

Aspire Large Group

February 28, 2018

Central Nine

Carmen opened with information on Rock the Block run. We are very close to having the minimum of 20 and offered to register people. She also gave an update on the trails plan and the municipal meeting held last January.

Kent welcomed everyone and held a round robin.

Jessie Lewis, community branch manager for FCFCU, welcomed as the meeting sponsor and gave an update on the credit union.

Dana noted that the employability workshop is also being held today and has 28 participants for the first workshop. She then introduced Erin Slevin to begin the local food summit panel.

Erin Slevin, NEP Community wellness coordinator opened the panel and explained why a local food summit was held. The issue of food insecurity, healthy and local food in schools, the economic value of using local foods in a restaurant, food deserts and general wellness were all issues that kept coming up with all the municipalities. She brought this information to Aspire, the placemaking team, and a subcommittee was created to partner with Purdue Extension to create and hold the food summit.

Erin gave an overview of the network of local food, how it develops and creates a community food system. A community food system shows what a community values. Do they value quick and cheap or long term and healthy? There is a direct relationship between food insecurity and poverty, and locally sourced foods can be a way to address this need. This affects low income workers, seniors, and children in every county in the state. Erin provided data on food costs each household spends on food in the county. There are several areas in the county that have food deserts in the county, even on the north end of the county, due to lack of transportation for people, but also a lack of a store that sells local, healthy foods. Convenience foods are much more accessible and often more in line with their income. Many of our students depend on free and reduced lunch in order to get a healthy meal. The schools are beginning to use local foods and creating a food-to-school table network.

Sarah Hanson, county extension director and extension educator, discussed the local food farming and local agriculture network in the county. She gave data on the number of farms selling directly to consumers= 44. However we only spend \$2 per capita on local foods sold directly from local farmers. The majority of crops grown are corn and soybeans. This constitutes over 92% of the food grown in our county. Ag jobs in the county are 55,000 and average wage is \$41,000 yearly. A large number are in retail, such as restaurants and grocery stores. We are at 84%. Actual farmers are only 2.5%. For the retail workers the average wage is only \$19,0000 yearly.

In Johnson County 4% of the dollars spent on food come from SNAP benefits and other assistance. If every Johnson county household spent \$5 week at a farmers market, the farmers would earn 6.3 million directly from consumers, including the amount already being spent.

Sarah also gave a quick overview of the state Indiana Grown program which was presented at the food summit. This program promotes locally grown foods and provides a conduit to help local farmers get their products in grocery stores and restaurants in Indiana. A specific label also helps residents identify local foods for purchase.

Jill Overton, Franklin Community Schools food service director, was part of the panel and gave an overview of the panel and her role in the panel. The panel included John Woodbury who grew lettuce by aquaponics and now has other vegetables using high towers, similar to greenhouses. Stephanie Rich from Hoosier Brewhouse who discussed how restaurants are using local foods. Rachel Miller from Piazza Produce who discussed how food distributors try to connect with local foods for vendors. And Dr. Yousef Mohammadi, a family medicine care doctor at community health network who talked about the connection between health and healthy food, focusing on natural medicine and how foods can help with specific illnesses.

Franklin schools purchase vegetables from Nature's organics and apples from Appleworks. They always identify the vegetables and fruits that they serve as locally grown for the kids and what those vegetables are. Franklin schools also have a summer feeding program in which they offer lunch meals at different sites for students who qualify. This allows families to stretch their food dollars more and provide students with a hot meal through the week, just as they would get during the school year. They served over 21,000 meals this past summer. In 2018 they hope to offer these meals at the Franklin library to increase sites for students. Currently they are served at Northwood. By expanding out to libraries, they hope to increase reading literacy as well.

The afternoon sessions were roundtable discussions and Jill gave an overview of some of the takeaways from these. There is a need for more education to the parents about summer reading programs. What companies are Indiana grown and use local farms. There is also a need to continue to support local foods when you shop and dine. Also using local foods when companies host meetings and events. More food being donated to local food pantries.

The committee would like to hold a second summit this Fall, focusing more on food insecurity and food deserts in the county and how to integrate local foods in the workplace with meeting events as well as, activities and increasing local foods in the schools.

At this time there are no incentives from the state for farmers to diversify their foods and grow more table produce as opposed to major crops such as corn. Some of the regulations from USDA slowed the progress of bringing local foods into schools. The regulations are important but need to be revised to allow for more local foods. There is still a need to educate students on where their food comes from and what other food options are available. The issue of food deserts is a growing problem and is one topic that will be addressed at the next food summit. Another issue to be addressed is how can bring more local foods and fresh foods into food pantries. Another topic this group discussed was how to get our residents to choose health foods over "junk" foods.

Next meeting: Annual meeting at the Nest March 21st. Please rsvp by March 9th if you plan to attend.