Northwest MN Local Foods/Sustainable Ag Projects

LOCAL FOODS COLLEGE

In January 2014, we’ll launch the third annual series of local foods college courses. Improvements in 2014 include an interactive platform using Moodle to provide opportunities for participants to connect with one another and share their knowledge and experience. Each annual series has been supported by the Statewide Health Improvement Program partners in the region, involving presenters from many colleges and campuses within the University of Minnesota system.

http://localfoods.umn.edu/college

BEMIDJI COMMUNITY FOOD SHELF

Bemidji Community Food Shelf moved into a new facility and acquired 1.5 acres of undeveloped land. BCFS serves 3,000 families, serves 35,000 individuals, and involves 350 volunteers. This project assists in design and development of a community garden to provide clients with opportunities to learn gardening skills, to engage community volunteers in gardening and to grow produce for the food shelf. It also assesses opportunities to gain energy efficiencies, harvest rainwater and utilize solar energy on site. More information:


FARMERS MARKETS IN NW MN

Collaboration among all markets in the NW began with a service learning project by “Integrated Marketing Communication” class in 2011 to create a market promotion plan. The plan utilized a regional label developed by MN Grown that is used on signs, banners and advertising. In 2012 and 2013, MN Grown created a custom cover for its directory featuring a listing of all markets in the region. The markets gather for a winter celebration that highlights the successes and provides training for marketing from MN Grown and MN Farmers Market Association.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Cass Clay Food System Initiative hosted Growing Communities Workshop conducted by the American Community Garden Association (ACGA) in January 2013. Growing Communities is an in-depth, hands-on workshop based on the ACGA’s curriculum. Participants learned proven strategies to develop dynamic leaders and create strong community gardening programs through a participatory approach to community building. NW RSDP leveraged this training in the region by combining mini-grants with regional training sessions in spring and summer 2013.
FRUIT TREES AND BERRIES IN HIGH TUNNEL

The practice of using high tunnels for season extension is growing rapidly across the state. In zones 2 and 3 in Northwest Minnesota, this on-farm research includes variety trials of fruit trees and berries. The Schulstad farm hosted research tunnels 2010-2013, and shared the results in a summer field day. There were variety trials of strawberries, raspberries, honeyberries, blueberries, apples, pears and plums.

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