



HARTFORD FOOD SYSTEM



Fall 2011 Newsletter

It's hard to imagine a stranger autumn weather. While we watched the October snow melt from our Park Street office, we wrapped up a couple of our seasonal programs and continue to prepare exciting new things for the community. Here are some highlights from our programs and some things to expect in the future.

North End Farmers' Market



On the last Wednesday in October, Hartford Food System's North End Farmers' Market wrapped up another successful season of bringing fresh and local produce to the North End neighborhoods of Hartford. In the fourth season since its inauguration in 2008, the North End Farmers' Market has become an institution for many community members who faithfully visit the market every week, rain or shine. Shoppers who frequented the market during the 2011 season enjoyed live music, a puppet show, a variety of healthy recipes, and delicious fruits and vegetables.

The 2011 season also saw the establishment of the North End Farmers' Markets Double Value Program for SNAP and WIC. For the first time in, shoppers were able to double the value of their SNAP benefits and their WIC Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers. The Double Value Program succeeded in making the market more accessible and attractive to shoppers using food assistance benefits, more than doubling all the sales in SNAP and WIC Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers from the entire 2010 season within the first few weeks.

The North End Farmers' Market will open again next summer for another exciting season. Look for us again starting in June on Wednesdays from 10 AM - 1 PM at 80 Coventry Street in the North End.

Grow Hartford

Grow Hartford completed a very productive eighth season in all four sites, including a new one on Main Street. Our team harvested more than 21,000 pounds (more than 10 tons) of fresh, wholesome, organically grown fruits and vegetables for Hartford households, including low-income families, and human service organizations. The fresh fruits and vegetables made their way across the state, being sold from the Coventry Regional Farmers' Market to a special fundraiser night for Hartford Food System at the Flatbread Company in Canton, which featured Grow Hartford vegetables on their pizzas that night.

A summer youth crew composed of 15 culturally diverse students -- representing nationalities such as Iraq, Thailand, Jamaica, Mexico, and Puerto Rico -- helped with Grow Hartford and learned valuable skills. Eight girls and seven boys worked HARD planting, weeding, watering, building and filling raised beds, harvesting, and spreading mulch in weather that was both enjoyable and oppressive; yet, there were no complaints.

"Everyone got along exceptionally well! Every day with them was the highlight of my day. We learned a lot, we sweat a lot, and some of us even lost some weight but we laughed a lot and that was great."
- Sharon Lewis, Youth Coordinator



Grace Academy Food Justice Club

This fall, Hartford Food System has returned to Grace Academy to facilitate the second offering of the school's Food Justice Club. The club is made up of 5th, 6th, and 7th grade girls, some of whom are returning for their second year in the club. Hartford Food System Youth Coordinator, Sharon Lewis, is leading the club, facilitating discussions on food justice and teaching the students what it means to be a food activist.

The club gives the students the opportunity to share their ideas and experiences about food issues in their own communities and to become empowered as food activists themselves. We are excited that we are able to again work with the amazing students of Grace Academy and look forward to this opportunity to raise the awareness of issues of food justice in our community.

First Annual Hartford Harvest Market



On Saturday, November 19, Hartford Food System, Knox Parks, Billings Forge Community Works, and the West End Farmers' Market joined forces to host the first annual Hartford Harvest Market. The event, which was held at the Knox Parks greenhouse, was developed in order to give farmers the opportunity to extend their growing season while providing community members the chance to do their Thanksgiving shopping with local vendors. The Harvest Market attracted almost 600 visitors who enjoyed a festive setting to do their shopping while enjoying live music and a variety of delicious food options. From local produce to jams to tacos, the market offered something for everybody.

The Harvest Market was also a drop-off site for Foodshare's "A Turkey and a Twenty" campaign and received 11 turkeys and over \$400 in donations to Foodshare. Vendors and shoppers alike enjoyed the market's festive ambiance, and we are looking forward to making the Harvest Market an annual event.

Healthy Food Retailer Initiative

Our Healthy Food Retailer Initiative program continues to work with corner stores and bodegas throughout the city to increase accessibility and availability of healthier food. In this phase of the project, we are continuing to work with a group of store owners to strengthen their roles as healthy community assets through marketing and outreach strategies that promote healthy options in their stores.

This October, one of our participants, Romny Mini Mart, was given a City of Hartford Community Food Security Award for their dedication to providing healthy food options to their neighborhood.

Check out Romny's and other participating Bodegas' great selection of healthy options at the addresses below:

- Romny Mini Market: 1892 Broad Street
- Green Apple: 264 Farmington Avenue
- Carlos Supermarket: 189 Farmington Avenue
- El Kiosko: 570 Wethersfield Avenue
- Sigourney Grocery: 97 Ashley Street
- People's Plaza: 1631 Main Street
- Kathy's C-Store: 423 Main Street
- El Gitano: 673 Park Street

North Hartford Community Kitchen

We are excited to announce a new program debuting in January 2012 -- the North Hartford Community Kitchen. The goal of this program is to promote healthy eating, to give participants hands-on cooking skills and experience, and to reinforce for our residents that it is possible to advocate for better food and to eat well on a limited budget. Classes will meet twice a week at Parker Memorial Community Center in the Northeast neighborhood of Hartford, and will feature a sister program, Cooking Matters™, for six weeks. The classes will provide information and techniques about nutrition, starting an indoor vegetable garden, oral health, and much more. Claudine Constant, Outreach Coordinator, is very excited to get The Kitchen in full swing, and cannot wait for others to see the finished product. Stay tuned!



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