

# Community Food Projects Program Annual Report

## **GROWING PARTNERS OF SOUTHWEST COLORADO**

Southern Ute Community Action Program

---

**PROJECT GOAL:** In a collaborative effort with other local organizations, the project will conduct a community food assessment to gather information on the food and nutrition needs of underserved populations, including low-income and older adults, with emphases on agriculture, gardening, educational programs, gleaning projects, and farm-to-school programs.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** To identify resources and needs regarding a. the local food system, b. underserved populations, c. farm to schools and d. key stakeholders.

*ACTIVITIES: From October 1, 2005 through September 30, 2006, Growing Partners reached objective through an expansive literature search and analysis of both national and county data, conducting written and in person interviews, and distributing a community and youth survey to the general public. A total of 469 interviews and surveys have been completed.*

**OBJECTIVE 2:** To strengthen links between existing food system groups.

*ACTIVITIES: From October 1, 2005 through September 30, 2006, Growing Partners reached objective 2 through conducting interviews with farmers, agencies, school administration, and business owners. Other activities included attending community meetings with collaborating agencies.*

**OBJECTIVE 3:** To promote community learning and participation through the community food assessment.

*ACTIVITIES: From October 1, 2005 through September 30, 2006, Growing Partners presented information on the local food system, community food security, and available resources in the form of public forums and educational materials. Two public forums were held in the spring of 2006 and fall of 2006. Educational materials include the Growing Partners brochure, farm tour booklet, local harvest calendar, food menu, and charitable resource guide. Other forms of participation included seeking a diverse set of people for interviews and volunteer recruitment.*

**OBJECTIVE 4:** To use the results of the community food assessment to plan effective Community Food Projects

*ACTIVITIES: From October 1, 2006 through December 31, 2006 activities include the final report of the community food assessment, organization of the food project matrix and the eventual design of a five year plan and strategic planning sessions for Growing Partners and extended organizations.*

## **ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY**

---

Data collected for the community food assessment focused on both qualitative and quantitative data. Before beginning the assessment Growing Partners spent several months planning the project including the goals, audience, methods, and internal and external evaluation. This involved researching other community food projects and their methodologies, identifying existing county and national research, and identifying a broad spectrum of questions and topics they could focus on. Growing Partners then sought the

support and advice of the community in reaching these goals and narrowing the focus of the assessment.

A planning survey was distributed to the local Farms to School group and other community members to narrow the scope for the youth and school portion of the assessment; a presentation was given to the Southern Ute Tribal Council to inform them of the project and identify possible areas of interest for the tribe; a flyer and media campaign was completed that sought support and feedback from the community; and lastly a community-wide food forum was held in Ignacio. The forum was open to all community members. The goal of the first forum was to educate the community on the CFA and to seek community feedback on planning the area of focus for the food assessment.

Data for the food assessment was collected in the following ways:

1. Written Surveys: In-person and phone interviews
2. Consumer Surveys
3. Community Food Forums
4. Secondary Data Resources & Other County Assessments
5. Community Meetings

### **INTERVIEWS AND SURVEYS:**

Interviews and surveys were tailored for each specific population resulting in separate surveys for farmers and ranchers, youth, school administration and staff, non-profit and social service agencies, Hispanics, and consumers. In each of the surveys, there were some common questions and themes asked of each group such as: What are our greatest community food needs? What are our greatest community food strengths and resources? And, what does food security mean to La Plata County residents?

A total of 469 surveys have been collected to date, representing 35 farmers, 36 agencies, 36 restaurants, 13 grocers, 123 consumers, 96 forum participants, 100 youth, 25 schools, and 5 medical and nutritional experts. Interviews and surveys ranged from a 15-minute consumer survey to a 6-hour in person interview. In person and phone interviews not only tended to provide more in depth data, they also provided more opportunity for education and networking among Growing Partners and participating individuals and organizations.

### **FOOD FORUMS:**

As part of the planning and data collection, two public forums were held. The first was in the town of Ignacio and the second in Hesperus. Over 60 people attended the Ignacio forum. With great community support, a free, locally grown and prepared dinner was provided. Participants were asked to identify areas for research as well as individuals and organizations to include in the assessment.

The second forum was held in August of 2006 in Hesperus. This forum was focused on outreaching the residents of the Fort Lewis Mesa District, where much of the agricultural land in our community is located. The second forum was designed to hear from the community about the food and agricultural needs and resources in their region of the county, with a focus on agricultural and rural food security.

### **CONSUMER SURVEYS:**

A consumer survey was developed in April of 2006. The survey was designed to reach as many La Plata County residents as possible to connect socio-demographic information with

food choices, perceptions, needs, and interest in food projects. Surveys were administered in numerous locations and at several events in the county in order to get a wide range of participants. Some of the locations or events included: The Taste of Durango, Cinco de Mayo, Farmers' Appreciation Day, The Durango Farmers' Market, Mountain Valley Market, USDA Commodities Food Distribution, and The San Juan Basin Health Clinic.

### **SECONDARY DATA RESOURCES:**

Growing Partners utilized existing county information from a variety of national and local literary resources. Survey information was collected from other county assessments including the 2006 Grassroots Visioning Projects, 2006 Healthy Lifestyle Coalition health assessment, Operation Healthy Communities Pathways Index (socio-economic profile), and the Fort Lewis Mesa 2006 Planning survey. The Durango 9R School District and the Nutrition Task Force also provided Growing Partners with the results of a district food services study and 500 parent and student surveys.

### **COALITION MEETINGS:**

Growing Partners attended regular meetings with the local Farms to School group, Nutrition Task Force, Sustainability Alliance, Healthy Lifestyle Coalition, and Fort Lewis Mesa Planning Group. Growing Partners staff participated in the meetings to reach its goal of strengthening and expanding food networks as well as gathering data about the food needs and resources of these existing community groups.

### **EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS:**

In addition to conducting a research assessment, Growing Partners used gathered data to produce educational materials to redistribute to the community while conducting the assessment. A harvest calendar, local foods menu, Farm-to-School product list, farm tours booklet, and informational brochure on Growing Partners and goals of the community food assessment were all produced.

### **EVALUATION**

---

Growing Partners used several methods of evaluation including the development and use of a logic model, monthly management team meetings, monthly progress reports and the use of the common output tracking form. The Growing Partners staff used a monthly progress report to categorize the amount of time spent on various project tasks including: Research, Data Collection and Analysis, Volunteer Recruitment and Networking, Evaluation, Administration and Staff Meetings and contact.

SWMN's Jim Dyer served as the team's evaluator. At an initial meeting of the project team in October 2005, the draft logic model was reviewed to serve as the basis of quarterly assessments of the team's progress. The logic model's goals and corresponding outcomes were listed previously in this report. These quarterly project team assessments were conducted on 18 January, 15 May, and 25 September 2006.

At each session, the goals and outcomes were revisited to see if changes were necessary, but the team saw no need for substantive changes throughout this process. Then the team assessed progress toward each outcome, noting whether they felt they were on target for achieving the outcome by the end of the project, and what adjustments were needed. This review did result in them changing priorities of specific tasks, dropping some tasks, and substituting others. The most common adjustments made were decisions to bring in specific

additional stakeholders deemed necessary for specific outcomes. In each session, they also queried team members as to effectiveness of internal communications, workload, and similar work situations. This resulted in streamlining of communications, shifting work among team members, and clarifying responsibilities.

### **SELF SUSTAINABILITY**

---

With funding provided through this grant, Growing Partners has built the necessary relationships and food networks to implement many of the suggested community food projects. In working with nearly 500 individuals, agencies, schools, businesses, and farmers in the last year, Growing Partners has made significant progress in strengthening the local food system.

Community education and interest on the food system greatly grew from this project. Farmers were equipped with a new message regarding the demand for local products, schools learned about the possibilities of a Farm-to-School program, and agencies were encouraged by the number of possible projects available to enhance their existing programs. The food assessment served as an excellent tool to speak with the community on the meaning and importance of community food security, the definition of a local food system, and the community food projects to strengthen both of these.

Data collected also equipped the Growing Partners team with several new tools regarding the needs and existing resources of the community and with ways in which to work within a diverse community. The assessment and final report, which will be made public to the community through the website and paper report, will also enable other groups to gain the necessary information to build on their own food programs. The website will be used as a marketing strategy as well as a consistent source of opportunities for more community involvement. The partnerships and linkages developed between local food establishments, producers, community organizers, and consumers have also been strengthened. Individually and collectively the partners have, and will, continue to solicit funds from local and national funding organizations in order to continue their work. Overall, it is the collaboration of the organizations, a joint vision for the community, and commitment to making each program successful that will sustain this project.

### **APPENDIXES TO ANNUAL REPORT:**

---

1. Budget Summary – Attached in Word, Prepared by SUCAP
2. Growing Partners Brochure – Attached in PDF format
3. Harvest Calendar – Attached in PDF format
4. Survey and Interviews – Available per request