COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY news

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CFSC Hard at Work on New Federal Food Policy

By *Andy Fisher and Thomas Forster*

One year after successfully gaining the doubling of the Community Food Projects Program funding in the Farm Bill, the Community Food Security Coalition is hard at work on new farm to school and food access federal policy initiatives. With guidance by the Coalition's policy committee (co-chaired by Board members Mark Winne and Kathy Ozer), Policy Director Thomas Forster has led the effort to develop new farm to school and transportation legislation.

Concern about child obesity and disease has resulted in a groundswell of interest to improve the school lunch program, with pending legislation to restrict soft drinks and other junk foods, while increasing the availability of fruit and vegetables. The CFSC has spearheaded an initiative to gain further support for the budding farm to school movement through the Child Nutrition Act, currently under debate in Congress. Our proposal, entitled "Assistance for Farm to Cafeteria Projects" enjoys bi-partisan support. In the Senate, it has been introduced by Sen. Leahy (D-VT) as S.995 and soon will be

(See CFSC HARD AT WORK on pg. 12)

FARM TO CAFETERIA:

From Pilot Project to Movement Building and Policy Breakthroughs

By Robert Gottlieb

Five years ago, *Community Food Security News* devoted an issue to a new type of approach called "farm-to-school" that several communities and schools had begun to explore. Farm to school was already a catch-all phrase that included a range of programs such as the Santa Monica school district's farmers' market salad bar, individual item purchases from local farmers in places like New York, and school garden programs at a number of different school sites. Although enthusiasm among advocates was high, most programs were quite tentative and generally considered "pilots" rather than continuing programs. Funding was unclear, resistance among institutional buyers such as food service directors was rather widespread, and policies were basically non-existent. The articles in the Fall 1998 issue seemed to be describing a series of new experiments that had just been launched rather than significant institutional changes or broad movement-building activities.

This past May I was on a panel with Rodney Taylor (former Food Service Director in Santa Monica and currently head of the Riverside, California food service program). We were given the task of describing the history of the Santa Monica program and what had subsequently emerged nationally in the six years since the Santa Monica program had been established. Rodney and I decided to recreate the assumptions each of us had about the other in 1997 as we discussed if and whether this farm to school program could be established. My two kids were in the Santa Monica schools at the time and Rodney had recently been hired by the District from his previous position at Marriott. "This guy (Bob) is undoubtedly some upper middle class white parent trying to foist another hare-brained scheme on us," Rodney recalled his thoughts at the time. "This guy thinks like a Marriott type," I recalled my own thinking, sure that we would have to work around him in order to get anything through the school food service bureaucratic culture.

How wrong we both were. I was a parent, but I was also part of a Center (now the Center for Food and Justice) and part of the community food security movement. We both cared passionately about what the kids ate at school and also about how to begin to change a system of sourcing and the kinds of food purchases made by schools. Rodney was a former Marriott employee and a cautious food service director focused on the bottom line. But Rodney also cared deeply about doing the right thing for the kids while knowing that he had to justify any change in purchasing to his supervisors regarding cost and perhaps even more

(See FARM TO CAFETERIA on page 13)

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Spring 2003

CFS News is a quarterly publication of the Community Food Security Coalition. The CFS Coalition's mission is to promote comprehensive systems-oriented solutions to the nation's food and farming problems. It conducts policy advocacy; provides technical assistance to organizations implementing food security related programs; organizes regional coalitions; maintains a clearinghouse and database; conducts research and publishes reports; and educates the public and professionals through the media, conferences, and newsletters.

Community food security (CFS) is defined as "all persons obtaining at all times a culturally acceptable nutritionally adequate diet through local non-emergency sources." A CFS approach emphasizes the need to build community institutions to ensure access and availability for community residents. Thus, food security must be seen as a question of community development and empowerment which complements and extends the traditional view of addressing hunger issues at the individual level.

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OHIO UNIVERSITY FARM-TO-COLLEGE PROGRAM

Green, yellow, and red peppers. Fresh fruit. Crisp lettuce and colorful squash. These are just a handful of the products bought from local farmers and used in the campus dining halls. And, after only two years of participating in the Farm-to-College program, Ohio University has deemed it a resounding success. "The program is extremely successful and we are just scratching the surface of a strong national trend," Randy Shelton, Director of Housing and Food Service, says. Randy has already given six national presentations on the program and is currently working with two other groups in the state to start their own programs.

Randy is a member of the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC), and has been an avid promoter of programs like the one used by Ohio University that uses local agricultural products and foods in schools. This program not only provides nutritious and fresh food products to students but also supports local farms and economy. When the program was first implemented at Ohio University, only two farmers were involved. Now six farmers are participating in the program and others are currently in discussion. Last year, over $300,000 was spent on farm products. This is far more than ever expected in only two years. Randy says when the program was first applied, the general thought was "if in four years we had three or four farmers, it would be a success." But Randy was surprised at the momentum the program gained and "it has just spread like wildfire." Ohio University purchases a wide variety of products such as tomatoes, corn, honey, pork and some dairy items from local farmers. They also buy products from local food manufacturers. Ohio University is currently working to buy even more goods with the Appalachian Center for Economic Development (ACENET), an organization that works with marketers to develop, label, and sell their product.

So, why is Farm-to-College and other programs so successful? Randy attributes much of the success to the desire to eat nutritiously. "There is a huge national movement for healthier, organic food. These programs meet and fill these needs," Randy says. Also, Athens has helped the program to flourish-"we are in a progressive area with lots of local farmers and lots of availability," Randy adds. All of these factors work together to create a program that not only benefits the students but also creates a market for the family farm and local manufacturers.

Randy Shelton is the Food Service Director at Ohio University, a strong supporter of the Coalition, and an active member of the North American College and University Food Service organization.

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Training and Technical Assistance Program Updates

In partnership with World Hunger Year (WHY), the Coalition is working on a national, web-based information clearinghouse on CFS issues and practices. Expected to go live late this summer, the clearinghouse will provide 'one-stop shopping' for case studies, action ideas, resources, and other information on a range of topics.

Early this year, CFSC conducted extensive publicity to highlight new funding opportunities in the 2003 Community Food Projects (CFP) grant cycle. The 140 proposals submitted this year represented a major increase from last year's total of 100. The Coalition also offered two popular, free services for prospective CFP applicants for the third year in a row: an updated CFP Project Planning Guide that highlighted changes in the grant program, and a 'hotline' that provided individualized assistance to 60 applicants.

Coalition staff and trainers continued to lead workshops around the country, on topics that included local food systems, community food assessment, and farm to school. CFSC staff are currently compiling a Trainer Toolkit with a variety of handouts and overheads. Contact: Kai Siedenburg at *kai@foodsecurity.org*. 831-429-8202

Evaluation Program

CFSC's Evaluation Program hosted a highly successful eVALUation workshop in New Orleans in January, with 51 participants from 32 Community Food Projects (CFP) grantees. A second workshop will be held following the CFSC annual conference in November.

We completed phase one of the CFSC eVALUation Handbook for CFP grantees, and are continuing work on additional chapters, as well as the CFSC eVALUation Toolkit that will include surveys and other evaluation tools developed specifically for CFP projects. This Toolkit is the first phase of a larger project and will focus on farmer's markets, community supported agriculture projects, and community gardens. Both the Handbook and the Toolkit will be available in some form to other organizations once they are complete.

CFSC also worked with our evaluation consultant team to begin a liaison program that is providing individualized assistance on program evaluation to CFP grantees. Contact: Jeanette Abi-Nader at *jeanette@foodsecurity.org*, 985-892-7501

Community Food Assessments in California

The Community Food Assessment in California Project is in its second year of promoting food assessments as important tools that low-income communities can use to work toward food security. We continue to carry out workshops, and to provide support to organizations that are currently conducting or are interested in doing assessments. A new focus of the project is to develop policy connections between assessments, community-based food security efforts, and state policy advocacy efforts. As part of this effort the Coalition will be hosting a statewide meeting to help identify ways that assessment activities can be coordinated as well as best practices and innovative approaches. To learn more information about the Community Food Assessments in California project contact Tori Kjer at 310-822-5410 or *tori@foodsecurity.org*.

Checklist of Healthy School Food Policies Available

Throughout the country people are working to make schools healthier places to learn. They are getting fresh, tasty, locally-sourced food into school cafeterias and junk food out.

The Occidental College Center for Food and Justice (CFJ) has produced a Checklist of some of the most innovative Healthy School Food Policies that have been adopted or proposed at the local and state level. The Checklist contains around 50 policy options, including sample legislative language and sources.

The Checklist can be downloaded at: *http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/schoolfoodschecklist.htm*

If you cannot access the internet, or prefer a paper copy, contact Marion Kalb at 530-756-8518 x 32. Finally, the Checklist is an evolving document. CFJ wants to include the latest and best ideas in a new version to be released later this year. If you are working on a healthy school food policy in your district or state, contact Mark Vallianatos at *mvalli@oxy.edu* or by phone at 323-259-1458.

Profiles in Leadership

By Mark Winne

This is the second in a new series of articles by Mark Winne for the CFSC Newsletter called Profiles in Leadership. The series will examine the critical role that individuals play in building community food security and healthy local food systems. Mark is the Executive Director of the Hartford Food System in Hartford, CT and is a Food and Society Policy Fellow. He welcomes your comments and ideas and can be reached at mwinne@hartfordfood.org.

Joanne Neft, Director Placer County Agricultural Marketing Program

Joanne Neft—Placer County's Own

When someone once said that all the best minds of our generation were creating ad campaigns for toothpaste, they probably hadn't met Joanne Neft. Tireless promoter, endless creator, and imagineer extraordinaire, Joanne, 66, has dedicated the better part of these past 15 years to marketing all that is lovely, lush, and local about Placer County, California. She has developed several farmers' markets, made *Placer-Grown* a household name, and literally elevated local agriculture to an art form.

Placer County was settled by the original gold-digging 49ers, most of who soon discovered that the land's rich soil would bear more fruit than nuggets. Farming, and later the maintenance of the County's rural character, turned out to be a wise long-term investment strategy as it now churns out over $70 million a year in agricultural products. But like all places bucolic and beautiful, Placer soon became the apple of everyone's eye. A 1960s population of 70,000 ballooned to 260,000 by the end of the century. And with the ill wind of sprawl blowing menacingly from the West, Placer County government began to take steps to protect their heritage before it soon went the way of the Gold Rush.

Taking advantage of both its agricultural economy and population growth, the County's Board of Supervisors decided to start a farmers' market in 1989. That was a good decision that was followed by an even better one: they hired Joanne Neft to do it. She organized the first market that year in the town of Loomis, which was joined within four years by six more markets that Joanne organized across the County. When she left in 1993, 10,000 people a week were shopping these markets and a total of 140 growers were selling their goods.

For Joanne organizing markets was not just a job (she took an 80% pay cut to do this), but a way "to do something that brings me the most pleasure." In fact it may be the pleasure principle, formed from childhood experiences, that motivates Joanne to be the advocate for locally produced food that she is. Born in a little Minnesota farming town and raised in an 1864 homestead built by her great, great grandfather, she proudly tells you that her grandfather was one of the founders of the St. Paul Farmers' Market. As early as 6 or 7 years of age, Joanne was "schlepping bushel baskets" of produce from her parent's stall to waiting customers. Later in life Joanne moved to Southern California where she fell in love with the Santa Barbara Farmers' Market. Her pursuit of pleasure again drove her, as she would spend an entire day basking in the Market's ambience, smells, and visual delights.

Joanne's intuition and an inbred tenacity fuel a fiery imagination that inspires her search for uncommon connections. These ingredients told her that farmers needed help marketing their goods and the County needed help marketing itself. She knew from her father and a myriad number of other farmers she'd encountered that they are growers first and marketers second. She also knew that if the sights and sounds of agriculture gave her pleasure and stirred her senses, then chances are they would do the same for others. But it wasn't enough for Joanne to simply sell persimmons better than anyone else; the act of exchanging money for farm goods had to be tied to something bigger, better, and perhaps as important as the survival of Placer County. Raising up the virtues and values of local agriculture meant building on the County's assets of beauty, character, and agriculture, because as Joanne says, "I don't want Placer to look like San Jose or Orange County."

So from the markets grew the *Placer Grown* marketing campaign that married the best of Placer County's heritage to the delights of its agricultural tradition. Joanne went on to create the *Mountain Mandarin Festival*, a celebration of one of the County's (and the country's) most divine fruits, the mandarin orange. Started in Newcastle, the festival attracted 2,000 attendees the first year and expects to draw 40,000 this year. More importantly for agriculture, the number of mandarin orchards in the County grew from 8 to 47, a growth that was supported by grower training workshops as much as by the major promotional campaign.

Like many people, Joanne dreams a lot. But unlike many people, she respects her dreams enough to put them into action. One night she had a dream where she saw people shaping sculptures from fruits and vegetables. The very next day she started looking for art students who would turn her nocturnal images into living art forms.

Out of this experience the Placer County *AGROart Festival* was born which is for Joanne the penultimate

(See PROFILES IN LEADERSHIP on page 5)

PROFILES IN LEADERSHIP *(cont. from pg. 4)*

expression of beauty. Working in a variety of mediums, talented local artists transform all the richness, forms, and colors of food into an array of exciting images ranging from the classical to the whimsical.

As Joanne's story suggests, community food leadership is not just about developing a few local projects. It's about building from one small thing to another and looking for unusual connections along the way. One success, no matter how modest, can lead to another that is a little bit bigger. By connecting farmers to artists to tourists to planners and so on you add layer upon layer of constituents for a local food system. The vision for all this may not be clear from the outset, but emerges over time. It may remain blurry, and you may not be at all certain how to realize it, but if you keep faith with your ideals and listen to your inner voice as Joanne has, the vision gradually comes into focus.

The process of developing and linking multiple food projects, as successful as it might become over time, will not by itself, however, transform the larger food system unless there is a distinct connection to government policy. In other words, elected and appointed officials, laws and budgets, and the governance structures that make the rules by which the game is played should be aligned with the goal of supporting a local food system. Joanne recognizes the critical role that policy plays in supporting the development of Placer's food system, which is why her ever so modest annual budget of $68,000 comes from county government. While that has helped her sell a whole lot of mandarins, she knew it wasn't enough to change the rules for the growers and those who wanted to protect and enhance Placer's underlying asset, namely farmland.

With yet another dream in mind she chaired the Citizens' Advisory Committee of the Placer Legacy Initiative, a ballot referendum that asked first if the voter supported the preservation of the County's farmland and, second, would they approve a one-quarter of one percent tax to pay for farmland preservation. The first item won by a landslide, however, the second item lost. Joanne had worked tirelessly for these measures for months and after their defeat, she collapsed for two weeks. But with a little coaxing from her husband, she shook it off and got back in the game. She'll try again, no doubt, since one loss will not staunch Joanne's flow of dreams or dampen her entrepreneurial spirit. "No matter what I do," Joanne says, "I can't make my brain stop…and if we don't get involved with our local food system we're going to have to be satisfied with food from Mexico and Argentina."

Joanne now has several new projects on her plate and, with a steady supply of dreams in the pipeline, the transformation of Placer County's food system is well underway.

Food Politics:

How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health.

By Marion Nestle
(2002, University of California Press, Berkeley and LA, Hardcover: $20.96).
Reviewed by Kami Pothukuchi, Ph.D., Wayne State University.

In our food-abundant context, obesity and chronic diseases associated with poor diets are becoming increasingly prevalent. By and large, Americans need to consume fewer calories, and more in the form of grains, vegetables, and fruits and less of meat, dairy, eggs, and processed foods. This historically unprecedented "eat-less" nutrition advice is unpopular with food companies that want to sell us more of their products. And they are not taking it lying down. Not by a long shot. This, in a nutshell, is the message of Marion Nestle's book, "Food Politics."

It should come as no surprise that the food industry is in the business of selling food. Marketing imperatives predictably drive its activities. The public has to be persuaded to buy more fast food, soda, candy, and other processed food. To do so, industry needs to create: taste (sweet, energy-dense, and salty foods are more attractive); low cost (food companies send back an average of only 20% of the retail cost to producers); convenience (making eating faster and emphasizing nutrients rather than overall eating patterns); and public confusion (simple advice such as "eat fewer calories and more plant-based foods" is antithetical to selling more fast food and other products). Unfortunately, as Nestle documents, marketing imperatives dominate the environment in which people make food choices. These imperatives are also in significant conflict with public health concerns.

But we expect more from our government. We expect it to place our health front and center when it designs nutrition guidelines, regulates food products for their safety and effectiveness, and monitors the claims that companies make to sell us more products. Further, we expect professional nutritionists, dieticians, and their organizations to give us the straight talk on what foods should be consumed in greater or lesser quantities for good health. Finally, we expect our schools to take their social mission seriously by teaching kids about health, offering foods conducive to good health, and imparting critical skills that will help kids separate their future roles as consumers and as citizens.

(See FOOD POLITICS on page 14)

Farm To School Update

The USDA Connection

While USDA was active in helping to develop farm to school programs during the Clinton Administration, initial contact with the Bush administration indicated that this support was no longer available. However, in fall 2002, USDA provided a small amount of financial assistance for the National Farm to School Conference, and two representatives were in attendance—Debra Tropp from the Agricultural Marketing Service and Todd Barrett from the Food and Nutrition Services. Both have been helpful and have referred farm to school inquiries to the Coalition.

Most recently, Coalition members met with Undersecretary Eric Bost, and during this meeting he made a commitment to visit the Santa Monica Farmers' Market Salad Bar. He fulfilled that commitment in early April, when

Salad Bar at Santa Monica High School

we had the opportunity to meet with him in Santa Monica. The Undersecretary was able to interact with a school tour group at the farmers' market and then observe the children selecting fresh fruits and vegetables at the Farmers' Market Salad Bar.

While Bost was in Santa Monica we talked about ways that USDA might support farm to school efforts. He was happy to commit the Department to sponsoring farm to school workshops around the country. He was also enthusiastic about incorporating local purchasing into the expansion and/or extension of the free fruit and vegetable pilot program in the Midwest, sponsored by Senator Harkin. We also have a point person within the Department assigned to farm to school program work. This is Todd Barrett, in the Child Nutrition Services Division, who works for Stanley Garnett, the Division Chief.

Santa Monica Salad Bar

Legislative Work

Farm to school won a major victory with the 2002 Farm Bill. One of the first questions asked by school food service is if they are allowed to buy directly from farmers. The new Farm Bill language states that the USDA should encourage schools to incorporate local purchasing if practicable. USDA sent out a memo to food service directors around the country informing them of this option.

The Coalition is presently working on a proposal for the Child Nutrition Reauthorization that would create a grant program for schools or non-profit organizations. Recipients would receive up to $100,000 over 3 years to purchase equipment, develop procurement systems, connect with farmers, create menus around seasonal products, and develop experiential agriculture education programs. It is based on the same structure as the Community Food Projects grant program. Given the scarcity of dollars, we've been pleasantly surprised at the enthusiastic response the proposal has received, from both Republicans and Democrats. We expect the bill to be introduced by Senator Leahy a week or two after the Easter recess.

Media

Farm to School has been featured in numerous stories in both print and broadcast news. The two national pieces that have received attention are an article that made the front page of the New York Times, and a short segment on CBS national news covering the Santa Monica Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program.

First Ever National Farm to School Conference

Held in conjunction with the CFSC Annual Conference this was an unqualified success. Over 270 people attended in Seattle—farmers, school food service staff, community activists, environmentalists, and academics. The program content focused on the varied methods used to start farm to school projects. By concentrating on specific organizing techniques, with first hand accounts of lessons learned, we are confident that folks left with useful information—and this fact was evident in our evaluations.

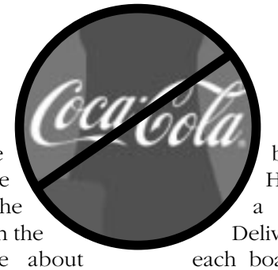
Transitions....

Many of you knew, Peggy Adams who worked with the National Farm to School Program at Occidental College. She died of brain cancer last September, and she is sorely missed.

Peggy's position was filled by Mark Wall, who worked together with Marion Kalb at the Southland Farmers' Market Association. Mark and Marion were both Executive Directors—Mark was a founding Director—and they also co-directed at times, working together for over 15 years. Both Marion and Mark are enthusiastic about working together as a team in the farm to school world.

(See FARM TO SCHOOL UPDATE on page 9)

Banned in L.A.



On August 27, 2002, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the second largest school district in the nation, unanimously passed a motion banning soda sales in every school throughout the district by January 2004. This victory has had national implications. Following LA's lead, parents, teachers and other healthy food activists across the country are developing similar resolutions in their school districts. In fact, the most frequently asked question to organizers of the campaign has been "how can I make this happen where I live?" For members of the Healthy School Food Coalition the answer is simple—organize!

LAUSD serves around 670,000 meals a day to students. Despite its size, LAUSD is not unlike other school districts. Although federal school meal programs meet the required nutritional guidelines set by the USDA, they are often prepared and presented in unappetizing ways. On most school campuses, especially in high schools, meals served often find their way into the trash. Student participation rates in the federally funded meal programs are so low that the LAUSD has begun to incorporate fast food branded items into the national school lunch program as a way to lure kids back into the cafeteria.

Frustrated with the poor quality of food served and widespread availability of junk food on campuses, parents and teachers began to organize. Established in 2001, the Healthy School Food Coalition is a grassroots working group of parents, teachers, students, and community and food advocates working to develop comprehensive food and nutrition policy in LAUSD. Many of the Coalition members live and attend schools in predominately African-American and Latino neighborhoods where access to fresh, healthy affordable food is limited. The motivation for many of the parents and students to join the HSFC is to learn more about healthy eating and good nutrition, and see their work with the Coalition as a way to work with others to improve the nutritional environment in their schools and communities.

At the time the soda motion was introduced, members of the HSFC had been organizing for well over a year. Nutrition education is a key component of the organizing strategy. The HSFC sponsored nutritional workshops for parents and students, including one about the effects and over consumption of junk food and high sugar, calorie-filled beverages. Advocacy trainings were organized to begin member preparation for future meetings with school board members and other LAUSD officials. HSFC organizers also introduced members to other food advocacy and community groups working on the similar food justice issues, including the Center for Food and Justice, California Food Policy Advocates, Los Angeles Project Lean, and the Center for Public Health Advocacy. Members soon realized they were not alone and later collaborated with these organizations during the soda campaign. In a little over a year, through intensive outreach and mobilization through individual visits, workshops and trainings, the HSFC became a unified group of over 50 parents, teachers and students ready to fight the LAUSD bureaucracy.

From the outset, HSFC members committed to an aggressive member-driven campaign. Members participated in various delegations to board members and their legislative deputies, and initiated an intensive letter writing, e-mail and phone campaign. Their most creative tactic came a week before the vote when HSFC members organized a "Board Member Gift Delivery". Members delivered each board member a full-sized 16-ounce mason jar of sugar representing the amount a teenager consumes in a week by drinking two sodas a day. This visual image strongly conveyed to the board the serious health risks faced by LAUSD students, and that this vote represented the first real opportunity to address the growing health crisis faced by youth in LA City schools.

No one directly involved in the campaign thought the LAUSD school board would vote unanimously in favor of the soda ban. The HSFC was part of a bigger coalition of healthy food, environmental and health advocates whose strategic input and direct advocacy had a profound impact on how the board chose to vote. In the process, the HSFC solidified their leadership base and established themselves as a true organizing presence. The significance of the victory cannot be understated–community organizing pushed the issue of children's health and school food and nutrition policy to be one of the District's top priorities. School food reform starts with parents, teachers and students. The grassroots organizing and coalition building that took place in Los Angeles can and will in districts across the country. This victory marks only the beginning of more to come. A movement has begun!

Francesca de la Rosa
Campaign Director
Center for Food and Justice
Steering Member,
Healthy School Food Coalition

Connecticut Comes First:

A Food Purchasing Program of the Connecticut Department of Corrections

The Connecticut Food Policy Council has encouraged state agencies to increase their purchasing of Connecticut agricultural products. Up until early 2002, this encouragement had resulted in the University of Connecticut changing its bid procedures to give wholesale produce vendors greater incentive to supply the University with Connecticut-grown products. But in May 2002, the Connecticut Commissioner of Corrections, John J. Armstrong, issued a press release "pledging that 'Connecticut Comes First' when fresh vegetables and produce are purchased by the agency [and that] the Department is changing its institutional menu to correspond with the local growing season." The press release went on to say "the DOC proudly looks forward to supporting the many family farms in our state and procuring their quality products."

While the DOC was not a member of the Food Policy Council, the Conn. Depts. of Agriculture and Administrative Services were. These two agencies, encouraged by their participation on the Council, played an important part in facilitating the development of DOC's "Connecticut Comes First" program. Agiculture helped the DOC find appropriate medium and large wholesale oriented farms, and Administrative Services facilitated the administration of purchasing procedures that regulate all state institution buying.

The DOC may be the single largest buyer of food in Connecticut. It operates 18 correctional facilities that house 21,000 inmates who eat three meals a day, 365 days per year. DOC's annual food purchasing budget alone is $3.5 million. All of the food for the prison system is prepared at one site, the York Correctional Facility in Niantic, which ships daily, to the other 17 locations. The facility's large institutional kitchen, that uses a "cook/chill" method of food preparation makes this possible. Briefly, the system uses all fresh ingredients that are cut, skinned, sliced and diced on site, and then mixed according to recipes, cooked, placed in plastic bags, and chilled. All the meal components are assembled on pallets for shipment the next day. The labor is provided by 76 inmates (all female) who are paid between 75 cents and $1.75 per day for a 7 to 8 hour day (I was told by DOC food service staff that inmates consider these to be very desirable jobs).

Robert Franks, the Director of Nutritional Services for DOC, is a 31-year veteran of prison food service. He's proud of the "Connecticut Comes First" program and likes to tell stories of tromping through the state's farm fields to learn more about farming methods. "If it's grown in Connecticut," he says, "and the cost is close (to that of non-Connecticut grown), we'll buy it first". According to farmers, "close" means that Connecticut farmers generally received a premium that was between 5% and 10% above the wholesale market.

DOC began buying Connecticut-grown in July 2002 and, with the exception of apples, completed the first season in November. A total of 20 farmers participated during the first season. One of the larger farmers was Henry Botticello whose 350 acres vegetable farm includes some of the Connecticut River Valley's best bottomland. Botticello sold the state sweet corn, peppers, eggplant, and summer squash. While the sales to DOC represented only about 5% of his wholesale business, Botticello said "we were very happy with the way this worked out for us and we're looking forward to next year." He hopes to add tomatoes and cucumbers to his DOC sales list in 2003.

Richard Gotta of Gotta Farm in Portland is another participating farmer. In 2002 he sold over 2,000 bags of corn to DOC, which constituted about 10% of his 2002 sweet corn crop. What he particularly liked about the program is that the state stuck to the agreed upon price right through the season. This price reliability contrasted significantly with the treatment farmers frequently receives from major chain supermarkets during the peak sweet corn growing month of August. According to Gotta, the price he's paid for corn by his chain store buyers drops 25% at that time of year because there's a glut on the market.

In addition to helping the farmers sell their surplus at a fair price during the peak harvest season, the DOC program was willing to buy slightly lower grades on some crops. David Henry operates the 318-acre Blue Hills Orchard in Wallingford which sells apples, peaches, and pears internationally. While he's sold several thousand bushels to DOC, it was still

(See CONNECTICUT COMES FIRST on page 9)

Farm to College in Pennsylvania

Sitting down to write this article, I had to let out a chuckle. Funny how a year and a half ago I thought this "little local foods project" would be thriving on it's own in no time! Despite unwavering support from the Slippery Rock University campus community, and a clear commitment from food service provider ARAMARK to attempt to purchase a minimum percentage of food consumed on campus from local farmers, we are still very much in the "fledgling phase" of the Slippery Rock University Local Food Project.

As the "principal instigator," my role in fall 2001 and spring 2002 was to do some legwork before proposing a local food project. Once our food service director, Debra Pincek, was convinced of the significance and feasibility of working with local farmers, Jerry Mullen of ARAMARK quickly jumped on board. Spring semester was a busy time locating farmers, designing a summer trial run, generating campus and public interest, and securing funding for a summer internship from PASA (Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture).

Summer 2002 marked the beginning of relationship building between ARAMARK and farmers in the newly formed cooperative PLOW (Pennsylvania Local and Organic Works). Typical salad bar items, such as lettuce and fresh strawberries, were featured in the University faculty-dining hall as we sometimes quite literally worked out the bugs of this pilot project. Ultimately, the trial was successful: the cooperative delivered a product of superior quality in a timely way at a fair price, and faculty members responded positively to the University's efforts to support the local economy through local purchasing. Supporting local farmers continues to be our main objective, regardless of whether they farm organically or not.

This winter, Slippery Rock and ARAMARK co-hosted a dinner that allowed farmers and food service directors from other institutions to talk candidly about working together. Slippery Rock invited other institutions to collaborate with them to build buying power, which may give farmers more incentive to organize to serve a growing market. During the course of discussion, farmers expressed concern about getting a fair price for their product, food service directors worried about sufficient supplies, and ARAMARK representatives emphasized the importance of safe, quality food. Some very promising connections were made that night, and now others will be looking to Slippery Rock for future direction.

Whether it's the light at the end of the tunnel, or just another train coming, I'm in my final semester of graduate school. My Masters is in Sustainable Systems, so I'm trained to ask what initiates and sustains reform. Having invested so much of myself in this local food project, it is startling to realize that I must be proactive about transferring responsibility to people who will see the project through after I graduate. This is, perhaps, the greatest challenge of the project thus far.

Students may wonder whether they can offer much help in establishing a local food project at their school. I believe ANYTHING that one does to make the project tangible and realistic, whether it is mailing out letters, organizing a local food lunch, or calling farmers one by one, demonstrates commitment to the project and lessens the workload for decision makers. I feel the success of this project, and other initiatives across the country, hinges on motivated individuals having a realistic long-term vision and a willingness to take steps to get there.

Heather House. Heather has just started with the PA Sustainable Agriculture Association to manage their state farm to college program, and can be reached at: hhhjapan@hotmail.com

CONNECTICUT COMES FIRST (cont. from pg. 8)

less than 5% of his total 2002 sales. But their willingness to take US #1 grade rather than the Fancy grade preferred by retailers was a real plus for Henry. The quality and taste is not less, but sizing, uniformity and cosmetics standards are slightly lower.

The Corrections Food Service felt the program was a tremendous success and plan to expand its size and diversity in 2003. According to prison officials, the program was also well received by the inmates whose participation in meals increased significantly when Connecticut produce was served, especially corn-on-the-cob. Food Services Director Franks summed it up this way, "Everything was fresh and good. What we can do in this small state is unbelievable, especially if we look for it."

Mark Winne, Hartford Food System, mwinne@hartfordfood.org

FARM TO SCHOOL UPDATE (cont. from pg. 6)

Please do let us know if you would like further information on the CFSC's National Farm to School Program.

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EXCERPTS FROM

Nutrition—Body and Soul

Remarks prepared for presentation at the opening of the First Ever National Conference Farm to Cafeteria: Healthy Farms, Healthy Students, Seattle, October 4, 2002

By Elizabeth Simpson and Henning Sehmsdorf

Elizabeth and I are both farmers and teachers and as such have an insider's perspective and strong personal views on the topic of this conference, which relates farm health to the health of students. We are therefore glad to have the opportunity to say a few words at the start of this opening session.

Elizabeth:

You may have come across the school lunch report card recently issued by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, according to which three out of ten of the nation's largest school districts flunked lunch. Two were awarded the grade of D, three a C, one a B, and none earned an A for excellence. As Kelly Brownell, director of Yale University's Center for Eating and Weight Disorders put it, "Our public schools look more and more like a Seven-Eleven with books." (Newsweek, September 16, 2002).

I tell my students that their brains work every day only on the power of foods they have eaten that day. You have to wonder what poetry, what mathematical formulas, what dreams are engendered by a Diet Pepsi, which is what some of them have had for breakfast, with little chance of improving their brain food by eating lunch at the school.

Rates of juvenile diabetes, obesity, heart disease, cancer, and various learning disabilities are climbing steeply. The cost to the health care system, and the cost to our future, as

Santa Monica School Garden

we raise young people whose contribution to society will be seriously undermined by health problems that will pursue them into adulthood, is frightening. In numerous press articles, we hear that Americans eat too much and exercise too little. What we don't hear about is the low quality of the food available in the supermarkets, restaurants, wholesale suppliers, and school cafeterias. Foods sold to the general public are, on the whole, nutritionally deficient, poisoned with high nitrate levels, herbicides and pesticides, and they travel, on average, 1400 miles from field to plate. Large-scale food processing threatens public health with BSE, salmonella, and e-coli. At least 2000 Americans die of food poisoning each year.

The cost of poor quality food is not only poor physical health but also intellectual, emotional and spiritual starvation. Foods supplied from the global food system foster impersonality, ignorance, and numbness to social responsibility.

I tell my students to count the social cost of the foods they eat. I tell them that, as they drive through the Skagit Valley, to look at the farm workers picking cucumbers. To think about the pitiful wages these people earn, and the fact that they, and their children, ingest toxins from those fields every day—through their lungs, their bellies, and their skin.

Foods supplied from local sources foster intimacy, knowledge, and a sense of social responsibility. My students come to our farm as interns, as hired help, as members of the agricultural science class that Henning teaches. Some of their families buy meat, vegetables, and milk from us. My students may transplant the seedlings that, just a few weeks later, become the salad on their plates. They buck the hay that feeds the cows and sheep through the winter. They can smell how sweet it is, and know that their labor will keep these animals well fed. They pet the milk cow, feed her apples from our orchard, and drink the milk she makes, which is poured into their glasses only a few hours after the morning milking. They pick up our chickens, and gather their eggs, and know that these birds were not kept in dark cages, force-fed antibiotics and arsenic.

Many of our graduates have gone into service in Africa and Asia and Latin America, to save threatened environments and people who are in desperate need. I am moved by their selflessness, but I am also sad that we did not teach them about the need at home. We need to teach them that saving the world begins with their own communities. As Terry Tempest Williams says, "The most revolutionary thing you can do these days is to stay home."

(See NUTRITION—BODY AND SOUL on page 11)

Apple Tasting

Henning:

When you think about the issue honestly and deeply, school lunch programs supplied from ecologically and socially responsible, local farms are not a luxury, but a necessity.

What are the impediments to implementing a farm-to-school stream of nutritionally wholesome, flavorful, fresh foods that have been produced in a manner that is fair to farmers and farm laborers, builds community food security, protects our groundwater from depletion or being poisoned with toxins, and preserves the forests upon which the climate system of the whole world depends?

The first impediment is ignorance. Most people in the U.S., including state politicians, school board members, administrators, teachers, parents, and students, have been indoctrinated by advertisers and other opinion makers to prioritize price, convenience, and choice, over quality, nutrition, freshness, seasonality, and social responsibility. The American public believes that food must not cost more than 15% of their budget. They shake their heads over the demise of small family farms, but they don't realize that how they spend their food dollars shapes agriculture in this country and around the world. In Sweden, by contrast, people generally expect to spend 30% of their budgets on food, and are much more aware of the health and environmental effects of a superior diet than we are.

Another impediment to healthy foods in school cafeterias is government policy and regulation, which discourage schools from contracting with local farmers who can provide a superior product that has been grown in an environmentally sound and socially responsible manner at an appropriate price. What is the food purchaser to do when government regulation tells her that she must choose on the basis of price only, and cannot consider quality? It compromises her first responsibility, which is to serve the students.

Heavy Tomato

Fifty years ago, this country still largely fed itself on the produce of small farms, which was marketed locally. The change from family farms to agribusinesses happened after the Second World War. The organic food movement which was, only twenty years ago, regarded as a fringe phenomenon, now is the fastest growing sector in American agriculture. Even though the organic label has been co-opted by agribusinesses looking to cash in, it is quietly being redefined by growers. As author and educator Joan Dye Gussow put it, "When we said 'organic' we meant 'local'. We meant 'healthful'. We meant being true to the ecologies of our regions. We meant mutually respectful growers and eaters. We meant social justice and community." (Organic Gardening, Oct. 2002, 39).

This final point gets us back to the question of what schools can and must do to improve not only the physical, but also the social and spiritual, health of the children entrusted to them. Legislators, county commissioners, school administrators, cafeteria personnel, teachers, parents, and community members must move children's health to the top of the pyramid. All of us need not only to learn to think differently about food budgets, and change federal and local government policy and regulations standing in the way of purchasing the best local food available. We must also commit ourselves to teaching students about the community's collective responsibility in procuring food for all of us, in a way that is healthful for local folks as well as for the whole world.

It is possible to achieve this. The responsibility lies with all of us: legislators, farmers, school administrators, teachers, parents, students: the entire community. The responsibility is mine, and it is yours.

Thank you.

The National Farm to College Research Report

By Kristen Markley

On CFSC's 'Farm to College' web page (*www.foodsecurity.org/farm_to_college.html*), you will find a link to the "National Farm to College Research Report". This report provides very practical information on starting or strengthening farm to college projects. Organizers, food service directors, and farmers, involved with eighteen different well-established farm to college projects around the country, were interviewed to determine the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for success of these projects. The farm to college projects highlighted are based at colleges or universities that range in size from 800 to 41,000 students. There are some common themes amongst these farm to college projects, but also an emphasis on 'customizing' the project with the people and resources at hand.

Typical barriers to farm to college projects are supply and distribution issues. Individual farmers cannot supply a large institution with the volume needed on a consistent basis for the college's customer base. A common strategy for dealing with this challenge is to organize farmers through a cooperative or some sort of network where they can collectively market a larger volume of product to the institution.

A universal strategy to success is communication and relationship-building. Suggestions to involve 'key players' such as students, faculty members, food service directors, and farmers from the beginning were emphasized repeatedly. Farm to College projects bring together groups of people who are not used to working with each other, thus learning about each others' fields of focus (whether a farm business or a food service system) is critical to finding effective strategies for overcoming barriers.

One of the most commonly listed benefits for farm to college projects was support for local farmers, community, and economy. Farmers felt that colleges were a reliable direct market for their products, with the potential for increased profitability in the long term. Other benefits include increasing the quality of the food served in the dining halls, lowering environmental impacts, great PR for the college, and countless opportunities for student research.

For more details, check out the full report on the web!

CFSC HARD AT WORK (cont. from page 1)

introduced in the House of Representatives. This bill, if enacted, would create a $10 million per year seed grant program to assist schools with the extra equipment and labor costs associated with purchasing food directly from local farmers. Schools could receive up to $100,000, and would need to collaborate with community groups.

Transportation has long been a missing piece of the food system puzzle for farmers trying to distribute their products to local markets, as well as for car-less consumers residing in neighborhoods with few supermarkets. The Coalition has been working closely with the Surface Transportation Policy Project, a national alliance of progressive transportation and environmental organizations, and with members of Congress on these issues as well. Our Transportation and Food initiative proposes to direct $25 million per year to transit programs to improve food access in urban and rural areas, and to establish marketing and handling centers to facilitate the distribution of local foods. Legislation will be introduced into the Senate shortly as part of the new Transportation Bill (SAFETEA). These are programs which encourage participation in transportation-oriented community planning and development. Better food access for low income urban and rural neighborhoods and farmers marketing and handling needs related to transport corridors and nodes are critical components of expanded regional food systems.

The work of the Coalition at the national level this year is also helping to prepare the way to increase the common ground between urban and rural communities, food and farm policies and diverse regional interests. This will be immensely important in coming state, regional and federal campaigns to strengthen local and regional food systems. For more information on our current policy work, visit the policy program on the Coalition's website: *www.foodsecurity.org/policy*.

Santa Monica Salad Bar

FARM TO CAFETERIA (continued from page 1)

importantly whether school age kids would actually eat fresh fruit and vegetable salads as their optional meal. The change for both of us, and, as it turned out, for hundreds of food activists and increasing numbers of food service directors, was discovering that it could work. The question then became not only how to do it, but also how to sustain it, and how to spread it, whether through programs, organizing, or policy change.

Other pilot type projects were also getting started at the time, with similar kinds of breakthroughs about how to overcome barriers and seize opportunities. In five years, we've seen the following happen:

- From a single project in 1997, more than 700 school districts now have farm to cafeteria projects in place, serving more than a half million students.
- Major policy breakthroughs are beginning to be adopted at the school district, state, and federal level.
- A farm to school movement has emerged full blown, as witnessed by the impressive Farm to Cafeteria conference in Seattle in October 2002 in advance of the Community Food Security Coalition annual meeting.
- Media coverage has increased significantly at both the local level and even with national coverage such as a recent CBS Network News segment.
- Food activists have linked the problem of poor food choices in schools such as sodas in vending machines with the importance of healthy food choices such as fresh food cafeteria items sourced from local farmers.
- The farm to school movement has become a farm to cafeteria movement, with new initiatives focused on prisons, hospitals, and other institutions.

Five years later, the challenges in 2003 have to do with scale rather than possibility. As the farm to cafeteria idea spreads, we are faced with the critical issues of infrastructure development, policy shifts, and ultimately the growth and staying power of an approach that highlights the value of community food systems as opposed to the globally-sourced and institutionally entrenched Fast Food Nation we've become.

Bob Gottlieb, Occidental College Center for Food and Justice, gottlieb@oxy.edu

The Crunch Lunch Manual:

A Case Study of the Davis Joint Unified School District Farmers Market Salad Bar Pilot Program and A Fiscal Analysis Model

(Brillinger, Ohmart and Feenstra, March 2003) is now available from the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (contact gwfeenstra@ ucdavis.edu or jlohmart@uc davis.edu) and the Center for Food and Justice, Occidental College (contact Mark Wall at mwall@oxy.edu). This manual is part of an effort to support other school districts in piloting salad bar projects with produce from local growers. It describes the process that the Davis project went through to initiate and support a farmers market salad bar for its first two years. The manual describes the process in phases: 1) planning, fundraising and organizing; 2) implementation, including facts and figures about equipment, labor, staff training, food procurement and delivery, record keeping, marketing and promotion; 3) expansion and institutionalization and 4) modifying the model. Each section includes lessons learned from our experience in the first two years. The fiscal analysis model describes a general overview of nutrition services finances and does a sample profit/loss analysis for the Davis pilot program and how to calculate the break even point. The Manual concludes with a listing of resources for farm-to-school programs and food policy. The manual will be available on SAREP's Website at: www.sarep. ucdavis.edu by the end of May, 2003.

FOOD POLITICS *(continued from page 5)*

Nestle suggests that, currently, such expectations are bound to be met with disappointment. When conflicts between industry interests and public health concerns arise in various arenas of decision-making—such as Congress, academia, professional organizations, and schools—the former tend to prevail, and not by accident. This makes food and eating political and raises questions about the ethics underlying practices of powerful players in the food industry.

In five parts and 15 chapters, the book shows how the food industry systematically and relentlessly undermines government-sponsored nutrition guidelines; employs high-pressure lobbying and public relations tactics; co-opts nutrition professionals; uses illegal methods such as price-fixing and collusion; intimidates critics; targets kids with attractive advertising on TV and the Web; buys school compliance to push its products to kids; challenges laws and regulations to counter misleading claims; and manipulates the public with a barrage of nutrition claims, into buying food products we don't need. What is mind-blowing is how routine are these typically behind-the-scenes activities.

For example, several representatives from the dairy, egg, and meat industry groups were involved in the 2000 guidelines featuring the ABC approach: Aim for fitness, Build a healthy diet, and Choose sensibly (p 73-75). Nestle expertly deconstructs this advice: the use of weak language for positive activities and the greater emphasis on physical activity rather than diet to control weight. "Eat less" guidelines are also downplayed by the use of self-canceling phrases, such as "*choose* (an eat-more word) *a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol…*" In sum, the guidelines are ambiguous at best and reinforce the idea that consumers rather than producers bear sole responsibility for diets.

Another example is a Nabisco-sponsored fact sheet related to snacking, put out by the American Dietetic Association, an organization with close industry connections: "In today's busy world, snacking is part of our daily routine. We enjoy milk and cookies after school…and reach for a handful of crackers before bed" (page 128). Does this not read suspiciously like an endorsement of such behaviors? The book is replete with such delightful, if ultimately tragic, illustrations, including an advertisement for Heinz ketchup (p 335) as "America's favorite source of lycopene" (with the header: "Lycopene may help reduce the risk of prostate and cervical cancer").

Industry influence touches all aspects of nutrition research, advice and regulation based on this research, and food choices based on this advice. The alarming consequences for society include, among others,

- An undermining of the ability of government to protect the public.
- Greater public confusion about nutrition and how best to achieve recommended diets.
- An increasingly reductionist nutrient-focused view of food that distracts from overall dietary patterns and food's connection to family, culture, and place.
- A blurring in the public's mind of distinctions among food, drugs and supplements.
- The transformation of schools into pushers of junk foods such as soda, to support basic school programs.

We can do much to counter such pervasive industry influence on our food choices. Actions include buying locally and organically grown foods; consuming more plant-based diets and less animal-based and processed foods; turning off the TV (especially in schools); getting junk foods and soda out of schools; and boycotting companies engaging in unethical production and marketing practices. Above all, campaigns to counter industry influence need to target the societal environment (such as laws, regulations, advertising, sponsorship of nutrition research, food access and urban planning), as well as individuals to change their diets.

This book is a valuable addition to a community food security arsenal for building more just, democratic, and local food systems that put public health considerations above profit. It'll make you itch for a fight!

Community Food Security News ■ Spring 2003

WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY COALITION?

The CFSC is a national network of organizations forging new ground in developing innovative approaches to food and farm needs for communities across America. Started in 1994, it is at the forefront of building a national movement around community food security.

WHY SHOULD I BECOME A MEMBER?

Becoming a member is a way to strengthen your connection to the Coalition and other related organizations and individuals across the country. Your membership helps build a dynamic national movement, and provides important support for innovative CFS initiatives. Membership also comes with certain benefits: a subscription to the quarterly CFS News newsletter, voting privileges (for organizations), and discounts on Coalition publications.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES:

Please join at the organization member level. By doing so, it demonstrates your organization's commitment and lends us greater political strength.

❑ $35 Individuals
❑ $50 Small organizations, with less than $100,000 budget
❑ $100 Large organizations, with more than $100,000 budget
❑ $500 Individual life time membership
$_____ Low income individuals, students, or seniors (sliding scale—$1-$25)

PUBLICATIONS AND OTHER MERCHANDISE:

❑ $12 Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids: Evaluating the Barriers and Opportunities, for Farm to School Programs 2001
❑ $15 Full Color, original artwork, T-shirts. (100% organic cotton shirt) -- Circle one: S, M, L, XL
❑ $10 Getting Food on the Table: An Action Guide to Local Food Policy. 1999.
❑ $10 Hot Peppers and Parking Lot Peaches: Evaluating Farmers' Markets in Low Income Communities. 1999.
❑ $30 Seeds of Change: Strategies for Food Security for the Inner City. 1993.
❑ $18 What's Cooking: A Guide to Community Food Assessments. 2002

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Meet Sarah Borron

During my first college environmental studies class, I came to the rather horrifying conclusion that I could not eat any food in my dining hall without causing damage to the environment or another person. Since that devastating evening, I have found hope and promise in the rebuilding of local food systems and fostering sustainable agriculture. Interviewing farmers about their experiences with direct marketing, coordinating a farm tour, and volunteering with a food pantry and community kitchen have all helped me see connections between sustaining the land and all people.

I have recently joined the Coalition's policy office in Washington, DC, as a Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow. This one-year leadership program offers six months of fieldwork and six months of policy work at anti-hunger organizations. At the Coalition, I provide research and organizational support as well as communicate with our grassroots members about our policy proposals. It excites me to discover how federal policy can bring resources to the local level so communities can create more sustainable and just food systems.