



Winneshiek County Team March 17, 2010

The Winneshiek County Team met on March 17, 2010 from 4:30 to 6 p.m. at the Decorah City Hall. There were 25 people present: Brenda Balk, Dan Beard, Ron Bullerman, Donella Darrington, Rick Edwards, Deb Edwards, Lindsay Erdman, Larry Grimstad, Jeanett Hansen, Bill Ibanez, Janet Lamebert, Ann Mansfield, Alma Meyer, Eric Nordschow, Marissa Nordschow, Janelle Pavlovec, Betty Ransom, Brenda Ranum, Krista Vandenbrink, Mike Haluska, Jon Lubke, Kristin Kriener, Kyril Henderson, Rachel Wobeter and Flannery Cerbin.

Introduction Activity Responses:

During introductions the participants talked about their last experience involving a school lunch. These are among the responses:

- * Luther College
- * Mom made all meals during grade school
- * I ate school lunch every day, they were great!
- * Never ate a school lunch, always brought my own
- * It's been since grade school that I remember those lunches, but they were very good
- * I only ate dessert

Old Business & Reports:

Farm to School Report: Rachel and Flannery reported there has been an effort in the 6-county region to improve the relationship between local producers and schools. This group would like to see school lunches that are fresh, local, and homemade. Efforts have been made to move toward these goals. Six schools are currently involved in the pilot program: Decorah, Howard/Winneshiek, Starmont, Turkey Valley, Postville and Olwein. There are three key segments: Education, Teacher Training and Food Service.

Summary of program and discussion:

Education: Thus far schools have focused on a different local food each month (meat, dairy, greenhouse produce etc.) They are starting with 2nd grade, but hope this program can be replicated for any classroom, anywhere.

Teacher Training: Teachers have taken part in classes to learn how food can be incorporated into reading, math and other subjects. They've also been taught to be more conscious of their personal choices in front of students. The example was made 'Should teachers be drinking Mt. Dew at their desks when they're trying to educate that juice and water are better options?'

Food Service: Unfortunately, cheaper and faster has become the norm. Food service meetings have been held to discuss what schools, parents and kids want. They talked about logistics, costs and legal issues. ServeSafe and SafeFood programs have taken place to certify local food service employees. And school gardens are being planned for each of the schools by partnering with David Cavagnaro.

Discussion: Grimstad felt that there are still a lot of barriers; federal, rising costs for schools, schools set in their old ways, USDA regulations. He said we can't expect schools to pay more because of all the cuts they're facing right now. He wondered if the community could raise funds to 'prime the pump' for future projects and programs. Ranum said many of the barriers are simply perceived barriers. She gave the example that Turkey Valley had some resistance, but recently installed a salad bar. There are so many kids using the salad bar now that it has actually paid for their hot lunch program.

Work Group Updates: Kreiner told the group that South Winn elementary are still working hard. They are currently thinking of ways to develop safe walking trails and routes to school in Ossian knowing by using existing sidewalks and low-traffic roads. She also said they will talk to the Ossian Crown Club to possibly turn some unused buildings downtown into “Anytime Fitness” type buildings. She said we might as well give these buildings a purpose, create gathering spaces and bring some life into the downtown.

Erdman said there’s a group of trail enthusiasts who have developed a Google mapping system of safe routs for bikes. Erdman’s team will review these options and determine if they are feasible and how to move forward. They are not trails that need to be built, rather, they use existing roads but define that they are bike-friendly with painted symbols. He said another big question is how to safely direct people off of the trails into our downtown areas. There’s a lot of work to be done with signage but a lot of testing that needs to happen first. He joked, “We need a few strangers to get lost in town and tell us what to do.” That will give us important data on where signs need to be placed and what they need to say.

Action items for next meeting:

Winneshiek County Public Health Nurse Krista Vandenbrink will discuss county health rankings for Iowa's counties and will present a PowerPoint about the rankings from the Iowa Department of Public Health.

Submitted by: Brenda Balk