



A newsletter for employees of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services

March 26, 2009

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Sustainable practices: we can innovate and be green

You really can't escape the fact that the idea of sustainability is everywhere. But you may not know that right here at the Department of Health Services we have at least one institution that is "buying locally" by purchasing wholesome foods through the Badgerland Produce Co-op Auction.

The Badgerland Produce Co-op Auction ensures that all produce is locally grown (meaning 100 miles from Montello where they are headquartered). This means truly local and fresh produce that doesn't have to travel very far or sit around for a long period of time. This in turn allows participating institutions to provide truly nutrient-packed fruits and vegetables for optimum health.

Auctions can accommodate most institutional purchasing needs



Good and good for you--buying locally. Photo courtesy of Kathryn Lederhause.

Auctions for wholesale produce purchases occur throughout the growing season and of course feature produce that is available depending on the time of season (spring, summer, fall). For instance, May through June will feature many items including lettuce, strawberries, and spring peas, while the summer season has an abundance of tomatoes, onions, potatoes, cucumbers, cantaloupe and more. The auctions have several types of purchasing programs and can accommodate most institutional purchasing and billing cycle needs. Badgerland Produce Co-op Auction provides a pre-priced program for institutions that require set-pricing.

USDA grading standards and uniform packaging are used for the produce, which is picked fresh 24 hours to auction time.

Mendota Mental Health Institute (MMHI) has been using Badgerland Produce Co-op Auction for the patient population and employee meal service. This allows exposure to more diverse food groups and menus. Feedback on taste has been positive, and there is nothing quite like serving produce that is freshly picked. Currently Sand Ridge Secure Treatment Center (SRSTC) is exploring the idea of using Badgerland Produce as well.

By purchasing locally, we can get competitive prices while helping to create new local jobs. It also increases the demand for local fruit and produce, which in turn helps to preserve farmland.

To learn more about the idea of promoting locally grown foods to institutions, visit [Dane County's Institutional Food Market Coalition](#).

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Last modified: Thursday, March 26, 2009