



Warren County Food Corps, 2011-2012

What is Food Corps?

Food Corps is a new national service program that seeks to increase children's knowledge of, engagement with, and access to healthy food. Ten states have been selected to participate in this inaugural year of the program, and service members will serve in 42 communities nationally.

Who is sponsoring Food Corps?

The North Carolina Food Corps program is being sponsored by NC4-H and the NCSU Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS), and the Warren County position is being co-sponsored by Working Landscapes and the UNC Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. In North Carolina, six Food Corps service members will conduct nutrition education, build and tend school gardens, and expand farm to cafeteria sourcing of healthy food in New Hanover County, Brunswick County, Wake County, Wayne County, Guilford County, Gaston County, Moore County and Warren County.

Who is Warren County's Food Corps service member?

Celeste Frisbee will be serving in Warren County from Sept 2011-August 2012. She is from Mount Vernon, Washington, where her childhood playground was 50 acres of cows, horses, trout fishing in a creek, and a big garden with fruit trees. She began working in the spinach fields at the age of 12 and spent 5 summers working alongside migrant crews. From this early experience she learned firsthand about not only back-breaking work, but about the socio-economical struggles around the business of agriculture. Celeste graduated from Washington State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Spanish and a Minor in International Business. After working for Dole for a number of years, she helped to establish and run the Skagit Wholesale Market in Washington State and provided consulting on sales and marketing for Viva Farms in Skagit, Washington. She has worked with youth as a camp counselor, ski bus chaperone, ESL tutor, substitute teacher, and led a 5-week English language program in China for her alma mater.

What will Celeste and Food Corps do in Warren County?

Celeste will work with students, teachers, school officials and interested residents to promote healthy eating and hands-on education in Warren County through three distinct but related program areas: 1) supporting more local sourcing in school cafeterias, 2) gardening education, and 3) nutrition education. Key activities for each goal are described below.

Goal One: Help source and promote local food in the school cafeteria.

Approximately 50% of Celeste's time will be devoted to developing capacity for local sourcing by Warren County Schools. Celeste will work with a county-wide Farm-to-School team to develop a 3-year plan to increase healthy, local food served in the cafeterias and to help build new connections between farmers and the Warren County school system.

Milestone 1: Convene a Farm-to-School action team that comprises stakeholders necessary to implementing eventual recommendations (school officials, farmers, civic leaders, interested residents)

Milestone 2: Assess current purchasing /cooking/preparation; learn from regional successes; identify opportunities for more local sourcing

Activity 1: Talk with nutrition director and obtain purchasing records

Activity 2: Talk with kitchen staff, and a selection of students about what they would like to see change regarding the food served in the cafeterias

Activity 3: Assess purchasing patterns and develop accessible information about current local/regional food production to share with stakeholder—requires research and synthesis of existing data and new data collection

Activity 4: Identify opportunities for more local sourcing through purchasing history and analysis of local production

Activity 5: Talk with regional Farm to School coordinator; learn from others with experience in this arena (such as Madison Farms program in Madison County)

Milestone 3: Communicate with local growers to 1) gauge interest in growing for school system, 2) to understand barriers to serving the school system, and 3) to discuss opportunities for reducing barriers

Activity 1: Talk with local producers and review recent research about farming capacity and trends, summarize interest in serving school system

Activity 2: Develop farm-specific and county-wide scenarios for more local production that could effectively serve the local school system or contribute to statewide Farm-to-School program

Activity 3: Develop a short presentation that conveys the rules governing sourcing for school system, as well as explaining current purchasing volumes

Activity 4: Plan and publicize interest meeting(s)

Activity 5: Host meeting(s) and produce short report on outcomes that identifies specific, actionable tasks most likely to support Farm-to-School within 2 years

Milestone 4: In partnership with school system, interested farmers and the Farm-to-School team, develop a 3-year plan for increasing local sourcing for the Warren County school system

Activity 1: Draft a plan for increasing local sourcing; present to Working Landscapes staff, Cooperative Extension, and school system personnel for review

Activity 2: Present plan at a public meeting no later than June 2012

Milestone 5: working from the plan, identify at least one crop that can be aggregated from local growers during the 2012 growing season and stored for use during the 2012-13 school year (may have to wait until summer 2013)

Goal Two: Build, tend, and incorporate school gardens into the educational setting

Approximately 30-35% of Celeste's time will be devoted to helping to grow the capacity of the school garden at Warren County High School, and to teaching students about gardening. She will collaborate with Mr. Tom Traylor, and look to build relationships with other teachers interested in using the school garden in their curriculums (such as Mr. Derrick Fogg and Ms. Oney Jones).

Milestone 1: Determine which teachers and which classes to engage in the garden and greenhouse and how they will be engaged

Activity 1: Hold meetings with potential teachers and Mr. Ernie Conner, and determine how to best engage students

Milestone 2: Incorporate greenhouse and garden education into existing classes and develop new educational opportunities, which may include a garden club and entrepreneurial opportunities such as starting a CSA or farm stand, or contributions to the Farm-to-School planning process

Activity 1: Determine location and lay out the food garden in conjunction with Mr. Traylor who is already tending a garden with his Agriculture students; determine use of the greenhouse;

Activity 2: Plant, tend, and harvest the garden, using the greenhouse for plant starts, and lead classes in the planting, tending, and harvesting

Activity 3: Provide lectures to classes on gardening techniques or resources so that teachers can provide them, and help other teachers (science, business, etc) take advantage of the garden as a resource for teaching, learning and experimentation

Activity 4: Work with students to explore whether or not the agriculture program could supply fruits and vegetables to the school food service (as part of the Farm-to-School planning process) and what food safety considerations are needed (referral to NC State Extension's Dr. Ben Chapman's guidelines)

Activity 5: Keep records of numbers of classes and students who are engaged in the garden, use the produce from the garden, and/or consume produce from the garden, and evaluate the success of the garden in terms of yield, number of classes and students engaged, and the satisfaction of students and teachers.

Milestone 3: Engage students at the adjacent Warren County Middle School in the garden through harvest, planting, taste-testing, and/or other hands-on learning activities.

Activity 1: Meet with the principal of WCMS (Mr. Wray Cannaday) and selected teachers (Karen Jerman – teaches a 9-week cooking class)

Activity 2: Develop plans for engaging which classrooms at WCMS and in what ways, and provide resources that teachers can use to engage students in gardening and how it relates to the standard course of study: Culinary Arts students could provide cooking demos or taste-testing to middle school students in science or health classes, Agriculture students could teach middle school students in science or physical education classes to plant, weed, and harvest produce.

Activity 3: Plan, schedule, conduct and evaluate events with WCHS and WCMS students

Goal Three: Teach kids about healthy food and nutrition

Approximately 15-20% of Celeste's time will be devoted to teaching students about healthy food and nutrition. This will include creating new opportunities for students to try fresh, healthy and locally-grown food (including food grown in the school garden/greenhouse) through tastings

and other engaging activities, as well as working with existing coursework and education (such as Mr. Fogg's and Ms. Jones' classes).

Milestone 1: Determine in which schools and classrooms to provide education about healthy food and nutrition, including cooking demos and taste-tests with school garden produce.

Activity 1: Identify teachers at Warren County High School and Warren County Middle Schools who are interested in providing their students with healthy food and nutrition education.

Activity 2: Determine daily and weekly schedule, topics to be covered, resources needed, who should provide any lecture or food activity.

Milestone 2: Conduct educational activities about healthy food and nutrition

Activity 1: Schedule with County Extension staff or other external resources, as needed, to provide additional educational resources

Activity 2: Engage high school students in the educational activities that are provided to middle school students.

Activity 3: Develop engaging methods to introduce healthy eating, offer educational experiences at many school events, such as sporting events

Activity 4: Evaluate whether the learning objectives were met.

Step 1: Obtain Food Corps National-developed evaluation and amend as needed.

Step 2: Work with teachers to administer the pre and post-test evaluations

Step 3: Work with site hosts to summarize the results.

Connections to Other Efforts

To enhance the effectiveness of the activities described above, the Food Corps Service Member will also work to integrate gardening and nutrition education into other educational and community events. These may include working with the Warren County Memorial Library to support nutrition and gardening education to students through the library's programming, working with art or shop teachers/classes to design art and infrastructure related to food and gardening, or working with other school clubs (journalism, theatre) to integrate gardening and nutrition education through their activities. We welcome your ideas for how to take a holistic approach to gardening and nutrition education!

Finally, Warren County will also be a part of a growing statewide network promoting school gardening, nutrition education and farm-to-school sourcing. We look forward to learning from the other Food Corps sites in North Carolina.

For more information about Food Corps, please contact Carla Norwood at (919) 323-4254 or carla.norwood@duke.edu.