

Ohio Farm to School Newsletter

July 2018

Congratulations to Ohio's USDA Grant Recipients!

The 2018 Farm to School Grant recipients have been announced! USDA's Farm to School Grants fund school districts, State and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations, agricultural producers, and non-profit organizations in their efforts to increase local foods served through child nutrition programs, teach children about food and agriculture through garden and classroom education, and develop schools' and farmers' capacities to participate in farm to school. For the 2018 - 2019 school year, 73 grants will serve more than 6,006 schools and 2.8 million students, nearly 66 percent of whom are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Check out our to learn more!

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmentoschool/farm-school-grant-program>

Ohio's two grantees are **Rural Action Inc.**, The Plains was awarded an implementation grant. They will receive \$99,820 to build upon an existing regional partnership of four organizations working in local and healthy food system development in the Appalachian region of Ohio. The four partners are Rural Action, Live Healthy Appalachia, Community Food Initiatives and the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACEnet) will leverage and expand

upon the collective impacts of their farm to school and healthy eating initiatives by intentionally connecting their current programs. The four partners along with their school district and farm partners, will create a multi-stakeholder farm to school culture that supports expectations and capacity for year-long local food consumption that works to equate local food with healthy food.

Stark County Educational Service Center, Canton was awarded an implementation grant for \$96,299. Stark County Schools "Putting Down Roots", will target and invest in four themes; sustainability, marketing, procurement, and education using strategies in the classroom, cafeteria, and community.

See related article:

<http://www.cantonrep.com/news/20180619/plain-local-looks-to-freshen-its-school-food-menu>

Ohio Farmer magazine reporter Gail Keck covered the National Farm to Cafeteria Conference. Here is the great article!

http://www.ohiofarmer.com/education/efforts-ramp-bring-local-foods-school-cafeterias?NL=FP-012&Issue=FP-012_20180522_FP-012_827&sfvc4enews=42&cl=article_1&utm_rid=CPG02000003365638&utm_campaign=27813&utm_medium=email&elq2=3bf15f1db1cd4c7ebed8c0dfa000d56f

Who Grew Your Food? Was it Yellowbird?

Yellowbird Foodshed of Mount Vernon has connected local farmers and small food companies with its more than 900 Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) members in the Columbus area. They have also provided produce to central Ohio school and college cafeterias.

Benji Ballmer founder of Yellowbird said, "The *Ohio Days: My State, My Plate* monthly Farm to School promotion taking place in central Ohio is a stepping stone to increasing local food sales. Many schools want to do more with local foods. However, it is a hassle for them to coordinate buying the food directly from the farmer therefore, we can step in. We are not trying to infringe upon that farmer relationship, but we can be the go between."

In order for the grower to really benefit with farm to school procurement, the school's need to be ordering their local produce about four months in advance through contracts so the growers can plan their plantings. Buying from farmers only once, does not give growers an advantage. If schools committed to buying more local products throughout the year, that would really help the grower, he explained.

Upper Arlington City Schools purchased from Yellowbird Foodshed. "Over the course of the year, they provided us with local produce items such as a spring lettuce blend, fresh coleslaw mix and cubed sweet potatoes. Not only was the product exceptional quality, but Yellowbird Foodshed did whatever they could to help us out and find the product we were looking for. On one occasion in particular, the original product they were going to provide us with was no longer available in the quantity needed. Instead of telling me they could no longer supply us with anything, Benji searched until he found us an acceptable replacement and went out of their way to ensure we had it on time. Their customer service was just as great as the product they provided," said Irene Hunt, director of nutritional services at Upper Arlington.

Most farmers do not have on farm refrigeration or the long term storage for their products. We are helping the growers as our warehouse is located in the middle of many of our growers, this cuts down on travel for them. Some farmers deliver to the



Each Yellowbird delivery truck asks "Who grew your food?"

Kathy Neal with Hand Hewn Farm of Fresno, OH raises pastured poultry, eggs, rabbits and pork is pictured with Benji Ballmer of Yellowbird



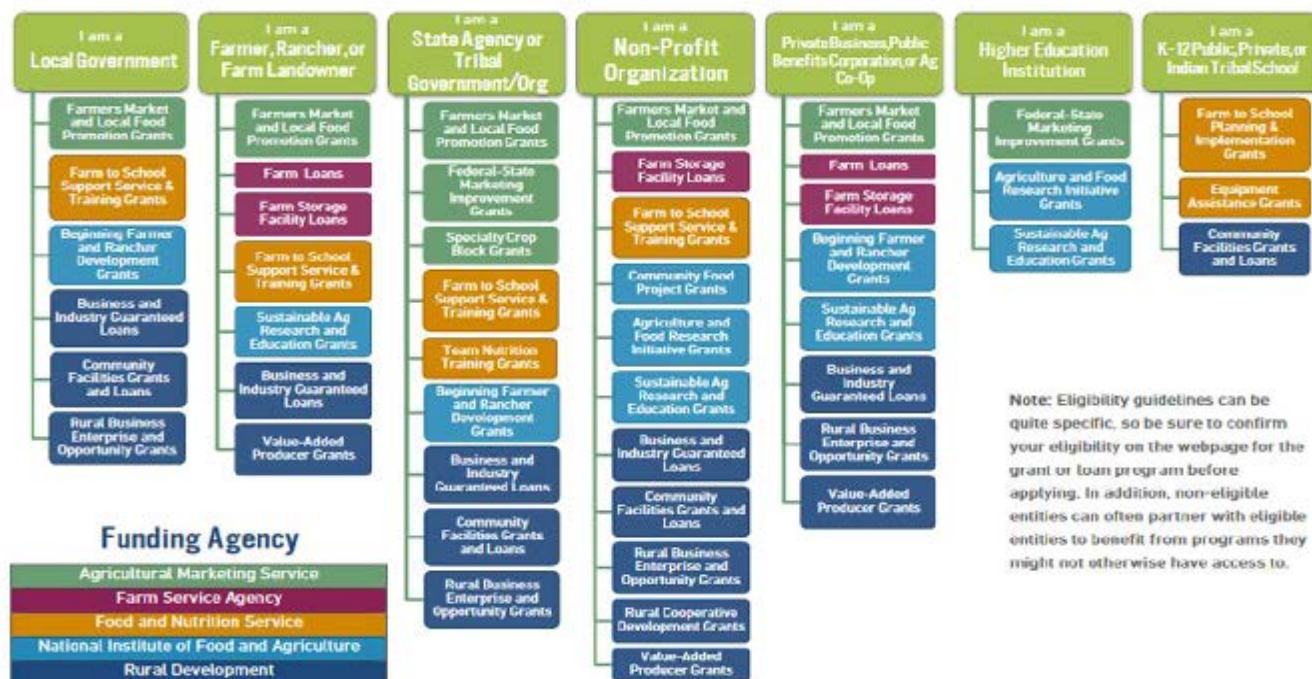
Yellowbird warehouse others have Yellowbird refrigerated trucks pick up the produce directly from their farm. It is repacked at the warehouse, then sent to the Columbus area. "We are providing the growers an outlet that will pay them at higher than wholesale price. Last year we spent more than \$500,000 on produce. That money goes directly to growers," Ballmer said.

We have created a sales channel and a winning scenario for nearly 50 farmers. This model does not work well with only a few producers. Our customers are supporting a sustainable local food system. They are getting the best value and flavor along with treating our growers fairly, he said.

Continued on page 4

USDA Grants and Loans that Support Farm to School Activities

Funding from the US Department of Agriculture is available to assist farms, schools, and every link in between in feeding kids healthy local meals; teaching them about food, farming and nutrition; and supporting local agricultural economies. While the programs listed below provide a good starting point for those looking to bolster farm to school efforts, other USDA grant and loan programs support local food systems work as well. Visit www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer and www.usda.gov/farmtoschool for more information.



The Great Lakes Great Apple Crunch is October 11th



The Great Lake region's goal is to register 1.7 million crunchers. Last year Ohio alone had more than 100,000 participants registered. We can double that number in 2018! The free crunch toolkit is now available at <http://www.cias.wisc.edu/applecrunch/>

Continued from page 2 "Food becomes fuel for our bodies so we can fight disease. We know that 75% of the diseases are preventable, he explained. When we present that message to the parents of school-aged children, then these parents will want to get behind having fresh healthy local food in the cafeterias," he explained. "There is a reason local food tastes better than non-local food...it tastes best, because it is picked at its best nutrition, as we catch it right before it falls off the vine. An example is local tomatoes, they are picked after it has turned red, which is when we will receive the best nutrition," he said. As compared to tomatoes, which are picked while green in other states then trucked to us.

We need people to make the right choices regarding our children's diets. We need to promote it in a way that people will put their money behind it. As we speak to the parents, we need to tell them their child's brain needs fueled three times a day. We need to rethink how we feed our children...without so much added sugar.

Our CSA customers want their families to eat healthier. They are voting for more sustainable food with their dollars. We need to convince the school systems to make a change and pay the farmers a fair price. Ballmer said, "for farm to school to be successful in Ohio we need more processing, storage facilities, flash freezing equipment, and high pressure processing. Throughout Ohio, we need more food companies like ours to supply sustainable products and align with schools' needs. I suggest that we decentralize the food system one customer at a time, he concluded."



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