



REAP Reporter

Newsletter from REAP Food Group · FALL 2018

Growing Our Farm to School Impact

REAP's work with the Summer Food Program is growing food education in Madison

For thousands of kids in Madison, the end of the school year can signify the end of regular access to nutritious meals. That's where Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) and the federal Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) come in, offering free meals to children at more than 50 schools and community sites throughout Madison.

In 2016, with funding from the Wisconsin Partnership Program, City of Madison, and Public Health Madison & Dane County, REAP set out to increase both participation in the Summer Food Service Program and the reach of our Farm to School programming. Children exposed to hands-on Farm to School education develop lifelong habits of making good food choices and consuming more fresh fruits and vegetables.

This mission was punctuated with Farm to School programming at four REAP sites (Centro Hispano and Leopold, Elver and Southdale Parks), where our summer interns passed out free lunches daily to children and accompanying adults over the summer, and led fun, educational activities centered around sustainability, agriculture and nutrition. The Farm to School Program also worked with MMSD Food and Nutrition Services to integrate locally-grown produce into summer meals, as it has done since 2014. The local fruits and vegetables increased freshness and appeal of the meals, provided a learning opportunity for students, and supported regional farmers.

Now, three years and hundreds of Summer Food Program visits later, we are beginning to see the fruits of our labor. Preliminary participation numbers for 2018 reveal many successes. During the last two years, we have witnessed a 5% increase in the number of lunches served during the program,



which translates to thousands more children in Madison receiving nutritious meals during the summertime.

Through surveys conducted with participating families, adults reported enjoying the program and its engaging activities and fresh food, and the availability of meals for the whole family made it even more appealing to show up.

One woman, who participated in the Summer Food Program at Leopold Park with her five grandchildren, said she enjoyed the activities and food, but her favorite part was seeing her grandchildren "eating oranges and salads." With a daunting family illness at this woman's home, REAP's Summer Food Program sites were a respite from having to cook at home while also giving her grandchildren a place to get engaged daily and have fun with other children.

What did the kids think? Surveys conducted at the beginning and end of the Summer Food Program indicated children who considered themselves as "disliking almost all vegetables" dropped from 45% to 29% by the end of the program.

Results like these are our driving motivation to get into the community and ensure that good food, grown well, is accessible to all.

FROM THE DIRECTOR: *Effort & the Beauty of Being 'In the Arena'*



I came across a favorite speech by President Teddy Roosevelt recently, entitled "Citizen in a Republic" and was reminded of these powerful words:

"It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit

belongs to the man who is actually in the arena...who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcoming."

To me, this speaks to the power of our community, not to just point out what isn't good but to shape the change we want to see. As a REAP member and supporter, you don't just talk about a broken food system, you get "in the arena." You build relationships with local farmers, you commit to paying the true cost of food grown well, you support organizations like REAP to make systemic change in our institutions so each and every one of our residents experiences the benefits of good food.

These words are also a reminder that nonprofits are uniquely situated to be trailblazers and innovators in making our world a better place. While we place a premium on asking if we are having an impact (and we should always hold ourselves to this), it is balanced by trying to change "business as usual" now. If we waited for perfect solutions, we'd never take a step toward better.

I think about this as I look at the work REAP and our partners have done toward improving access to good food for children

during the months when school is out. We set an ambitious goal to increase city-wide participation in the Summer Food Program, which far too many Madisonians still don't know exists. We set a goal of giving more children the opportunity to "play with their food" - to learn how it is grown and why it matters, and most importantly, how delicious fresh food can taste.

A huge effort by many partners moves the needle by a few percentage points, but that means thousands more kids are getting a meal that day, and hundreds more have just learned how good a late spring snap pea or August cherry tomato can taste. These experiences become part of these children, shaping their views forever.

This effort is worth that impact. And we are grateful for all of you who are in the arena alongside us, building a more just and sustainable food system.

Sincerely,

Helen Sarakinos, Executive Director

FARM FRESH ATLAS: MOVING THE NEEDLE ON LOCAL FOOD PURCHASES

Since 2002, REAP's Farm Fresh Atlas of Southern Wisconsin has been working to move the needle on local food purchases by giving Wisconsin consumers a comprehensive guide to local farms, farmers' markets and restaurants that source their food locally. In the 16 years since, the Farm Fresh Atlas has grown to include five regional publications throughout Wisconsin all working toward the goal of introducing Wisconsinites to local producers committed to sustainable methods and fair labor practices.

As the results of a Farm Fresh Atlas survey conducted this year show, we can enthusiastically declare our publication is doing its job well. This spring, the Survey Research Center at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls conducted a consumer survey with 162 self-selected respondents to determine their awareness of the Farm Fresh Atlas, how it has impacted their purchase decisions, and how they might use it in the future.

The results were encouraging. Nearly 80% of consumers responded said they had heard of the Farm Fresh Atlas and of those:

- Nearly 80% said they'd visited a farm in the past year
- 90% had eaten at a restaurant whose menu included locally produced food
- 97% had visited a farmers market

While more than half the respondents knew where to purchase local produce prior to viewing the Atlas, 66% said the Atlas will encourage them to buy more local products, 80% plan to buy from a new local producer, and 90% credited the Atlas for increasing their knowledge on where to buy local foods.

Best of all? "Many respondents expect to increase their purchases of locally produced food in the coming year," with a majority expecting to buy more locally produced vegetables and meat.

REAP FOOD GROUP

FARM FRESH
ATLAS™
of Southern Wisconsin 2018

YOUR FREE GUIDE TO LOCAL FARMS, FARMERS' MARKETS, & RESTAURANTS!

Sign up for the 2019 Atlas

We are now accepting producer, farmers market and business listings for the 2019 Farm Fresh Atlas.

Early bird rates are good through Nov. 15. Final deadline is Jan. 18, 2019. Sign up at reapfoodgroup.org/farm-fresh-atlas.

MEET OUR NEW PROGRAM STAFF

This fall has been a busy one here at REAP. Along with the whirlwind of onboarding a new batch of AmeriCorps Nutrition Educators, kicking off another school year of Farm to School, partnering with 27 restaurants for Farm to School Night Out and planning the Harvest Gala in November, we've also welcomed two new leaders to the REAP team. We're excited to introduce you to them!

Brianna Fiene became REAP's Farm to Business Director in September. She was born and raised near Lake Wisconsin, and has enjoyed a career that steeped her in the deepest realms of organic farms, supply-chain logistics and staple crops. She comes to REAP after three years as vice president of a boutique grain company. Prior to working in staple crops, she worked at Tipi Produce through college, spent some time at the Sauk County Farm Service Agency, and made the trek west to California to work on organic farms there. She eventually returned to Viroqua, Wisconsin, where she worked in schools, on farms and as a grain broker.

Matthew Fornoff is REAP's new Farm to School Director. He returns to the Midwest after nearly a decade in Arizona doing food system and policy work, most recently as grants program manager for the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona. Matthew is also a Peace Corps alumnus who spent two years in Malawi focused on community-based natural resources management and food systems.

We are thrilled to have our new program directors on-board. If you see them out in the community, give them a warm welcome!



Brianna Fiene



Matthew Fornoff

DREAMS FOUNDATION AWARDS \$10,000 GRANT



In a show of support for our work bringing fresh, local food to area children, American Family Insurance and its Dreams Foundation awarded REAP Food Group a \$10,000 investment grant.

REAP was one of 79 organizations across the nation to receive a grant, which recognized "programs and services that support under represented and economically disadvantaged individuals and families."

"Each nonprofit we are granting awards to is doing remarkable work improving the quality of life for individuals and families with a focus on life-long learning or filling a gap for basic needs including food, housing and transportation," said Judd Schemmel, American Family Insurance Community Investment Director, in a press release.

GIVE THE GIFT OF LOCAL THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Are you looking for holiday gifts that are delicious, local and impactful? Our annual Taste of Wisconsin holiday gift boxes are back, featuring award-winning products sourced and made right here in our beautiful state.

Choose between the Snack & Share box, a delectable mix of pickles and fruit-infused crackers, preserves and granola, or the Wisco Pantry, featuring locally-sourced pantry staples like maple syrup, honey and popcorn. Additionally, we are offering the brand new, hardcover, coffee table book *Love Wisconsin: Stories From The Place We Call Home*, a beautiful celebration of Wisconsin people and their stories.

Every dollar spent on these boxes stays in the local economy, supporting farmers and producers committed to crafting high-quality products while caring for the land, animals and people. Funds raised also support our work to make good food, grown well, accessible to all.

To purchase gift boxes, call (608) 310-7836 or visit reapfoodgroup.org/shop. Orders are due Friday, Nov. 9.



HAPPENING NOW

SUPPORT REAP WHILE YOU WORK

September kicked off Community Shares of Wisconsin's Workplace Giving campaign, allowing employees at more than 150 workplaces in Wisconsin to pledge their support for CSW's member nonprofits.

REAP is a proud member of CSW and a recipient of the workplace giving campaigns. For those who have donated to our nonprofit before, thank you! We hope you will consider pledging your support once more. In case you didn't know: 100% of your gift goes toward our work to ensure good food, grown well, is accessible to all.

To learn more, contact Community Shares at (608) 256-1066 or visit www.communityshares.com/workplace-giving.

IN THIS ISSUE...

- Growing Our Farm to School Impact
- From the Executive Director
- Moving the Needle on Local Food Purchases
- Meet Our New Program Staff
- Dreams Foundation Awards \$10,000 Grant
- Give the Gift of Local This Holiday Season
- Support REAP While You Work



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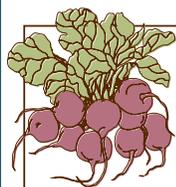
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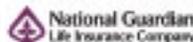
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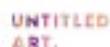
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REAP Food Group nourishes the links between land and table to grow a healthful, just, and sustainable local food system. You can support our mission by making a donation online at reapfoodgroup.org/give. Every annual donation above \$45 makes you a REAP member.