funding schools receive versus the ever-rising costs of food. But there are clearly crucial barriers that affect the goal of getting students to make better food choices — and, by implication, impact the larger goal of school wellness overall.

Health: A new part of schools' mission?

It is a simple and understandable fact that not all educators see promoting students' health as part of their mission. Or their job.

"Our number one hurdle is overcoming the school's feeling that their sole mission is education — and that health is a backwater issue for most of them," claims Robert Murray. "Getting education leaders such as superintendents and principals to turn their attention from strict educational outcomes to the well-being of the whole child remains a challenge. It will be greatly facilitated by offering to help school administrators accomplish these goals."

It is Julia Graham Lear's con-

* Action for Healthy Kids' qualitative research with minority middle school students in low-income, urban communities, conducted with MEE Productions in 2006-07.
** See *Helping Youth Make Better Food Choices: Perceptions, Barriers, and Promising Approaches among Nutrition, Health, and Public Health Professionals*, available at www.ActionForHealthyKids.org.

>> On compromise...

"Sometimes health and wellness-focused people come into the school environment with a powerful and well-intentioned commitment, but with a no-compromise kind of mentality, and maybe a lack of empathy for the conditions that exist in schools. Health advocates have to keep up the strong message and interest in wellness, but they have to do it in a way that recognizes the shortfalls and the realities of schools' ability to implement." **Gene Wilhoit**

School administrators and teachers are the more powerful and influential groups, but are viewed as less supportive than others.

tention that the problem is not lack of knowledge. "I think people in the [education] field understand the issue; they just don't see a role for themselves. Teachers worry about the tests, and school boards worry about budgets," she says.

Lear notes that individuals from the health world may need to better understand the culture of education to create change. Public health professionals "have not immersed themselves in a really fine-grained understanding of what makes schools and school buildings and school districts and education policy and state operations tick," she observes.

In her view, public health works from the top down, where, when a directive is given, things happen. But — with the exception of the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, where schools are held accountable for test scores — education is different; things tend to happen from the bottom up. You can't rely on top-down directives as much as you have to build bottom-up support.

Are the real change agents on board?

Could it be that the individuals best positioned to move school wellness forward are often the least supportive of school wellness?

Participants in Action for Healthy Kids' stakeholder research give highest marks to physical education teachers and school health professionals in their support of advancing school wellness in general. Respondents judge some two-thirds of both groups as "very supportive" of school wellness. School nutrition and food service professionals come next, and are judged "very supportive" by 46 percent of respondents.

However, school administrators, school board members, and classroom teachers — arguably the more powerful and influential groups, and labeled so by research respondents — are viewed as less supportive. Only 28 percent of school administrators are ranked as "very supportive" of school wellness. Similarly, very few respondents (7 percent) rank parents as "very supportive." In fact, 16 percent of respondents view parents as not supporting the advance of school wellness at all.

A national study with school board members and superintendents, produced by California School Boards Association and California Project LEAN in 2007, shows that these school governance team members understand and support school wellness in principle. However, their support does not necessarily translate into action because of a myriad of barriers, most notably lack of adequate funding and competing priorities they must address.

The bottom line: until those individuals who are most influential are also among the most actively committed to school wellness, hurdles will remain. ✹

The Future: Within Our Reach

Needed now: clarity and consistency. For its part, Action for Healthy Kids' path is clear: a commitment to nutritional quality and physical activity in schools; a redoubled focus on underserved communities; enlisting parents as advocates; closer collaboration with school leaders; support for wellness policy implementation and evaluation; and stakeholder mobilization overall.

Schools simply cannot do it alone. If there is one theme that emerges from this report above all others, it is that to tackle school wellness, schools need broad, specific, and continuing support — from all sides, and from all constituencies.

That is, in large part, precisely why this report has sought the input of, and is addressed to, such a broad array of stakeholders. Action for Healthy Kids' next five years will be marked by close collaboration with exactly those stakeholders in a joint, committed effort to accelerate change in American schools.

That effort is fueled by the knowledge that only by positively impacting the school environment as regards better nutrition and increased physical activity will we impact students' ability to reach their potential — and afford American youth the healthy adulthoods they deserve.



Where is Action for Healthy Kids headed?

A commitment to nutritional quality and physical activity.

The natural evolution beyond the "wipe out junk food" strategy requires turning the focus toward getting kids to make more intelligent choices about the foods they do eat. In getting kids to make better food choices — especially from among the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans'* "Food Groups to Encourage," including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat and fat-free milk and milk products — Action for Healthy Kids will be:

> Engaging youth in developing approaches for improving nutritional quality in their school.

> Motivating youth to make better food choices at school by improving access to quality, healthful foods that are tasty and appealing in school meals and in all other venues.

> Utilizing social marketing strategies to promote and market all key "Food Groups to Encourage" that youth need to consume more of.

> Encouraging participation in school meal programs through the use of taste tests, special menus, improved food choices, and incentives and contests.

> Partnering with school administrators and industry to provide funding necessary for improvements.

> Engaging parents, families, communities, students, and schools in activities and events focusing on wellness at home and school.

For optimal health and wellness, children and youth must move more. Schools can help by providing systematic opportunities for physical activity and physical education.

Toward this end, Action for Healthy Kids will help schools to:

> Instill regular physical activity into the culture, attitudes, and behaviors of students, staff, families, and local communities.

> Reinforce the importance of regular, quality physical education classes for all K-12 students.

> Engage youth in motivating their peers to become, and stay, physically active.

> Optimize the hours before school begins by using the time to help

kids get a healthy start to their day with physical activity, such as walk-to-school programs and other age- and site-appropriate activities.

> Increase opportunities for children and youth to be physically active during the school day, working with school administrators, teachers, and students to add brief periods of physical activity in ways that support students' crucial academic studies.

> Raise awareness of the importance of being active after school — and provide activities and resources to help kids move more during this time of day.

Mobilizing key stakeholders.

A redoubled focus on underserved communities. Action for Healthy Kids places a high priority on supporting children in underserved communities who have been affected disproportionately by health disparities. As part of our multi-year Campaign for School Wellness, Action for Healthy Kids is working to create robust school-family-community partnerships to advocate for effective and sustainable wellness policies and practices in underserved communities and schools. Already, Action for Healthy Kids' pilot projects in Philadelphia, New York City, and Battle Creek, Michigan, involve Teams, representatives of our national Partner organizations, and grassroots community leaders who are working side-by-side with targeted schools and local organizations in creating best practice wellness interventions. This model can be expanded on, and adopted, in other communities through Action for Healthy Kids Teams.

Enlisting parents as wellness advocates. Action for Healthy Kids will continue to bring parents — especially parents in those same underserved communities — into the process to advocate on behalf of their children. When parents are informed, mobilized, and properly equipped, they can greatly influence school wellness policies and practices. *Parents Advocating for School Wellness* is a new Action for Healthy Kids resource to help motivate and assist parents to move from awareness and caring to hands-on advocacy. This toolkit of information (see sidebar on page 53) is designed to help recruit, cultivate, and train parents to connect with community partners and schools to make positive contributions to the health of students.

Closer collaboration with school leaders. Action for Healthy Kids will continue to reach out to school leaders because of their high-leverage value in bringing about change in schools. Every school leader has the ability and the responsibility to strengthen school wellness. Action for Healthy Kids will work with these administrators and educators to craft innovative, yet practical, solutions

When parents are informed, mobilized, and properly equipped, they can greatly influence school wellness policies and practices.

>> On the future...

"We've set some lofty goals for education in the future; we're not only to educate children to higher levels, but we're to educate every one of them. We have a growing number of children with great needs. Children will not reach academic standards without a strong and supportive environment around them, which includes health and nutrition programs and physical activity. We need to do everything in our power to organize our communities and to marshal all the resources of parents and school personnel to come up with creative and exciting solutions. Our children will respond to these kinds of new emphases – and I think they will surprise some of us with what they'll be able to achieve if we meet their basic needs." **Gene Wilhoit**

to enhance school wellness — while highlighting as role models the outstanding leaders who are doing it successfully.

Replicating best practices of Action for Healthy Kids Teams. In addition to — and often integrated with — the priority areas outlined above, Action for Healthy Kids Teams nationwide will continue their critical on-the-ground efforts to improve the nutrition and physical activity environment in schools, working in ways that best address the needs in their local communities and states. Action for Healthy Kids is committed to capturing and sharing these activities and innovations through the regular convening of key stakeholders for dialogue, collaboration, and replication of best practice strategies for solutions.

Support for local wellness policy monitoring and evaluation. Better systems for monitoring and tracking wellness policy implementation will enable stakeholders to more accurately assess progress with school wellness and also aid in developing targeted intervention strategies. Action for Healthy Kids is working at the grassroots level to help school administrators, staff, and wellness advocates monitor the effectiveness of their wellness policy implementation efforts. This wellness policy monitoring tool will help districts answer important questions related to the impact of their local wellness policies, including:

> What are the contents of the policy?
> To what extent is the policy being implemented?
> What could facilitate the implementation of components of the policy?
> What outcome(s) has the policy produced?

This online self-assessment tool, available in the 2008-2009 school year, helps districts look at the results that are reasonable to them given the timing of implementation and contents of their policy. They can use the tool to monitor the results of their wellness policy activities, or to keep track of their wellness policy goals moving forward.

Clarity of vision, consistency of mission. As David Satcher notes in his preface to this report, strong leadership is the key to improving school wellness. Action for Healthy Kids has learned that leadership that results in change can come from any corner — and often emerges in its most effective form from unexpected places: a committed parent, an impassioned physical education teacher, a forward-thinking superintendent with a "whole child" mindset.

One of Action for Healthy Kids' most valuable functions is igniting, uncovering, and channeling that kind of leadership — and supporting it with valuable information, tools, and insights vital to effecting change.

It is notable that, in the sea of opinions, research, and field knowledge gathered and assessed for this report, while there are countless perspectives and sometimes contradictory or conflicting findings and points of view, there is virtually no difference of opinion on the belief that school wellness is both vitally necessary and a reachable goal.

The certainty of this belief has always been a central tenet underlying Action for Healthy Kids' mission, and will remain so. ✹

There is virtually no difference of opinion on the belief that school wellness is both vitally necessary and a reachable goal.

National Resources to Promote School Wellness

For more information on the programs listed on this page, visit **www.ActionForHealthyKids.org.**



Game On! The Ultimate Wellness Challenge™

Developed by Action for Healthy Kids in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Game On! The Ultimate Wellness Challenge* is part of a continuing initiative to encourage our children and youth — and those who support them — to make better food choices and move more. *Game On! The Ultimate Wellness Challenge* draws upon existing free and low-cost resources from federal agencies and other leading organizations. The program features four challenges, each of which emphasizes healthy eating and physical activity. The challenges are spaced throughout the school year — and the Challenge Course is a special event that can be used to kick off and/or conclude the program or used midway through the year to add momentum.



Parents Advocating for School Wellness

Recognizing parents as a largely untapped force for change in school wellness, Action for Healthy Kids and MEE Productions — an organization widely regarded for its success in mobilizing parents in low-income, urban communities — have produced this toolkit to help Action for Healthy Kids Teams and other school wellness advocates unlock the enormous potential of parents as change agents, to engage them as partners in support of healthier schools for their children.



ReCharge! Energizing After-School™

In partnership with the National Football League, Action for Healthy Kids developed *ReCharge! Energizing After-School*, the first nationally distributed after-school program that fully integrates nutrition and physical activity through teamwork-based strategies for youth in grades 3-6. *ReCharge! Energizing After-School* focuses on four concepts — "Energy In" (nutrition), "Energy Out" (physical activity), Teamwork, and Goal-setting. An online *ReCharge!* resource center provides valuable technical assistance to after-school program staff and educators who implement the program.

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- American Academy of Family Physicians
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- American Association of School Administrators
- American Public Health Association
- American School Health Association
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Association of School Business Officials International
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Council of Chief State School Officers
- Food Research and Action Center
- National Association for Sport and Physical Education
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Association of State Boards of Education
- National Association of Student Councils
- National Dairy Council
- National Education Association – Health Information Network
- National Middle School Association
- National Parent Teacher Association
- National School Boards Association
- School Nutrition Association
- Society for Nutrition Education
- U.S. Department of Agriculture – Food and Nutrition Service
- U.S. Department of Education – Office of Safe and Drug-free Schools
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Partners

- Afterschool Alliance
- American Association for Health Education
- American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists
- American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences
- American Cancer Society
- American College of Sports Medicine
- American Diabetes Association
- American Dietetic Association
- American Federation of Teachers
- American Heart Association
- American Medical Student Association – Child & Adolescent Health
- Association of State & Territorial Health Officials
- Association of State & Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors
- Directors of Health Promotion and Education
- The Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
- Family, Career & Community Leaders of America
- Health Occupations Students of America
- National AfterSchool Association
- National Assembly on School-Based Health Care
- National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
- National Association of Health Education Centers
- National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
- National Association of School Nurses
- National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education
- National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity
- National Future Farmers of America Organization/Foundation
- National Medical Association
- Prevent Cancer Foundation
- The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports
- The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Society for Public Health Education
- Society of State Directors of Health, Physical Education and Recreation
- YMCA of the USA

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