

HFFA holds Farm to School spring fling food event

The next generation of farmers, chefs and foodies gathered at Monora Park Pavilion May 24 to celebrate the success of Headwaters Food and Farming Alliance (HFFA) Farm to School programs, and to provide feedback to fertilize future endeavours.

The family-positive evening included a fun Food Fashions for All Seasons fashion show, a raucous game of Farmer Family Feud, presentation of Golden Carrot Awards recognizing supportive farmers and local food sellers, a local food meal, and children getting their hands dirty making dessert in the kitchen and planting seedlings to take home. Attendees also heard about the new Headwaters Food Charter and many added their personal endorsement on the spot. Program partners in attendance included Food and Friends, a project of The Children's Foundation of Guelph and Wellington, and Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health.

After enjoying the entertaining program showcases and a local meal catered by Lavender Blue, families, farmers, teachers and food enthusiasts met in small focus groups to provide feedback on the programs to date.

"We'd love to take a peek in the kitchens of families participating in our programs to see the impacts first hand," Program Coordinator Jennifer Payne stated, "but since we can't do that, we have invited them all to come out and tell us in person."

"We are formally evaluating our programs to see how they are working and how they might better serve our communities of growers and eaters, present and future," she added. "Some of the best feedback we received today was from the kids themselves."

Those attending the event were very enthusiastic about the work of the Farm to School team. Twelve-year-old Faith Moffat, who took part in the fashion show, said that Local Food Club night is one of the highlights of the month at her home.

Program Coordinator Nicole Hambleton indicated that in addition to enhancing programs, the Farm to School team is also interested in reaching more families and exploring a sustainable model.

"We would love to expand our programs," he said. "It is so rewarding to be able to share information on local food, farming life and food preparation skills and help make local food more accessible in our community."

The three Farm to School programs are funded by an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant. The monthly Local Food Club gives students the chance to bring locally sourced food home to their families to make a seasonal, family-friendly recipe. The Family Food Classes bring farmers, chefs, dietitians and families together to teach valuable food skills. Education Workshops pair local farmers with local schools for class visits that teach about the local food system and farming life. Programs are delivered by HFFA, an organization dedicated to supporting food and farming in Dufferin County and Caledon. HFFA is in turn a project of Headwaters Communities in Action, a registered charity working on community wellbeing and "making life better together."

Anyone looking for more information or wishing to get involved is encouraged to visit www.hffa.ca/farmtoschool



Golden Carrot awards were presented to Bob Thomas, Jamie Richards, Amy Ouchterlony, Rebecca Landman and Amanda Coutts by Program Coordinators Jennifer Payne and Nicole Hambleton (in costume as Sandy Celeriac! from the Food for All Seasons fashion show.) Additional recipients not in the picture were Brooke Reid, Shannon Stirling and Silvio Clarlandini. Photo by Ashley Jamieson-Burford