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Student at University of OK serving Farm to School watermelons



Oklahoma Farm to School

Hello from Farm to School

I hope you have had a fantastic year and sure you are looking forward to the summer! Thank-you so much for your commitment to purchasing from local growers and adding to your school lunch program through the Oklahoma Farm to School Program. The seedless watermelons were super in Fall 08 and we will continue to make that available again for Fall 2009 from Perennial Produce with plans to include cantaloupe from Peach Crest Farms on the statewide program. This past year has been spent recruiting more local growers to be able to provide

more choices of produce and products, developing promotional materials, doing many presentations, school activities and launching the farm to school website in Nov. The link to the website is www.okfarmtoschool.com. If you would like to add/change information to your school's listing that has to do with Farm to School on the website, please let me know.

I continue to look for growers that can be matched directly to a school district close to their farm that can offer a more diverse selection of produce, offer farm visits, possible



summer jobs to students, etc. I will contact you directly if there is one in your area.

Yours truly,

Chris Kirby

Oklahoma Farm to School

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- 59 school districts are now part of the Oklahoma Farm to School Program
- 3 Universities participate in Farm to School
- 1 Career Tech growing lettuce for their cafeteria

Distribution Partners for Statewide Program Fall 09

We have continued to build additional partnerships with our distributors which will enable more school districts to participate in the statewide farm to school program. The distributors that have

agreed to work with us on the statewide produce program are **Thomas Brothers OKC and Tulsa, Vinyards Produce, Tulsa Fruit Company, Frontier Produce Company, Mid America Food Service,**

US Food Service, Ben E. Keith, Sysco Oklahoma, Buddy's Produce Company, OKIE Produce, Jim's Produce & Southwest Foodservice.

If you receive food from any of the (cont.)



Distribution Partners (cont. from Page 1)



Shawnee Middle School students munching on locally grown watermelon



Jill Stichler, KJ Vineyards, showing her new juice pops in her vineyard

companies listed, we can definitely get farm to school produce delivered to you. Many of your sales and delivery people will not be familiar with the program until they start delivering farm to school items to you. We have developed the partnerships with the main offices of these companies and the sales and delivery people have become more involved once

the program starts. If you wanted to participate in the program in the past but we couldn't get delivery to you, please do not give up. We are forging new partnerships all the time. Go ahead and fill out the order form and we will work on the delivery over the summer.

We appreciate our distribution partners for helping to make locally grown produce available to the

schools. They have helped some of our farmers the opportunity to get their fresh produce to the schools for an affordable price

They are truly community partners to our schools and our farmers!

Produce Available for Fall 09

Produce that will be available to order on the Farm to School Statewide Program, is yummy seedless watermelons grown by Perennial Produce in Albert, OK which is south of Hinton and sweet juicy cantaloupe grown by Peach Crest Farms in Stratford, OK.

Kevin Hughes owns Perennial Produce and purchased the Albert/Oney Peanut Coop that

had been closed for several years. He retro-fitted the area into his new watermelon shed and along with a couple of hundred acres of watermelon production and a lot of help from his in-laws, the Prices, he is able to grow sweet crisp seedless watermelons in the months of August—October.

Susan Bergen, owner of Peach Crest Farms in Stratford, has

had a challenging year this spring. With a late season hard freeze that wiped out her peach crop, Susan is looking forward to growing scrumptious cantaloupe for the farm to school program along with many other field crops. Susan is a great supporter of Farm to School & looks forward to being able to provide fresh fruit to students in Oklahoma.

Products Available for Fall 09

There will be some new healthy farm to school products available this year. These items can be directly shipped to you or hand delivered until we have our food product distribution partnerships developed. We will be offering:

1) *Grandma Opal's cookies* – 100% whole wheat pre-portioned oatmeal raisin or chocolate chip cookie dough, ready to bake, made with quality ingredients (no trans fats and no preservatives) and wheat grown in Oklahoma. The

product is being offered by Tami & David Buss of Hunter, OK. Many school districts already serve these yummy healthy cookies in their lunch program. Purchase 10 cases and delivery is free.

2) *Grape Juice Pops* from KJ Vineyards in Lexington, OK – 2 oz. of 100% locally grown and processed grape juice (not reconstituted juice) with no sugar, high fructose corn syrup or water added. They are shelf stable and you put them in your

freezer before ready to serve. They are yummy & healthy. KJ Vineyards is owned by Jill Stichler & Kathy Bates.

3) *Beef Jerky & sticks* made from certified organic beef from CattleTracks, John & Kris Gosney of Fairview, OK – healthy, yummy and organic

We have been able to provide samples to some school districts and if you need a sample prior to ordering, please let Chris know and she will get them to you.

Upcoming Workshop —Don't Miss!

We would like to invite you to a special local food focus session at the American Farmers & Ranchers building in Oklahoma City to meet with farmers and gain a better understanding of how farm to school can serve your needs. We will be discussing fresh fruits and vegetables, new products, look at schools needs for whole grain products, do sampling, meet with other progressive child nutrition directors like yourself and have lunch made with locally grown produce and products. It will be a very informal

meeting and will be scheduled for 10:00am – 3:00pm. Please let Chris know via email or phone as soon as possible if you will be able to attend. Registration will be limited to the 1st 60 applicants.

**When: Tuesday, June 23, 2009
10:00am—3:00pm**

Where: American Farmers & Ranchers Building, 800 N. Harvey, Oklahoma City, OK 73102

Who: School District Food Service Directors /Managers

Cost: Free—Locally grown meal will be served at lunch

Why: Chance to meet Oklahoma Farmers Face to Face, sample locally grown produce and products, discuss needs for whole wheat products for schools, meet with other progressive child nutrition directors and more.

Must pre-register. Deadline for registration:

Monday, June 17, 2009



Universities Joining Farm to School too

The University of Oklahoma was the first university to join the Oklahoma Farm to School program in 2007. They have made a commitment to buy local produce and products for many of their food service operations. They recently opened their Healthy Fast Foods line named the “Laughing Tomato” purchasing from and promoting local farmers. During their Earth Week celebration, a mini Farmers Market was recently held on the campus where students, faculty and staff were able

to sample local foods and also take home a tomato or pepper plant.

The University of Science & Arts of Oklahoma in Chickasha joined the program in 2008 serving fresh local watermelons with hopes to provide more local offerings in the upcoming year.

Oklahoma State University recently won grand prize at the OSU Creativity Challenge with their “Farm to University Dining” idea. Terry Baker, Food Service direc-

tor said she used a lot of information from the Oklahoma Farm to School website and other sources to develop their entry concept. You will be seeing local produce & products in their food service operations this fall. They recently opened a restaurant in the new North classroom Building called “Roots” that focuses on organic healthy foods and they hope to use local produce in that restaurant as well.

Activities an important part of Farm to School

Whether a student is taste testing a piece of fresh asparagus as they learn how it grows and how to cook it or planting a tomato plant in their school or home garden, hands-on activities are an important part in getting youth to eat more fruits and vegetables. With the Oklahoma Farm to School program, hands-on activities have included grilling fresh vegeta-

bles, planting vegetable plants in biodegradable pots made of newspaper, growing veggies in indoor garden labs, mini farmers markets, farm field days, and food service workshops to name a few. Produce, plants and products are purchased directly from our local growers and then incorporated into many fun and meaningful activities. “This is the best activ-

ity that we have done all year”, says one Stillwater Middle School student. Over 250 students got to learn how to grill fresh asparagus and all participated in the taste testing with approx. 60% asking for seconds. Many hands-on activities have taken place across the state at elementary, middle and high schools along with Universities.



Oologah FFA student, Rashelle Blakeley, helps students from Alcott Elementary in Tulsa choose a tomato plant to take home

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New Website

www.okfarmtoschool.com

Growing Healthy Kids and a Healthy Rural Economy!



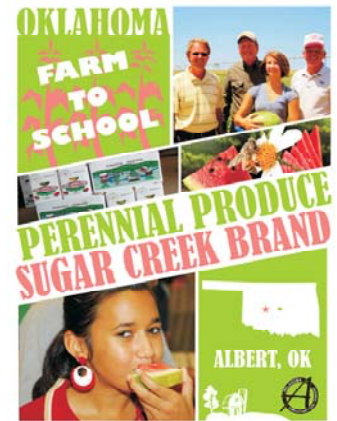
OSU Graduate student visits Todd & Jamey Hanley to see crops growing in the winter in their hoop house in Norman, OK

Farm to School is easy to join!

Farm to School is perfect for the school's Breakfast, Lunch, & Snack Programs along with the Fruit and Vegetable Grant Program.

Contact: Chris Kirby, Farm to School Coordinator for more details

We would like to thank the schools for responding to the recent survey sent out by Oklahoma State University Food & Agricultural Products Center's graduate student Anh Vo who is working on a grant through USDA –FSMIP studying distribution models for Farm to School!



Statewide Orders Due By June 25, 2009



Fresh cantaloupe almost ready to pick at Peach Crest Farm in Stratford, OK

Once again, I know that school is coming to a close very quickly but before you leave for the summer, to help with proper planning & distribution, I really need to know if you are going to participate in the Farm to School for fall, what your estimated first delivery date will be, quantity needs by produce type and week, **summer contact information** and who your produce delivery company is. Enclosed is a form that you can fill out and then fax, mail, or email to Chris **by June 25, 2009.**

We have had a lot of fun with this program while enhancing access for our students to fresh fruits & vegetables and providing economic & community opportunities for our farm families. We have so much to build towards in the future. Please know that you are not in this alone. There are many community partners ready to help in this effort from parents to county extension nutrition educators to health advocates and many more. Communication is one of the keys to success with the program, so please do not hesitate to

contact Chris with your questions, concerns, needs, comments & ideas.

HAVE A
WONDERFUL
SUMMER AND
LOOKING FORWARD
TO WORKING WITH
YOU!