2011-12 Wisconsin Idea Fellowship

Slow Food Educational Outreach and Social Justice Initiative

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Partnership: The Morgridge Center for Public Service, Slow Food UW, Badger Rock Middle School, and the Boys and Girls Club of Dane County

Goal: Educate children about healthy, sustainable food; resolve health and food access disparities in Madison; and support Madison area farmers.

Our Foodshed of Madison, WI

Health Disparities

The prevalence of obesity among black people in America is 35.7%, whereas among white people it is 23.7%. Disparities in health outcomes can also be seen among different income levels in America. Medical costs of obesity in the US in 2008 were estimated at $147 billion in 2008. Low income people in America experience the physical costs of a poor diet at a higher rate than the average American. This chart demonstrates the health challenges that low-income individuals in South Madison often face. By teaching kids to cook fresh foods and get physical exercise by gardening, we hope to teach them the affordability and engagement that a healthy lifestyle can garner.

Environmental Degradation

Cheap oil lowers the costs of fuel, fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, metallic ores, irrigation, packaging, and refrigeration so essential to industrial farming and food manufacture. Ubiquitous and over-intensive use of these inputs in and technologies has resulted in widespread erosion of soil and water resources and in erosion of the health and vitality of our own and our fellow species. Jack Kloppenberg "Coming into the Foodshed" pg 35

Support Local Economy

Because half of the world’s assets and consumer expenditure belong to the food system, we hope to afford change by shifting our monetary flow towards local farmers. We source most of our food for all three of our weekly meal programs through local farmers. The average morsel of American food travels 1500 miles. The USDA census of Agriculture, smaller farms produce more food per acre whether you measure in tons, calories, or dollars, than industrial, large farms, unless we want to have separate economy and farmer’s market sections distancing of food—75 cents of every dollar goes to someone other than the farmer and goes to costs such as packaging, storage, and marketing.

Health Problems

- Affordable access to calorie dense, but low-nutrient foods has become prevalent in our country. The trend leads to enormous economic and physical stressors.

Underlying causes of health disparities in America are less frequented by the general population. As part of the Slow Food South Madison project participants during Fall 2011. The class met bi-weekly to discuss topics of environmental degradation, sustainable farming, health disparities, poverty, and animal rights as they relate to the food system. The service learning class provided knowledgeable student volunteers for the Family Voices project and teen cooking nights and also reached beyond the WIF sphere to educate children at the Madison Children’s Museum and hold campus food justice discussions.

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Starting in Spring of 2012, Slow Food South Madison has provided locally sourced, sustainable meals and snacks for the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation’s (WARF) Science Outreach program. WARF brings about twenty elementary and middle school students to campus every Monday to provide them with exciting lab experience in the biological sciences.

During fall semester of 2011, Wisconsin Idea Fellow Cara Ladd began serving as a teacher’s aide and volunteers at the newly instated Badger Rock Middle School. The unique school curriculum focused on integrating socially relevant issues as well as food-related topics into daily lessons, with weekly programming through Growing Power-Madison that involved teaching students about growing their own food through use of the school’s own local garden. Cara worked with the students during one full school day weekly, as sitting with food lessons and uniting students in the Slow Food Movement through leading a lesson on school lunch in conjunction with the Make Farm to School Happen campaign. Badger Rock will provide environmental education opportunities for future Slow Food students, thereby achieving our goal of spreading the knowledge on good, clean, fair food to the next generation.