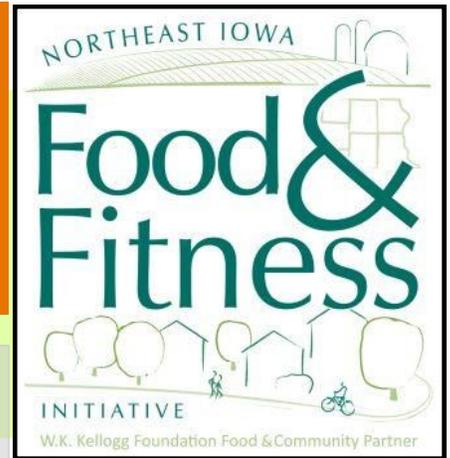


FOOD & FITNESS NEWS

FALL 2013



Celebrate Good Health!

What's the first thing that comes to mind when thinking of an 80-year-old's morning routine? Is it walking wiggly, giggly, energetic youngsters to school each morning? Probably not.

However, take a peek at the life of Richard Simon Hanson, and that is exactly what this 82-year-old professor emeritus and longtime resident of Decorah is up to each weekday morning — volunteering for a Decorah Walking School Bus.



What started out as a simple answer to a Northeast Iowa RSVP volunteer request has become a wonderful adventure no one anticipated. Hanson began volunteering with the Walking School Bus two mornings a week this fall. Just one week into the school year, the popularity of the Walking School Bus grew from 5 students to well over 20. With the increased number of little feet on board, Hanson took it upon himself to start walking every morning to lend a hand of the other volunteers.

Hanson, who was already a morning walker before volunteering with the Walking School Bus, decided that since he was already walking, why not lend a helping hand at the same time.

Hanson's student passengers have become a Walking School Bus family of sorts for Hanson. With his own grandchildren living hours away, Hanson is delighted for the opportunity to be a "grandpa" to these students each morning. And it's safe to say that the feeling is mutual; one student has even given him a school picture, just like a grandchild would.

The icing on the cake? Hanson gets to share his morning adventures, toils and teachable moments with the residents at Aase Haugen nursing home—Hanson's other daily volunteer activity. The residents look forward to his report day in and day out. To show their appreciation, Aase Haugen gave Hanson five umbrellas. The umbrellas have proven useful for both poor weather AND poor behavior: if a student begins to act

up, Hanson just asks them to hold onto an umbrella, and magically, the poor behavior disappears.

When asked about his favorite part of the Walking School Bus, with a smile on his face, Hanson simply states, "Everything." He also noted that if others tried it, they just might like it.

Hanson has no plans of slowing down, not even for the looming Iowa winter. Instead, Hanson will continue to head across town each and every weekday morning to walk his student passengers to school through the cold and snowy months ahead. Why? Well, as Hanson puts it, "to celebrate good health while it lasts," of course!

If only the world had more people like Richard...

Interested in becoming a Walking School Bus volunteer or having your children join a Walking School Bus? Contact Ashley Christensen at 563-382-6171 or achristensen@uerpc.org.

The Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative is grounded in the work of these core partners:



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach



Building a Food System—One Box at a Time

We caught up with Nick McCann one day as he navigated the streets of Decorah on his way to assemble bags of food for a workplace food box program, a new type of community supported agriculture (CSA) enterprise. It is organized through a northeast Iowa regional food hub.

“What this is designed to do is to create a win-win,” says McCann, business specialist for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. “The customers end up with a weekly delivery [at their workplace] of local food at a reasonable price. The farmers have an additional market for their product at a fair price and don’t have to deal with the demands of marketing and logistics.”

McCann is researching the viability of a weekly food delivery program as the primary revenue source for a broader food aggregation service in northeast Iowa. Worksites are targeted because of the volume of business they provide per stop. He works with a team to locate and collect local produce and products, then package and deliver these to employees of businesses like Rockwell Collins and Upper Iowa University. Food box contents vary weekly and seasonally, but typically include local produce, meat, bread, eggs and milk. There are no limits on what items the boxes may contain. In winter, organic produce from a food cooperative may be substituted for local produce.

While the food box program essentially covers all the delivery costs for a truckload of food, it offers several other advantages. For example, it allows McCann to easily find markets for surplus food. “Farmers typically overplant for their growing season,” explains McCann, “allocating extra land and labor to insure they have adequate produce no matter the growing and weather conditions.”

McCann also notes that it can be difficult for local farmers to manage packaging, transport and marketing on top of production. “It’s not just the amount of work,” he says, “It’s the amount of focus that it requires to get everything done.”

In September, the Winneshiek County Agricultural Extension District purchased a refrigerated truck with funds from a USDA RBEG grant to provide technical assistance to farmers to transport goods to markets throughout the region through the Food Hub Program.

Goods from the region are being delivered to markets in Iowa City, Waterloo/Cedar Falls and Twin Cities areas. McCann estimated about \$12,000 in monthly sales are coming back to the region through the program that serves nearly 50 farms throughout the region.



The northeast Iowa regional food hub partners include Iowa State University Extension, Allamakee New Beginnings, the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative, Northeast Iowa Funders Network, Convergence Partnership, Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, and USDA Rural Development.

‘C’ is for Cauliflower

Connecting locally grown food to our youngest children has been a collaborative effort with NE Iowa Food and Fitness (FFI) and the Head Start classrooms of Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation (NEICAC) this fall.

Almost forty percent of children in NE Iowa’s fifteen Head Start classrooms are overweight or obese compared to the National Head Start statistics of 28.5%. This high percentage puts these children at a higher risk of developing asthma, diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease.

Research shows that the preschool years are a particularly sensitive period in the formation of life long habits and taste preferences. Since early eating habits impact weight gain and health issues across a child's life the need for healthy meals starts much earlier than grade school.

That is where Farm to Preschool comes in. It is a program that connects farms with nearby preschools and child care centers to form the kinds of relationships that will benefit us all - children, families, communities and local farmers.



Learning from the Pros

This fall, we welcomed three visitors from Seattle when they came to NE Iowa to offer a training on FEEST.

The WK Kellogg Foundation supported the training by bringing in two adults and a youth from Seattle as facilitators. Seattle is the birthplace of FEEST — Food Empowerment Education and Sustainability Team. They have an after-school program at Chief Sealth High School and Evergreen High School where they do improvisational cooking in the kitchen where they prepare a delicious and healthy meal. Then they eat together family-style while learning more about food and its impact on people and their communities.

FEEST came to NE Iowa two years ago when youth members from Postville and West Union attended a national meeting and learned about the program. The youth wanted to create that experience in their towns. To deepen the knowledge and honor the mission of FEEST, a training was held in September, 2013, for Postville, West Union (North Fayette), and Decorah FFI 4-H youth and adult partners.

In addition, Cici Mueller has been hired as the FEEST coordinator to work with the three sites this year. Three youth internships have been created to strengthen the leadership, communication, marketing and organizational pieces of the program. The internships include a small stipend in return for leading FEEST in their community and completing necessary reporting. The FEEST interns are Sam Iversen, Decorah; Sam Poppen, West Union and Molly Brackett, Postville.

Research indicates that when students learn where food comes from, how it is grown, have hands-on experiences, and use their senses to understand it, they are more likely to taste new food items and accept them as part of their diet and build a foundation of lifelong healthy choices. Nutrition education at the preschool level can also prove instrumental in influencing the development of healthy eating habits while developing kindergarten readiness through hands-on activities in the areas of science, math, art and literacy.

Cauliflower was the featured food in October.

- Shelly Stubbs, a teacher in Monona, bought four different kinds of cauliflower at the farmer's market in Marquette and did taste test during the month.
- According to Sandy Johnson, Oelwein Center Manager, Teacher Carrie Kostohryz made cauliflower cookies with the children "They loved helping make them and thought they were good tasting," she reports.
- Sara Converse, a teacher in West Union, shared a couple of her favorite cauliflower hummus recipes for families to try. You can find the recipes on our blog.
- Waukon children (below) prepare green cauliflower salad for the parent celebration party later that day.



PASSING THE TONGS

Kaylee Michelson (right), Roberto from Seattle FEEST and Sam Poppen, new West Union FEEST Youth Intern. Kaylee brought FEEST to West Union when she was in high school. She joined the training to celebrate the transition of leadership to Sam.



Creating Collective Impact

By Ann Mansfield, Project Coordinator

NE Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative leaders attended a 'Collective Impact in Healthy Living' workshop this fall sponsored by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation and Foundation Strategy Group (FSG), an international group of social impact consultants.

This workshop brought together eight mature, collective impact initiatives focused on healthy living in communities across the country to explore the specific challenges and opportunities of healthy living collective impact efforts.

FSG defines collective impact as the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a complex social problem.

In order to create lasting solutions to social problems on a large-scale, organizations — including those in government, civil society, and the business sector — need to coordinate their efforts and work together around a clearly defined goal.

Collective Impact is a significant shift from the social sector's current paradigm of "isolated impact," because the underlying premise of collective impact is that no single organization can create large-scale, lasting social change alone. There is no "silver bullet" solution to systemic social problems, and these problems cannot be solved by simply scaling or replicating one organization or program. Strong organizations are necessary but not sufficient for large-scale social change.

We are on the right track. The four core partners including Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, Luther College, Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission and NE Iowa Community College, area schools and hundreds of community partners have worked together to develop the five conditions necessary for collective impact: common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication and backbone support.



Farm to School Month

During the month of October, students across the region enjoyed local food in their classrooms and cafeterias while learning all about the benefits of local food.

Service member volunteers provided countless taste tests of local items like kale smoothies, coleslaw, sweet potatoes, and zucchini hummus. Service members encouraged Super Tasters, organized trips to area farms and serving over 6000 lbs of local produce in schools. Not only was food purchased from area farmers, but also several of the schools served food grown in school gardens. Now that's fresh!

While October is officially National Farm to School Month, FFI will continue to help schools offer local food throughout the school year.



Decorah Schools served locally-processed BBQ pork on a home-made whole wheat roll accompanied by potato wedges, local coleslaw, radish salad from the school garden and local apples for lunch during October Farm to School month.

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