

**Feeding the Farm to School Program in Southeast Michigan with Local Fruits  
and Vegetables  
USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant #791N0200089  
Final Report  
January 24, 2011**

Funding from the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program allowed the Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP) to create and expand opportunities for specialty crop farmers in Southeast Michigan by increasing production and meeting demand for local fruits and vegetables from schools.

Schools most often receive processed and pre-cut food, and many school kitchens lack adequate food-preparation facilities. This means that farm-fresh food must be delivered in a form that is usable to schools with minimal processing. Workshops and business counseling were conducted to teach local farmers best practices in how to deliver fresh produce along with appropriate delivery methods that meet institutional food safety requirements. Another goal of the program was to educate students about the importance of the region's fruits and vegetables by making the connection about where their food comes from and thereby increasing consumption. Classroom visits by local farmers and outreach in the cafeteria were conducted to teach students about the nutritional benefits associated with the region's fruit and vegetable crops.

**I. Original Goal**

One of the main goals of the program was to conduct workshops for specialty crop farmers to increase awareness within the farming community of the opportunities to sell local, fresh produce directly to schools or through food distributors selling to the schools. The workshops focused on teaching participants about food safety requirements, proper packing and grading, how to bid to schools, and how to adapt what they are currently growing to serve the school market.

**I. Objectives and Tasks**

**Objective: Increase purchases of fruits and vegetables from farms in Southeast Michigan by schools participating in the FSEP Farm to School program.**

Task: Identify interested farmers by conducting outreach at farmers' markets, farm organizations, and special events to inform the farming community about opportunities to sell fresh produce to schools. Issue press releases about Farm to School opportunities and workshops. (Oct 2009 – Nov 2009) *Farm to School Program Director and Business Development Specialist*

Task: Conduct workshops for farmers to facilitate the purchase of fresh, local fruits and vegetables by school districts in Southeast Michigan. (Oct 2009 – March 2010). *Farm to School Director and Business Development Specialist*

Task: Identify interested schools in Farm to School expansion and identify partnering organizations to determine level of assistance needed and level of institutional knowledge about Farm to School. (Oct 2009 – Dec 2009). *Farm to School Program Director*

Task: Identify policy and practice barriers through organizing meetings with partner schools and interested local farms. Identify policy and practice changes to enable the purchase and distribution of fresh, local fruits and vegetables to schools. (Jan – April 2010). *Farm to School Program Director and Business Development Specialist*

Task: Identify workable distribution methods based on needs of schools, farms, and intermediaries. (Jan – April 2010). *Farm to School Program Director and Business Development Specialist*

Task: Work with existing schools to identify imported fruits and vegetables that can be replaced by produce purchased from local farmers and work with schools to promote increased purchases of local produce. (Oct 2009 – April 2010). *Farm to School Program Director*

Task: Facilitate supply, distribution, and delivery of fresh, local farm foods into participating schools. (May – June 2010 & Sept – Dec 2010). *Farm to School Program Director and Business Development Specialist*

## **OUTCOMES**

Press releases about the Specialty Crop Block grant were issued to local media outlets including markets in Detroit, Washtenaw and Jackson counties. Coverage was obtained in the *Jackson Citizen Patriot*, and Detroit's Fox News. FSEP Farm to Food Service Director, Michaelle Rehmann was interviewed by Channel 7 News. The grant award was posted to the FSEP listserve in October 2009 reaching approximately 900 email addresses including County Commissioners from Jackson, Lenawee, Monroe, Washtenaw and Wayne Counties. During the National Farm to Cafeteria conference that was held in May 2010, Rehmann was interviewed by Channel 7 News to discuss the Farm to School program. Executive Director, Jennifer Fike was interviewed by Comcast Newsmakers which aired in November 2010 and discussed the Farm to School program. Rehmann was interviewed in April 2010 for the business segment of the *Lucy Ann Lance* radio show on WAAM.

Due to efforts of Rehmann and interest from the Detroit Public Schools (DPS) Food Service Directors, a pilot Farm to School program in Detroit was launched during fall 2009 increasing opportunities for specialty crop producers to sell directly to DPS. This major expansion for the Farm to School program involved 18 schools with a three-year plan to implement the Farm to School program district-wide. DPS desires to purchase fresh produce from urban farmers in Detroit as much as possible.

Throughout the grant period, Rehmann provided information via the FSEP Farm to School email listserve to Food Service Directors in the region about produce availability from the Lesser Farm in Dexter, Grazing Fields Egg Co-op, D-Town Farms, Grown in Detroit Co-op, Curtis Farms in Napoleon, Todosciuk Farms in Howell, Fusilier Family Farms in Manchester, the Michigan Celery Co-op and the Michigan Bean Trading Company, a dried bean Co-operative in Pigeon.

Outreach was conducted by Rehmann at the 2009 Statewide School Superintendents conference in Traverse City and networked with school administrators to share information about Farm to School and the benefits of connecting schools with local farmers who produce specialty crops. More than 600 superintendents attended the conference and many were interested in learning more about Farm to School. Both Rehmann and FSEP Business Development Specialist, Jane Bush presented information about opportunities for fruit and vegetable producers at the Bioneers conference from October 17-18, 2009. Outreach with specialty crop producers was conducted at the MSU Product Center's "Making It In Michigan" conference on November 13, 2009 and at the Great Lakes Fruit and Vegetable Expo from December 8-10, 2009. On December 9 at the GLFV Expo, Rehmann presented information about opportunities for specialty crop producers to sell to institutions as part of a break-out session which included approximately 50 attendees.

During the spring of 2010, Rehmann worked with Saline Public Schools, Dexter Community Schools, Whitmore Lake Public Schools in planning the implementation of Farm to School programs thus expanding the program even further throughout Southeast Michigan. Outreach to specialty crop farmers was conducted by Bush at the Michigan Family Farms conference in Battle Creek on January 16, 2010, the Michigan Good Food Summit in Lansing on February 25, 2010, the Michigan Organic Food and Farming Alliance on March 6-7, 2010, and the FSEP annual conference on June 24, 2010. As building relationships between farmers and buyers is such a crucial component of a local foods program, Bush and Rehmann conducted a series of networking sessions to bring interested parties together. Networking events were held in Jackson, Adrian and Ann Arbor several times throughout the year. FSEP also led a community discussion "Putting the Michigan Good Food Charter to Work" to build support and increase awareness of the local food movement and benefits to specialty crop producers in Southeast Michigan. Outreach was also conducted at the GLFV Expo through the FSEP booth from December 7-9, 2010.

## **WASHTENAW COUNTY**

During the fall of 2009, Bush conducted one-on-one business counseling sessions at the Chelsea Public Library to 10 participants to provide assistance to food and farm businesses including specialty crop producers to allow for the expansion of existing businesses. These counseling sessions were conducted in Jackson County in the spring of 2010 at the Jackson Public Library. During 2010, Bush has been facilitating relationships with specialty crop producers including Alward Farm, No Bad Days Farm, Paradise Farm, Snick's Farm and Allegiance Hospital. Bush has also facilitated the expansion of the University of Michigan's (U-M) local food purchasing program as the University plans to increase local produce purchases campus wide and in all dining facilities. Local food purchases at U-M have increased dramatically over the past 2 years due to the efforts of Bush and the specialty crop producers she has

been working with that are selling to U-M. Over the past several months, Bush has been working with the U-M OSHA department to institute traceability and food safety standards for specialty crop producers. This past fall, Bush met with Buzz Cummings, U-M Executive Chef at East Quad dormitory to discuss quantity, price and quality of produce supplied by the farmers that Bush has assisted in order to increase sales to U-M.

### **Ann Arbor Public Schools**

Over the past two years, Rehmann has attended regularly scheduled meetings of the Ann Arbor Farm to School Collaborative. During fall 2009, the Ann Arbor Public Schools Food Service Director shared information regarding the first local food days. Overall they felt things went well but that they had perhaps ordered too much cantaloupe and muskmelon. However, the produce did not go to waste as it was served the following day as part of the school lunch line and expanded the Farm to School program with local food served 3 out of 4 days. As a large school district, Ann Arbor Public Schools purchases produce from produce distributor, Coastal Produce, which is sourcing from Ruhlig Farm in Carleton and Horkey Brothers in Dundee. Because of cool weather and early frost during late October 2009, Coastal Produce was unable to source some of the local produce planned including sweet peppers, corn and butternut squash. Rehmann assisted by searching for Michigan produce available at the terminal market (celery, parsnips, bell peppers, radishes, turnips, potatoes, winter squash, apples, apple cider) and encouraged the Food Service Director to request Michigan specialty crops from his vendor, even if farmer identity was not available. May 2010, was the first time local produce was used in the Farm to School program during the spring and demonstrated a commitment by the food service department to source Michigan grown produce when available. The 2010/2011 school year was marked with growth as well, as the program shifted from serving one local food item a week to serving fresh fruits and vegetables three times a week in September and October. Michigan grown winter squash, apples, sweet potatoes and white potatoes continued to be purchased and used in the school meals program through December 2010.

### **Saline Public Schools**

In the early part of 2010, Rehmann met with Julie Harsh, Food Service Director of Saline Public Schools. Harsh expressed an interest starting a program during 2010 and made a few purchases of local produce on her own during fall 2009 which was well received by both students and staff. Rehmann provided her with farmer contact information for local apple purchases made in February and March. The Farm to School program was formally launched in May with asparagus, rhubarb and other local items. Rehmann attended the Saline PTO Meeting in April and shared information about the Farm to School program. One parent shared that high school students were interested in the "Food Revolution" television show and Rehmann discussed ways to get them involved in the Farm to School program. Parent volunteers will be sought as part of the district's "Healthy Food Initiative" and will be asked to help with food prep on local food days. Harsh shared that four years ago the district had a free/reduced percentage of 3% and it is now 16%, demonstrating an increase in poverty in the school district. A number of school garden projects are being considered as ways to link students to the food they eat and the Saline High School Agri-science class is seeking funds to build a greenhouse. Teachers and school food service staff are working together to utilize produce grown in the greenhouse as part of the school meals program. During the summer of 2010, Rehmann facilitated the development of a bid request sheet representing seven school districts, including Saline that requested 43 different types of fruits and vegetables for use in the school districts farm to school program.

### **Ypsilanti Public Schools**

During May 2010, Rehmann met with the Ypsilanti Food Service Director, and discussed potential opportunities for starting a Farm to School program. They were very interested in putting a program in place and would like it to run year-round with the exception of December/January (due to winter breaks and a lot of days off in those two months). Meetings were held again in early fall 2010, with the launch of the program beginning in November 2010. Rehmann advised sourcing specialty crops that required no prep due to the school's tight labor budget and decided that apples and potatoes would be easy to work with this winter. November was apple month and apple facts were announced in each school over the intercom every day. Rehmann provided the school district with apple posters from the Michigan Apple Commission and created Farm to School information boards for display during parent teacher conferences held in November.

## **WAYNE COUNTY**

### **Detroit Public Schools**

Rehmann began working with DPS Food Service staff during September 2009 to finalize details for local food days at the 18 pilot schools. Rehmann assisted in locating additional produce as the number of students purchasing school lunch at the 18 pilot schools had increased from an estimated 3,500 to more than 5,700. DPS held their first local food day on September 17 and it was a huge success! Students at Robeson Academy asked for local food every day. Early last fall, Rehmann presented information about the Farm to School implementation plan to the DPS School Board. The plan was well received and the School Board was optimistic about the opportunities this program brings for their district, the students, urban specialty crop farmers, and the community.

Outreach to specialty crop producers was conducted by Rehmann and Bush at the Wayne State Farmers' Market and at the Greening of Detroit – "Grown in Detroit" Collaborative. Rehmann met with Ashley Atkinson, Eitan Sussman and Nikki Zahrn of Greening of Detroit to discuss ways the Grown in Detroit farmer co-op could become involved in the DPS local food days. On November 19, 2009 Rehmann attended the DPS Local food day at Farwell Middle School. Students were served acorn squash from Todosciuk Farm in Howell. For many of the students, this was their first time eating squash. Of the dozen or so food service personnel Rehmann spoke with that day, only one person had tried acorn squash before the local food day at the school. They were also interested in learning more about the squash and how to prepare it.

During January 2010, Rehmann provided assistance to the food service staff as they worked to implement Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grants in eleven schools. The schools were awarded a combined \$350,000 for the purchase of fresh, minimally processed fruits and vegetables to be served either mid-morning or mid-afternoon. Rehmann introduced them to Eric Hahn, owner of Locavore Food Distributors as a potential source for future produce purchases. The money needed to be spent by June 30, 2010 on the purchase of the produce. The food service staff purchased up to 10 different varieties of Michigan apples from local growers during March. One of the challenges for DPS is that they wish to have produce processed into certain serving sizes and there are no food processors in the region that can supply the schools. Locavore had been attempting to provide this service, but the owner has since dissolved the business and is now working for another food distribution company. The FSEP Farm to School program was in high gear during the spring with Asparagus Month in May. Rehmann helped DPS purchase asparagus from Joe Luellen and Associates.

During fall 2010, Bush and Rehmann continued to provide technical assistance to DPS in sourcing produce from specialty crop producers in Southeast Michigan. The DPS Farm to School program has expanded from 18 schools to 45 schools and is reaching students in all grades, K-12. Rehmann serves as a key member of the Schools Work Group for the Detroit Food and Fitness Collaborative.

### **Detroit Charter Schools: Nsorma Institute, Aiesha Shule, WEB Dubois, Timbuktu**

In October 2009, Rehmann met with Mandell Crawford of Touch of Class Catering and connected him to D-Town Farms, a 2-acre urban farm in Detroit. Touch of Class is the food service provider for the following Detroit charter schools: Nsorma Institute, Aiesha Shule, Timbuktu and WEB Dubois. D-Town farms had collard greens, green peppers, summer squash and lettuce available for Touch of Class to purchase. The produce was incorporated into the school lunch program during the fall of 2009 and has continued to grow. Touch of Class Catering and D-Town Farms have developed a strong relationship that is allowing for expansion of the farm to school program in these schools.

### **Detroit Charter School: University Prep Academy and University Prep Science and Math (UPrep)**

During October 2009, Rehmann conducted meetings with Susan Aaronson who operates the Project Healthy Schools program at UPrep along with the food service provider, Edibles Rex, to discuss ways to collaborate in creating a Farm to School program and supply the schools with fresh produce. During the winter of 2009 and spring of 2010, Rehmann attended monthly meetings with UPrep Healthy Schools Collaborative and began to plan local food days for the school cafeterias. The food service operators featured sweet potatoes grown by a collaborative of farmers in Detroit in December.

During January, Rehmann assisted the school in sourcing the local food items for February and March -- apple slices from Peterson Farms from west Michigan, which were available through the commodity foods program for \$2.50/case (100 pk/case). Because Edibles Rex serves more than just UPrep, they

purchased 55 cases of apple slices per week to be served over 8 weeks. During the fall 2010, Tammy Todesko of Edibles Rex has expressed some difficulty with sourcing. Rehmann suggested begin building relationships and purchasing from specialty crop producers selling at Eastern Market, in addition to purchasing from Grown In Detroit and D-Town Farms. Additionally Rehmann has provided Todesko with contact information for farmers in Livingston, Washtenaw and Jackson counties as she works to grow the farm to school program. The UPrep Farm to School program has grown from featuring a local food once a month during the 2009/2010 school year, to featuring local food twice a month as part of the school meals program, in addition to two tasting days during the month during which unique foods are featured such as rutabaga and brussel sprouts. The addition of tasting days during the month allows the food service to expose students to seasonally appropriate fruits and vegetables and increase their palate.

## **JACKSON COUNTY**

In the fall of 2008, Rehmann began working with Concord Community School's, Jackson Public Schools, and Northwest Community Schools in Jackson County on the development of farm to school programs. Both Concord and Northwest schools are rather small districts, so by building a collaboration among the districts and linking to a larger school district, they were able to increase their purchasing power. Rehmann worked with the school districts throughout the 2008/2009 school year to understand purchasing practices and build an ordering system. Through various networking events hosted by FSEP, the food service directors of these school districts began working with Fusilier Family Farms of Manchester for the 2009/2010 school year. Through FSEP's facilitation of a networking event in December 2009, Fusilier Family Farms began working with DuRussel Farms, also of Manchester, and were able to begin providing the three school districts with potatoes. In turn, DuRussel Farms began distributing Fusilier Farm's apples to Michigan Department of Corrections, Region III facilities. FSEP has aided in the development of strong relationships between the food service directors, farmers and an created an efficient ordering and delivery system, that has allowed the Farm to School program at all three school districts to expand dramatically for the 2010/2011 school year.

During fall 2009, Rehmann met with Napoleon Public Schools Food Service Director, Andrea Haskell and discussed the type of support she would need from FSEP for the 2009/2010 school year. Haskell asked that FSEP continue to facilitate relationships with specialty crop producers by providing information on who is interested in selling to the schools and what produce is available, and to assist the school district in marketing the program. Haskell has been purchasing produce from Curtis Farms in Napoleon and has been serving as much local produce as possible.

Bush presented information about the opportunities for specialty crop producers through season extension production and direct marketing on January 20 at the Jackson Agriculture Council meeting. Bush also conducted a workshop at the Jackson Public Library on February 6 with 30 participants in attendance. The workshop was focused on increasing the financial viability for specialty crop farmers through the CSA business model, direct marketing, season extension techniques, and on-farm sales.

Over the past nine months, Bush has been working with specialty crop producers in Jackson, Ingham, and Eaton counties to form a cooperative focused on season extension produce. Due to her expertise in cooperative development, Bush has been advising the specialty crop producers in how to devise planting schedules, pricing, branding and marketing, grading, packing, and the legal aspects of cooperative formation. Bush and Rehmann have been working with Allegiance Health System in Jackson since February 2010 to connect the cooperative members with the hospital food service directors. Once the cooperative members have formalized their operations, Bush will work with them to connect them to Jackson area schools and restaurants.

Through the work with Allegiance Hospital, Bush and Rehmann were instrumental in providing support and technical assistance for the launch of the Green Market at Allegiance Health – a new farmers' market located across from the hospital. Wade Pregitzer, a local farmer from Munith was able to expand his operation by offering CSA shares to Allegiance Health employees through the new farmers' market. Bush assisted the Green Market Farmers in negotiating purchase agreements with the hospital, and their first purchase was buying the oversupply of tomatoes from Paradise Farms in Jackson in August 2010. Since the initial purchase, Allegiance has purchased specialty crops from No Bad Day's Farm and Snick's Farm as well, both of whom sold their produce at the Green Market during the summer/fall 2010.

## **MONROE COUNTY**

On December 7, 2009 Bush conducted one-on-one business counseling sessions to 6 participants to provide assistance to food and farm businesses including specialty crop producers to allow for the growth of existing businesses and launch of new ventures. Since August 2010, Bush has been providing business counseling services to the McLaughlin Farm, a 20-acre diverse farm operation.

During July 2010, Rehmann met with Dundee School's Food Service director, Zachary Cohen, about the Farm to School and the technical support FSEP is able to provide. Cohen is interested in starting a program, however, one of his primary concerns is adequate insurance coverage and procurement procedures for his company, the district's food service operation is managed by Aramark Corporation. During their July 2010 meeting, Cohen shared that Aramark has Farm to School programs operating in other states, but none currently in Michigan. He is seeking to purchase from specialty crop producers in Dundee, Tecumseh and Clinton. However, he does not understand the procurement procedure for their company, so FSEP can connect them with the farmers who are best suited to meet their needs. Sysco Detroit is his current supplier, so FSEP suggested that Cohen ask Sysco Detroit about product that is locally grown. Rehmann is working to address these barriers with the goal of starting a program in this district in 2011.

## **LENAWEE**

Over the course of the past year, Bush has been providing business counseling to John Craig, a farmer in Adrian who is interested in selling to Saline schools. This farmer has a full-time job, and is farming part-time. He is also interested in selling to restaurants and Bush has been assisting in making this connection. Bush assisted with local sourcing efforts for the "Art-a-Licious/Food-a-Licious" annual event in Adrian in September.

## **OTHER**

During October 2009, Bush assisted Alward Creek Farms located in the Dewitt/St. John's area with development of a marketing plan for their transition potatoes in order to expand the operation. She also provided expertise in grading, packaging, distribution and customer service. Through Bush's assistance, connections have been made to the University of Michigan, Eastern Michigan University, and Zingerman's Delicatessen. Bush also assisted the specialty crop business, Todosciuk Farm in Howell in connecting them to Detroit Public Schools as part of the Farm to School program.

During April 2010, Rehmann presented information about the Farm to School program to a joint meeting of Washtenaw/Livingston food service directors in Hartland. Food Service Directors and cooks from Dexter, Howell, Fowlerville, Whitmore Lake, Saline and Hartland were in attendance. Farmers Gwen Kato (Fowlerville) and Joe Luellen were in attendance, along with Eric Hahn of Locavore Food Distributors. Rehmann discussed how to start a Farm to School program and resources/tools available to help with promotion of the program.

During the annual FSEP conference held on June 24, 2010 at the Jackson Career Center, Bush and Rehmann conducted sessions for farmers focused on how to sell to institutions and expand operations including how to form co-operatives, marketing Farm to School programs, and integrating Farm to School into the school. Other sessions geared to specialty crop producers featured food safety on the farm, and a panel discussion on successful CSA operations. Rehmann and Bush also sourced the food for the conference from specialty crop producers in Southeast Michigan including the Chestnut Growers cooperative, Grown in Detroit, Apple Schram Orchards, Fusilier Family Farms, Garden to Go CSA, Snick's Farm, No Bad Days Farm, Pregizter Farm, Grazing Field Co-operative and Michigan Bean Trading Company. The Food Service Department for Jackson Public Schools prepared the food for the FSEP conference and we leveraged the opportunity to provide exposure of the diversity of specialty crops and introduce new growers to the food service staff.

**II. Objective: Increase access to healthy local foods by children in participating schools thereby increasing the likelihood of healthy weight in children.**

Task: Create and provide localized resource materials for description and promotion of Farm to School Program to participating schools. (Oct 2009 – Dec 2010). *Farm to School Program Director*

Task: Assemble and provide educational resources for nutrition education, related classroom curriculum, school gardens, farm field trips, and other related educational efforts to enhance effect of project. (Oct 2009 – Dec 2010). *Farm to School Program Director*

**OUTCOMES**

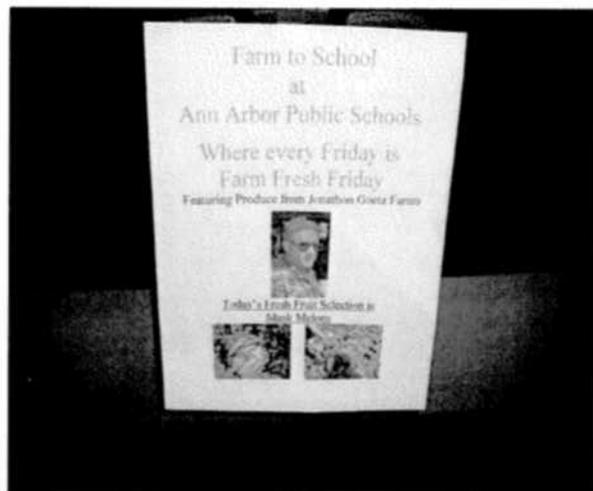
**WASHTENAW COUNTY SCHOOLS**

**Ann Arbor Public Schools**

FSEP has worked with community partners, Agrarian Adventure and Project Healthy Schools to facilitate farmer classroom visits during the school year. The visits began in late October, once the growing season has ended and continue into the following spring, wrapping up around late March. During the 2009/2010 school year there were 57 classrooms averaging 25 students each requesting visits. (Numbers for the 2010/2011 school year are not yet available.) Deb Lentz and staff from Tantre Farm in Chelsea conduct classroom visits, along with Alex Young, owner of Cornman Farms in Dexter and Managing Partner of Zingerman's Roadhouse in Ann Arbor. Lentz has teacher certification and both she and Young have demonstrated their ability to connect the students with the nutritional value of the fresh produce and where the food came from in order to increase consumption.

The Farm to School program in Ann Arbor Public Schools expanded to the district's preschool program during the fall of 2009 and has been well received by parents, students and staff. A local food rescue operation, Food Gatherer's has served as the conduit for fresh produce distribution at the preschools on Thursdays, utilizing locally grown produce donated by specialty crop producers selling at the Wednesday Ann Arbor Farmers' Market. Executive Chef, Neil Young, conducted cooking demonstrations geared towards families with young children, showing them how to use the fresh produce in meal planning, as part of the produce distribution on Thursdays. In November 2009, cooking classes for parents were held utilizing seasonally appropriate foods and 38 parents participated in the first cooking demo with the food service staff and local chefs hosting the demos. Cooking demos continued during the fall 2010 as the farm to school program works to expand household purchases of fresh produce grown by local farmers. The inclusion of Bridge Cards at the Ann Arbor Farmer's Market during the 2010 season provided an opportunity for these low-income families to access additional fruits and vegetables grown by specialty crop producers in Southeast Michigan.

The Farm to School program has expanded beyond Farm Fresh Fridays and is now marketed as Farm Fresh Features as the Food Service Director has worked to purchase more specialty crops to serve to students. During the fall of 2010, local produce was served multiple times per week.



**Ann Arbor Public School elementary student enjoying melon from the Goetz Farm in Riga**

During an April 2010 meeting of the district's Farm to School Collaborative Food Service Director David Lahey shared that the Tappan Middle School cafeteria was getting remodeled as a result of the upcoming National Farm to Cafeteria conference tour, which FSEP helped coordinate. As part of the remodeling, the cafeteria now offers stations with lots of "fresh" food options for students sourced from Michigan's specialty crop producers. The idea is that students feel empowered to make choices, but that the things they have to choose from are all healthy and fresh. Food is then prepared in front of the students instead of being pre-made and served. The goal is to renovate all middle school cafeterias in the district in this manner by January 2011. Ann Arbor Public Schools sources their produce from the Ruhlig and Horkey Brothers farms of Monroe County through Coastal Produce Distributors.

During the June 2010 meeting, the Collaborative discussed the Farm Fresh Features for the upcoming school year and ways to prepare in advance for local food days and also discussed the need for increased communication to the broader community about the Farm to School program and brainstormed ideas of places around town to display the farm fresh feature posters.

### **Saline Public Schools**

In February, Rehmann met with Julie Harsh, Food Service Director to continue working on building the Farm to School program with the launch occurring in May 2010. Rehmann shared the press release she created for Harsh and discussed ways PTO, teachers and administration could be involved. A parent volunteer and special education teacher joined the meeting and they shared their vision for the school district, which is to incorporate Farm to School at all grade levels to incorporate more local food throughout the district. Saline is actively working to secure funding for several hoop-houses which will produce salad greens for the school meals program and provide Agri-science students with business opportunities and provide the students with the necessary skills to grow specialty crops.

### **DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Rehmann utilized student volunteers from Wayne State to create posters highlighting the Farm to School program which were displayed in the school cafeterias. During mid-October 2009, Rehmann conducted meetings with DPS Food Service staff and finalized details for the local food day held on October 14. Ashley Atkinson from the Greening of Detroit attended the meeting and discussed ways that the classroom and school garden components of Farm to School could be implemented. Only one of the 18 pilot schools has a school garden and so Atkinson will be working with the schools to identify parents, teachers, administrators who could help coordinate and oversee a garden in the remaining 17 schools. She will be working to identify a leader for the school that has a garden as it is currently not in production. During this meeting there was discussion about utilizing the school cafeteria kitchens for extra-curricular activities including allowing Greening of Detroit to use the cafeterias for washing and preparing foods grown in the school gardens for taste-testing or cooking demonstrations. A few days before the October local food day, we learned that D-Town Farms had the cabbage they had picked for DPS stolen -- 400 pounds of cabbage. Therefore, the local food day was moved to October 17 and the students received Michigan Apple Cider distributed by the DPS vendor Sun Valley Foods of Detroit. Students loved the cider and many were trying it for the first time. Rehmann created and distributed produce posters on zucchini, summer squash, tomatoes, peppers, watermelon for schools to display on local food days.

### **JACKSON COUNTY SCHOOLS**

Concord Community Schools conducted a local food cooking demo with Chef Brian Renz of Taher Management Company. At the demo, Rehmann shared information about the Farm to School program with Chef Renz and why/how the program works. Chef Renz travels to schools around the country doing cooking demos and would like to encourage the food service directors he meets to purchase more local food. He was very excited about the quality and freshness of the ingredients Concord, Jackson and Northwest are purchasing from our local farmers.

Concord Food Service Director Alan Breneman noted that much progress was made during the fall of 2010 in implementing Farm to School in Concord, Jackson, Northwest, and the YMCA Camp Storer. FSEP facilitated getting buy-in from Washtenaw County farmer, Kathy Fusilier. Fusilier has been delivering fresh produce to Jackson area schools since the fall of 2009. She has now planned what to grow for Jackson area schools and supplied them with specialty crops during the spring and fall 2010 which allowed her to increase sales to the schools.

During November 2009, Rehmann provided the Napoleon Food Service Director with farmer contact information for local apple purchases and marketing materials to post throughout the schools and cafeterias about apples. During December, Rehmann created and distributed produce posters on winter squash for schools to display on local food days.

During June 2010, Rehmann participated in a tasting event at Northeast Elementary school in Jackson. Funding for the event was provided by the schools Fruit & Vegetable Grant Program and Rehmann facilitated a station where students tasted broccoli, coleslaw, radishes, cauliflower and tomatoes. All but the tomatoes were in season, so Rehmann talked with the students about seasonality and knowing where their food comes from. This was the first time the food service has conducted an event where students move from station to station for taste testing's, however, the response was so positive, they are looking at ways to do more events like this in the future. Since the event took place during the last few days of school, many parents accompanied their students and Rehmann was able to talk with them about the Farm to School program.

### **STATE/NATIONAL**

FSEP was approached by the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) and the National Farm to School Network to serve as the local host for the National Farm to Cafeteria conference that was held in Detroit during May 17-19, 2010. Rehmann served as the planning coordinator for the conference which drew over 700 attendees from across the country and even beyond our nation's borders including Brazil, Canada and the Netherlands. This was the highest attended National Farm to Cafeteria conference in CFSC's history. Bush and Rehmann worked closely with specialty crop producers across Michigan to source the food for the conference and highlight the local food efforts across the region including purchases from Giving Tree Farms, Peterson Farms, Purity Foods, Uncle John's Cider Mill, Dawn Foods, Michigan Apple Committee, Locavore Food Distributors, Ypsilanti People's Food Co-op, Alward Creek Farms, Bur Oaks Farm, Avalon International Bakery, Zenner Farms, Ann Arbor Tortilla Company, Michigan Bean Trading Company, Mike Pirrone Produce, American Sweet Bean Company and Zingerman's Deli.



Lisa Richter of Earthworks in Detroit sharing information about urban farms during the National Farm to Cafeteria Conference.

Along with many volunteers, Bush and Rehmann planned and coordinated field trips to schools and institutions including Tappan Middle School in Ann Arbor, the University of Michigan, Earthworks Urban Farm, the Student Organic Farm at MSU, Eastern Market Produce Distribution Companies and DuRussel Farms, to showcase the specialty crop production and sourcing that has grown throughout the region and how each of these programs works to purchase food from Michigan farmers. A highlight of the conference was the proclamation by Governor Granholm who declared "Local Foods Week" during May 16-22 coinciding with the conference to encourage Michigan schools to feature local food on their menus. The Great Lakes Hospital Purchasing group which includes more than 500 schools worked to develop a menu that highlighted Michigan grown and processed products to cafeterias through the "MI Products – MY MICHIGAN – MI School Lunch" promotion during the week of the conference.

Over the course of the past year and a half, Rehmann has been participating in the National Farm to School Great Lakes Networking conference calls where we shared updates of what is happening in each state across the region. Both Minnesota and Wisconsin have utilized federal stimulus money to create farm to school positions at the state level and Ohio is using Specialty Crop Block Grant money to create a two-year position for Farm to School within the State Department of Education.

Rehmann attended the Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan Coalition meeting in Lansing in November 2010 and learned about the various committees and goals for 2011. Several aspects of the Coalition's work align with the goals of Farm to School including working to increase access to fresh and healthy food access through PA 231 and working to increase community and school gardens in underserved areas. The Farm to School program also aligns with the Education Policy Action Team which has been working with the Michigan Board of Education on adopting new nutrition standards and encouraging the inclusion of whole foods in school vending machines. This provides an excellent opportunity for specialty crop producers. The Coalition is also encouraging faculty role modeling so that teachers will eliminate food as

a reward in the classroom and are supporting the shift to healthier options in concession stands, at conferences, school open houses, events ,etc. As these changes continue to take place, the opportunity for specialty crop producers to serve these markets will grow.

**III. Objective: Increase production of fruits and vegetables in Southeast Michigan to be able to supply schools with fresh produce during the school year.**

Task: Conduct classes with beginning farmers about successful fruit and vegetable production. (Oct 2009 – Dec 2010). *Business Development Specialist*

Task: Conduct season extension classes for fruit and vegetable production with new and existing farmers. (Oct 2009 – Dec 2010). *Business Development Specialist*

**IV. Objective: Measure outcomes and success of Farm to School program and increased production and consumption**

Task: Construct evaluation tools for gathering of input data. (Oct 2009 – Dec 2009). *Farm to School Program Director*

Task: Gather and track school purchasing data of local fruits and vegetables to measure increased purchases and consumption of fruits and vegetables. (Oct 2009 – Dec 2010). *Farm to School Program Director*

Task: Interview and survey all participating parties. (June 2010 – Dec 2010). *Farm to School Program Director*

**JACKSON COUNTY**

On February 23, 2010 Rehmann and Bush conducted a Meet & Greet event for farmers and food service professionals at the Jackson Coffee Company. Approximately 20 people participated and shared ideas about how to tap into local markets and expand opportunities for specialty crop producers. The farmers in the meeting began discussing ways they could work together and since the meeting, began working to establish a four seasons growers co-operative to meet the demand for year round locally produced food. . Food Service Director, Brant Russell of Jackson Public Schools attended and was representing Jackson Public Schools, Northwest, Concord and the YMCA Storer Camp and stated that if more local produce was available, they would purchase it. The Conference Coordinator for Spring Arbor University (SAU) was also in attendance and expressed an interest in exploring ways SAU could incorporate local food and support sustainability as a way to set the university apart from others in the area. Since this meeting, Rehmann and Bush have hosted regular networking events in Jackson to increase opportunities for specialty crop producers and connecting them with food purchasers.

During October 2010, Rehmann and Bush planned and coordinated “Jackson Community and Local Food Conversation” event held in October 19, in partnership with the Jackson Community Action Agency as part of a community food profile commissioned by the agency. Approximately 20 people attended the event which served as a networking opportunity to share information about FSEP services including the Farm to School program and business planning support for specialty crop producers.

**LENAWEE COUNTY**

During March 2010, Rehmann and Bush developed and promoted “*Growing for Local Markets*” workshop which was presented in Adrian. The workshop was designed for farmers interested in entering the local food market and presented information about the demand from area institutional buyers, cold crop storage, hoophouse production, food safety, and marketing.

**WASHTENAW COUNTY**

Bush was instrumental in planning the Small Holder Farm and Career Day held at Washtenaw Community College on April 19, 2010. The event was planned as a method to assist specialty crop producers with identifying interns and employees for the upcoming season and as a way for WCC students to connect with local farmers and community supported agriculture programs (CSAs) to learn about jobs in agriculture. The program was a success as many businesses hired employees they networked with at the job fair. Due to the event’s success, it will be held again in February 2011. Additional time will added to the day’s events to allow farmers and food service professionals the opportunity to network, with the goal of increasing the purchase of specialty crops by schools, restaurants, catering companies, universities and hospitals during the 2011 growing season.

## ALL SCHOOLS IN FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

May 2010 was Asparagus Month! Rehmann assisted school food service directors in Concord, Jackson, Northwest, Napoleon, Dexter, Saline, Detroit and University Prep connect with farmers (through Joe Luellen and Associates) for asparagus day in schools. Ann Arbor Public Schools also served asparagus, which was sourced from their broadline distributor. Nearly all of the schools served asparagus during the week of the National Farm to Cafeteria Conference. Rehmann assisted in marketing the asparagus to increase consumption, by providing the schools with information posters on asparagus for display in the school cafeterias, as well as, wrote press releases and a newsletter for distribution across each district. Food Service Directors noticed an increase in consumption and many students noted it was the first time they had ever been served asparagus in school!



Hunt Elementary School student in Jackson enjoying local asparagus from West Michigan growers on Asparagus Day

## EVALUATION

Evaluation of the Farm to School program was conducted by collecting anecdotal information from the food service directors, specialty crop producers, and other stakeholders. One concern that was expressed was that the capacity of FSEP staff to provide technical assistance is limited due to resources and a large service area. Detroit Public Schools requires more hands-on assistance on a daily basis due to challenges faced by the school district, however, FSEP staff is unable to provide daily assistance due to limited staff. Seasonality continues to be a concern for school food service directors as they desire to purchase specialty crops throughout the school year, but producers are unable to provide an adequate supply of produce during the cold, dark winter months of January and February. This presents an opportunity for crops produced in hoop houses and those that utilize cold storage techniques as there is a market for locally grown produce year round. Processing is also a gap for specialty crop producers as some school districts desire to have produce processed prior to arrival at the school as they do not have the labor budget to process whole produce.

FSEP received state-wide and national exposure due to the National Farm to Cafeteria conference. Conference evaluations were positive especially the pre-conference field trips that Rehmann organized which highlighted the Farm to School program, urban farming efforts and distribution systems for locally grown food. The field trips were so popular, an additional bus needed to be added for the Farm to School field trip, raising the number of field trip participants to approximately 270 people. FSEP conducted two sessions at the National Farm to Cafeteria conference which one session focused on FSEP as a regional model for food system change and the second focused on marketing Farm to School programs. The evaluations of these sessions showed they were effective in increasing knowledge about Farm to School programs and which tools work for promoting the program.

Conference evaluations from the FSEP annual conference showed that the "Marketing Local Foods in Schools", "Integrating Farm to School in Your School", and "Gaining Ground for Local Foods through Cooperatives" workshops were well received and participants gained useful knowledge from these sessions.

In August, with assistance from the MSU Product Center, Bush conducted a survey to specialty crop producers to learn about interest and capacity in season extension and specialty crop production in preparation for working with producers in forming a cooperative. The survey clearly showed an interest and willingness of specialty crop producers in meeting market demand by forming a cooperative specifically focused on season extension crops. Since then, Bush has been instrumental in advising the cooperative members in all aspects of the process of forming this venture and purchase agreements have been made with Allegiance Health with the potential to serve schools in Southeast Michigan.

## SPECIALTY CROP PRODUCE PURCHASES BY SCHOOL DISTRICT

The following information represents purchases of specialty crops for three school districts as reported to FSEP during the 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 school years. The charts below demonstrate the impact the Farm to School program can have on the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables from specialty crop producers.

### Concord Community Schools, Northwest Community Schools, Jackson Public Schools and YMCA Camp Storer in Jackson County

Local Food Purchases  
(Concord, Northwest, Jackson school districts and YMCA Camp Storer)  
Fall 2009 v. Fall 2010

Item	2009 quantity	2010 quantity
Apples	246 cases	271 cases
Broccoli		21 cases
Cabbage		6 cases
Carrots	1/2 case	
Cauliflower		1 cases
Cucumber	5 cases	10 cases
Eggplant		3 cases
Onions		8 cases
Peas		1 cases
Peppers	10 cases	17 cases
Potatoes - Red	1 case	25 cases
Potatoes - White		45 cases
Sweet Corn	2 cases	2 cases
Sweet Potatoes		2 cases
Tomatoes	44 cases	40 cases
Tomatoes - grape		17 cases
Watermelon		68 cases
Winter Squash		8 cases

During the 2010/2011 school year, the Farm to School programs in Jackson, Northwest and Concord have featured the produce described above including: seven varieties of apples (Paula Red, Ginger Gold, Gala, Macintosh, Jonamac, Golden Delicious, and Fuji), two different varieties of winter squash (Blue Hubbard and Acorn) and green and red peppers and cabbage.