



KANSAS CITY FOOD CIRCLE

The KCFC Update: Summer 2008

Bigger crowds attend the Expos

Attendance was up 50 percent over last year at our 10th annual Eat Local! Exhibition of Farmers. The main reason was the success of our first ever event on the east side of the metro area. Total attendance was 1,656 people compared to 1,118 last year when we did just one event in Shawnee. This also compares to the 2005-2008 average of 826.

Attendance at this year's Shawnee event was 970, and attendance at the Roger T. Sermon Community Center in Independence was 686 people. The Independence figure compared to only 364 for the first year that we attempted a second event, which was on the north side. This suggests there is a strong interest in local organic food on the east side of the metro area. The only serious problem we encountered was a tight parking situation. Otherwise the Sermon Center facility worked out well, and the staff was very helpful. Attendance at both of the free workshops was also good.

Seventy-nine percent of the people attending the Shawnee event live in Kansas and 70 percent in Johnson County. Ninety-two percent of the attendees in Independence live in Missouri and 51 percent in Independence. Clearly the location makes a big difference in who attends these events. We think we can increase east side attendance with more advertising in Liberty, Blue Springs and Lee's Summit. The percentage of first time visitors at our expo events was 63 percent in Shawnee and 75 percent in Independence.

Given our continuing success, **we have already reserved the Shawnee Civic Center for Saturday, March 28, 2009 and the Sermon Center in Independence for Saturday, April 4, 2009** so please mark you calendar for next year.

More Farmers Join the KC Food Circle

Producer memberships increased to 61 in 2008 from 57 in 2007 as interest in selling local organic and free-range foods continues to grow. The 2008 total includes two producers who rejoined after their membership had lapsed. Below is a list of our new producer-members. New members who joined after the deadline for our printed directory are denoted by "web" which means they are listed only on our website.

50 Acre Wood (web)
A Few Good Plants
Antioch Farm
Beau Solais Farm
Burnett's Heritage Farms
Cornerstone Farm (web)
Crowned with Goodness Farm

Gannon Family Farm (web)
Hess Ranch
My Neighbor Steve's
Prairie Birthday Farm (web)
Quarter Ridge Longhorns (web)
Sage Moon Naturals
Spring Creek Farm

Check out the products offered by our new producer-members. By now, our eater/members should have received their printed 2008 *Directory of Local Organic and Free Range Producers* either by attending one of our Expo events or in the mail. To look at the listings of our website-only producers, go to the *Know Your Growers* link on our web site's home page (www.KCFoodCircle.org), or browse the web-text version of our *Directory* which is updated throughout the year: www.KCFoodCircle.org/docs/directory-text.html#Producers

It's Farmers Market Time!

It's that time of the year. Despite a cool spring, more produce is fast becoming available. Most of our producers sell at one or more farmers markets in the KC Metro area. Please see the individual producers' listings in our printed directory, or on our website, to find out where.

In addition, the KC Food Circle endorses a number of organic farmers markets:

- **KC Organics & Natural Market at Minor Park**
near Holmes & Red Bridge Rd (Saturdays)
- **Farmers Community Market at Brookside**
near 63rd and Wornall (Saturdays)
- **39th Street Community Market**
Genessee & 39th St. near KU Med Center (Wednesdays)
- **Troostwood Youth Garden**
52nd & Paseo, near Rockhurst University (Saturdays).

This year two (2) more organic markets have sprung up:

- **Badseed Market**
19th & McGee, Crossroads District, KCMO (Fridays)
- **Merriam Organic Market (M.O.M)**
5740 Merriam Drive, Merriam, KS (Tuesdays).

For more info, click on the "Featured Farmers Market" section of our web site (www.KCFoodCircle.org).

The new **Briarcliff Organic and Locally Grown Farmers Market**, in the Briarcliff Shopping Center just north of the River (Thursdays), also deserves a mention. At least half of these vendors are organic and free range.

Wow, we now have a special market for almost every day of the week! Please check them out.

Closing the Food Gap by Mark Winne

- a book review by Roena Haynie

In recent years there have been many articles on rising obesity and diabetes among the poor in America, with a tone of blaming the needy for making poor choices. One of the most valuable contributions of this book is in showing how policy shifts in Washington – cutting food stamps, eliminating congregate meals for the elderly, and redefining school lunch options ("catsup is a vegetable") – have resulted in fewer

resources for poor people to obtain healthy food. Mr. Winne also details the closing of supermarkets in urban areas and poor transportation to suburban stores as further obstacles to the poor in obtaining healthy food. He includes both research and interviews with inner city residents that show that many urban poor would prefer organic, fresh produce if they could get it.

Mark Winne reminds us that soon after taking office, Pres. Reagan made massive cuts in food stamps - \$1 billion in 1981 dollars. Non-profits responded by developing food banks as a stop-gap, "band-aid" approach to this massive resource and policy shift. Other responses included community gardens and farmers' markets in urban areas. Mr. Winne also discusses Community Supported Agriculture (CSA's) that have connected with the hungry and "food insecure." Another chapter describes successful and unsuccessful efforts to get supermarkets back into urban areas.

This book is useful and informative on the general issues of community gardens, farmers' markets, supporting local small farmers, and CSA's. Anyone interested in those topics should enjoy those chapters.

The book includes many lively anecdotes as well as informative research studies on closing the food gap for the poor and hungry in America. But the major point is that more energy needs to be put into changing public policy. He believes it is a trap to put so much energy into stop-gap efforts such as food banks. Mr. Winne thinks we can be most effective on the state and local level first, in changing policy.

Roena Haynie is a member of the KCFC Coordinating Committee.

KC's Voice for Local Food Gains Strength and Focus by Sarah Shmigelsky and Gretchen Burak

Kansas City is one step closer to having a local Food Policy Council -- a formal group charged with guiding the development of policies for sustainable local food, health, and agriculture. What started in early 2007 with the Healthy Food Policy Forum culminated recently in the first meeting of a Core Working Group to hammer out the details of setting up the Council.

It started with the reauthorization of the 2007 Farm Bill. This pending legislation motivated two local nonprofits -- KC Healthy Kids and the Healthcare Foundation of Greater Kansas City -- to invite KC community stakeholders from various corners of the food system to discuss ways to align national food policies more closely with our national health goals while supporting sustainable food systems. The Healthy Food Policy Forum brought together some 80 health care professionals, government officials, educators, farmers and others and resulted in the KC Healthy Food Policy Initiative.

To access all the resources, visit the Initiative web site: www.KCHealthyKids.org/Initiative-HealthyFoodPolicy

The Initiative's three main goals are:

1. To help community leaders envision a more sustainable food system focused on better health for the community, environment, and economy,
2. To form a Food Policy Council (FPC) in the Kansas City area, and
3. To provide support and feedback to the FPC once it is formed.

Throughout 2007 the Food Policy Initiative focused on learning about the local food system and understanding the barriers and opportunities to getting fresh, healthy food to the community. In 2008 the focus turned to "making the case" for an FPC. Mark Winne, national FPC consultant and food systems expert, visited Kansas City to help stakeholders better understand how to develop a council and the important ways coordination with government policies can positively affect local food systems. From that meeting a core working group was established to document specifically why Kansas City needs an FPC and outline the most effective FPC model.

Food Policy Councils can take many forms but they generally consist of 10-20 people who represent different components of the food system. Councils can strictly be a grassroots effort or can be commissioned by state or local government. They address food policy issues and make recommendations to decision makers regarding policies that could be improved to impact the overall health of the community. Food Policy Councils have been successful at educating officials and the public, shaping public policy, improving coordination between existing programs, and starting new food and agriculture-related programs. Councils can choose to work in a number of arenas, including schools and other institutions, local agriculture, anti-hunger efforts, and even urban development, transportation, and zoning policies as they pertain to the food system.

With respect to urban agriculture, members of the Core Working Group have so far identified the following priorities:

1. Formulate and implement pro-farming and gardening policies--make farming economically viable by addressing issues such as land use policies, property tax rates, and the cost of water,
2. Conduct an economic analysis of the production and consumption of local food.
3. Create a mandate to purchase some percentage of local foods in schools, governments, and other institutions,
4. Increase municipal, county, and state funding for agriculture, gardening, and food security projects.

Developing a healthy sustainable food system will involve urban, peri-urban and rural agriculture as well as a host of other system components. Our challenge is to integrate these components into a whole that offers health, sustainability and community to all. A Food Policy Council will move us in that direction.

Sarah Shmigelsky and Gretchen Burak are co-coordinators for the Healthy Food Policy Initiative, a project of KC Healthy Kids (www.KCHealthyKids.org). They can be reached at sarah.shmigelsky@gmail.com and grburak@yahoo.com

Sarah is also a member of the KCFC Coordinating Committee.

For a related article on the new US Farm Bill see "*The farm bill: What went wrong,*" by Michael Pollan posted on June 4 at <http://gristmill.grist.org/story/2008/6/4/43736/55179>

Mr. Pollan is the author of *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* and *The Omnivore's Dilemma*.

This UPDATE is a KC Food Circle original publication. Past issues are archived at www.KCFoodCircle.org For more information, you are welcome to write to KC Food Circle, P.O. Box 45195, KCMO, 64171, or call our hotline at 816-374-5899.