



DANE COUNTY FOOD COUNCIL

2014 Annual Report

NOTE FROM OUR CHAIR

The Dane County Food Council is happy to present this 2014 Annual Report. The council has strived this past year to support the development of a strong and sustainable community food system that is fair and equitable for all and protects our natural resources.



Dane County is the largest agriculture producing county and has the fastest growing population in the state. Agriculture is a key economic driver in our county and urban ag and other local food initiatives continue to expand. The council continues to address land access issues by supporting efforts to make Dane County land available for food production to increase fresh locally grown produce available for Dane County residents.

We strive to review and address issues within the food system from production to waste stream. Recently, the council partnered with the City of Madison Food Policy Council to form a joint food waste work group to explore options for reducing the amount of food entering the waste stream. Also a new Dane County Pollinator Protection Task Force has formed to review current practices and make recommendations to implement strategies to improve pollinator health.

In March, the council will begin recruiting new members. If you are passionate about our community food system, I invite you to consider serving on the council or one of our work groups. The application and more information is available on our website at: www.countyofdane.com/foodcouncil.

I hope you find this report interesting and informative.

Ace Lynn-Miller, Chair



2014 FOOD SUMMIT FOCUSED ON EQUITY IN THE FOOD SYSTEM

More than 100 community members attended the 2014 Dane County Food Summit on October 24. This year's theme was *Digging into the Local Food System: Be a Part of the Solution*. Participants included farmers, entrepreneurs, organizers, city officials, academics and non-profit leaders.

The Food Summit featured a panel of notable speakers that brought insights and inspiration to the event and put issues into local, regional, and national perspectives. The summit also included breakout sessions focused on food access, food justice, food production and food system infrastructure. A food system equity and empowerment lens was introduced as a tool to critically evaluate and problem-solve around challenges within our food system. A set of recommendations were developed from the summit and have been shared with both the county and city food councils as well as members of the Dane County Food Coalition.

Food Summit attendees responded positively to the event evaluation. 90% agreed the summit was a good use of their time; 84% agreed the summit helped them learn about community food system issues; and 97% found the interaction with others at the Food Summit to be of value.

The Dane County Food Council along with Dane County UW-Extension and the Madison Food Policy Council hosts the annual Food Summit to foster greater communication and coordination of efforts between our Dane County communities and local government. The summit is an opportunity to explore different food system topics and ways of working together as we develop and accomplish shared goals for developing an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable local food system for the Dane County region.



OUR MISSION

The Food Council is a committee of the Dane County Board, comprised of residents and County Board Supervisors, which encourages active collaboration to explore issues and develop recommendations to create an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable local food system for the Dane County region.

The Dane County Food Council includes three County Board Supervisors and six resident members.

MEMBERS:

Ace Lynn-Miller, Chair
Ian Aley, Vice Chair
Alison Ahlgrim
Rachel Angel
Pat Downing
Jenni Dye
Mariela Quesada-Centeno
Kyle Richmond
Bill Warner

STAFF:

Carrie Edgar, Dept. Head
Dane County UW-Extension
edgar@countyofdane.com
608-224-3706

Lexa Dundore,
AmeriCorps VISTA
Dane County UW-Extension
dundore.lexa@countyofdane.com
608-224-3696

[www.countyofdane.com/
foodcouncil](http://www.countyofdane.com/foodcouncil)

GARDENS GROWS YOUTH & COMMUNITY

In the summer of 2014, Dane County UW-Extension collaborated with several organizations and community members to coordinate the Gardens for Empowerment (G4E) program.

G4E provided jobs for 10 youth in both the Brentwood and Meadowood neighborhoods to build and tend the gardens and complete community service projects in their respective neighborhoods throughout the summer. G4E's long-range goal is to improve the livability of neighborhoods and to create a model of youth development and community capacity building that can be replicated in other Dane County communities.



Brentwood Crew

The youth were supported by a Dane County UW-Extension AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associate hired from the Brentwood neighborhood. During the summer, youth learned valuable skills around job readiness, teamwork, environmental sciences, nutrition education and community service. The G4E program hosted several events in the gardens bringing community members together in a positive way. The youth donated much of the produce harvested to local families.

Currently funds are being sought to continue the program in 2015.

A YEAR OF CHANGE FOR COMMUNITY GARDENS

There are more than 50 community gardens located throughout Dane County covering 30 acres of garden plots and providing over 2000 households an opportunity to grow their own food. Many of the gardens have doubled and tripled in size over the past several years and there are long waiting lists for plots. Community gardens help gardeners become more self-sufficient by growing their own food as well as providing opportunities to develop personal relationships, build a sense of community, beautify neighborhoods, reduce crime, and expand leadership opportunities.

Over the past three decades, CAC (Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc.) developed a strong foundation for community gardening in Dane County by playing a leadership role in providing oversight and support. CAC discontinued their Community Gardening program effective May 31, 2014.

Dane County UW-Extension assisted with pulling people together representing community garden leaders, city and county agencies, and local nonprofits to form an ad hoc community gardens planning committee to work through the transition. In addition to developing strategies and approaches to support thriving community gardens into the next decades, the committee took on the responsibility for ensuring that support was provided to community gardens throughout the 2014 season.

A new partnership including Community GroundWorks, City of Madison and Dane County UW-Extension has recently formed and will work with the many community garden leaders, gardeners and supporting organizations to insure community gardens continue to grow and thrive throughout Dane County.

To learn more about community gardens visit:
www.danecountycommunitygardens.org

PROGRESS AT SILVERWOOD FARM COUNTY PARK

The 2014 growing season was quite productive for the four groups now raising food at Silverwood Farm County Park. The groups include:

- Operation Fresh Start engaged youth and young adults ages 16-24 in learning to plant, tend and harvest food.
- Freedom Inc. had 25 Hmong elders, adults, and youth in the garden on a regular basis.
- Edgerton School District youth and adults raised 22 different varieties of vegetables for the school, area youth programs and local food pantries.
- Renegade 4-H Club participated in a seed saving project by growing 30 varieties of heirloom tomatoes. They learned how to start seeds and how to save seeds from the fruit at the end of the season. The tomatoes were used by the 4-H families and given away at the Harvest Festival.

8000 lbs of
produce raised at
Silverwood Park
in 2014

Silverwood Farm County Park was donated in 2002 by Irene Silverwood and consists of 300 acres located in the southeast corner of Dane County. Mrs. Silverwood donated the land with the desire that it be used for park, recreation, conservation, research, education and agricultural purposes. The Friends of Silverwood Farm County Park formed in 2013 to further develop the planning process started by the Silverwood Subcommittee of the Dane County Food Council.

The mission of Silverwood Farm County Park is to educate the public on the broad and diverse aspects of Wisconsin agriculture. The vision for the park is to educate, innovate and produce by:

- Providing educational facilities, job training, and resources for the public, farmers, and youth to learn how food, fuel and fiber are grown, processed and distributed.
- Providing access to a demonstration farm which offer opportunities for agriculture research to grow crops that have cultural, historical and economic significance.
- Supporting the production of food, fuel and fiber to demonstrate environmental health, economic profitability, and social and economic equity

For more information on the Friends of Silverwood Park visit their website at: <http://silverwoodpark.org>

CONNECTING LOCAL FOOD PRODUCERS WITH FOOD BUYERS



The demand for locally grown food continues to grow among institutional food buyers including schools, hospitals, universities and other food service entities. The Dane County Institutional Food Market (IFM) program helps meet this need by providing opportunities for food producers and processors to meet and develop relationships with food buyers and area food distributors.

This was accomplished in 2014 through two events – the IFM Annual Meeting held in May and the Local Food Means Business meeting held in November. More than 100 individuals attended these two meetings that included educational speakers, panel presentations and facilitated networking opportunities. The goals of the meetings were to assist individuals in making contacts and developing buyer/seller relationships resulting in increased sales of locally produced food.

In a follow up survey, 98% of the participants reported they found the meetings helpful. The participants on average reported making more than three new contacts at the Annual Meeting and nearly five at the Local Food Means Business meeting. When asked what they liked best about the meetings, participants repeatedly stressed the connections and networking. And when asked what they would like done differently in the future, many suggested more and longer meeting opportunities.

Dane County UW-Extension educators including Claire Strader, Small Scale and Organic Ag; Sharon Lezberg, Community Development; and Carrie Edgar, Community Food Systems, coordinate the IFM program. For more information on the program visit: www.ifmwi.org

Dane County By the Numbers

Ag Stats:

- Ag provides 17,294 jobs in the county
- Ag accounts for \$3.4 billion in economic activity
- Ag contributes \$1.3 billion to county income
- Ag pays \$80.6 million in taxes
- Sales of trees, fruits and vegetables, greenhouse, nursery and floriculture products add up to \$15.9 million
- 256 farms generating \$2,939,000 in local food sales through direct marketing
- Dane County farmers own and manage 504,420 acres, or 65.8% of the county's land
- 6% reduction in farm land from 2007 to 2012
- 17% reduction in the number of farms from 2007 to 2012

Primary Food Sources	
Farmers Markets	29
CSA Farms	32
Community Gardens	50+
Food Pantry Gardens	29
Food Pantries	50
Supermarkets & Groceries	77
Convenience Stores	160
Fast Food Restaurants	393
Beer & Liquor Stores	43
Farm Operators	
Total	2749
Female	386
American Indian	3
Asian	48
African American	6
Hispanic/Latino	40
Average Age	57.7

Sources include:

[USDA 2012 Ag Census](#)
[UW-Extension Dane County Ag Economic Impact Report 2014](#)
[Wisconsin Food Security Project](#)
[UW Food Systems Profile Project](#)

Food security	Dane	State
Predicted food insecurity rate* (all persons)	11.6%	12.6%
Predicted food insecurity rate (children)	17.1%	20.7%
Health		
Adult obesity rate	24.8%	29%
Low-income pre-school child obesity rate	13%	na
Adult diabetes	6.1%	9%
Economic Security		
Poverty rate (all persons)	12.8%	13.2%
Poverty rate (children)	12.7%	16.9%
Persons below 185% poverty	23.7%	27.1%
Median household income	61,790	52,627
Federal Food Programs		
Free & reduced school meal eligibility rate	34.4%	43.3%
FoodShare participants total	71,631	1,097,789
FoodShare participants % of population	14%	19.1%
WIC participants total	10,548	185,217
WIC participants # of women	3,159	53,005
WIC participants # of children	7,389	132,212

* Definition: a prediction of the food insecurity rate for the total population based on local economic and demographic characteristics such as the poverty rate, unemployment rate, and race and ethnicity of the population
Source: Map the Meal Gap 2010



PLEASE JOIN US

The Dane County Food Council typically meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 6 pm and meetings are open to the public.

Please visit the Food Council website for specific meeting dates, agendas, the membership application, and more: www.countyofdane.com/foodcouncil