

Everybody Eats

Volume 16

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Access to Fresh, Local Food for All at the Farmers Markets

GardenShare will be supporting the Farmers Markets in Canton, Gouverneur, Hammond, Massena, and Potsdam this year by providing the equipment and administrative support so the markets can accept SNAP benefits, as well as debit and credit cards. The Whitten Mobile Market and Martin's Farmstand near Potsdam also accept SNAP benefits.

For families and seniors who rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called food stamps), access to and affordability of healthy, fresh fruits and vegetables can be a challenge. GardenShare is excited to announce that, thanks to a grant from **Excellus BlueCross BlueShield** and a state program, we expect to be able to offer double value to SNAP recipients at this year's Farmers Markets. For each \$5 purchase via a SNAP EBT card, GardenShare expects to be able to add an additional \$5 worth of produce purchasing power.

One single mother in the Canton area has this to say about using her SNAP benefits at the market: "Being able to use

my SNAP benefits at the local Farmers Market not only keeps money in St. Lawrence County, it also allows me more opportunities with more varieties and mainly, more nutrients for the buck. The interaction with the farmers alone opens a whole other dimension for my kids. They witness the communication and questions being answered by the farmers who put so much love and hard work into the food they sell. We then, as a family have a deeper respect and appreciation for what is on our plate."

And it's a plus for the farmers, too. According to Mike Watkins of Lazy River Farm in Hermon, "As a farmer at Canton's market, I see many faces including families, business men, SLU students, groups of children with daycare providers, and seniors. Many are recurrent patrons and I have built a great relationship with them over the years. With the variety of people that attend the market and purchase my vegetables, fruit, berries, etc. a majority of them use SNAP tokens. If the EBT machine wasn't available to people at the market, I wouldn't have the number of sales I count on. SNAP brings more people to the market and broadens horizons for both my business and



Local Food Guide

Look for your 2016 St. Lawrence County Local Food Guide in the mail around the end of May!

CSA Bonus Bucks

Making the benefits of CSA available to all

Purchasing a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) share provides farmers with a financial safety net to purchase seeds and supplies in preparation for the growing season, allowing the consumer to share the bounty if a harvest is plentiful, and bear some of the deficit if a season is unfruitful.

GardenShare's CSA Bonus Bucks program allows recipients to purchase a CSA share at a reduced price if they feel the original cost to be outside their budget. To see if your household qualifies and to download an application for the 2016 season, visit gardenshare.org or call GardenShare at 315-261-8054.

Sowing Solutions

Thoughts from our Executive Director

Another Farmers Market season will be upon us before we know it and things are really buzzing at GardenShare as we get ready.

Jenelle Matthews started at GardenShare earlier this year. She will be working on promoting the Farmers Markets and particularly promoting the markets to families receiving SNAP benefits. Jenelle is engaging volunteers to help with this project—will you join her?

There's been a lot of talk in the region recently about SNAP recipients and nutrition, with two bills designed to limit what people can purchase with SNAP funds introduced by local legislators.

A better, and proven way, to get more fruits and vegetables into the kitchens (and the stomachs) of

SNAP households is to offer incentives. GardenShare will be doing this again this season.

We expect, with a combination of state funds and a grant from **Excellus BlueCross BlueShield** to be able to double every \$5 purchase made with a SNAP EBT card at a Farmers Market this summer!

You can also help us reach low-income families, including those who are not SNAP recipients, by donating Farmers Market tokens that our staff and volunteers will distribute to families in need. Tokens come in increments of \$5 and those who receive them can spend them at any Market in the County. Even a small gift can make a big difference!



Jenelle

Food Day Youth Summit - Action Projects Making a Difference

Last October, school groups from around the North Country attended the third Food Day Youth Summit. Each school created an Action Plan – a set of steps that they would implement in their school to help them along the path towards stronger food systems. We've been checking in with those groups to see what progress they have made.

Students at Beekmantown High School in Plattsburg left the Youth Summit energized.

Since October, they have connected with Cornell Cooperative Extension to learn gardening skills and they now have a Grow Light System that allows them to grow their own perennials and vegetables.

Teri LaMora, mentor of the Beekmantown Green Team, says that the projects have made a huge difference. "Overall, engaging in training and support from Cornell Cooperative Extension has opened doors for our students. They are tending to our own garden in the classroom, and will be planting their own plants on school grounds. In addition, students are even going to grow some veggies of their own to take home." The group celebrates their achievements with field trips and workshops – they recently attended a "Gardeners March Madness" event in their community.

"...students are even going to grow some veggies of their own to take home."

Other schools have met similar successes. Canton Central School students received a grant through National Agriculture in the Classroom that will help them

bolster their school garden programs and bring local food into their cafeterias.

Students at LaFargeville Central School plan to have a table at the local Wellness Fair in May, where they will

host workshops about healthy food preparation.

Schools across the North Country are making differences in their local food systems – stay tuned for more updates throughout the spring!



GardenShare Annual Dinner

Tuesday, June 14, 2016

5:30 cash bar and 6:30 dinner at Jake's on the Water
More Details Coming Soon

Volunteer to Support our Farmers Markets!

GardenShare is actively seeking volunteers for the upcoming Farmers Market season.

Farmers Market / SNAP Outreach - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) outreach volunteers are needed to promote awareness and use of SNAP benefits at Farmers Markets in St. Lawrence County. Volunteers will also provide information on an individual basis and in group environments and share materials and resources to engage and educate people while helping them learn and feel comfortable about the market environment.

Farmers Market Manager Assistant - GardenShare is looking for volunteers to be on call to support the Farmers Markets throughout the county. The job is to be at the market manager's table to answer questions, provide information about the market and GardenShare, and to process SNAP, debit, and credit card transactions. GardenShare will provide training and then the market managers will call when they need someone to fill in for a whole or partial market day.



"My volunteer work with GardenShare has given me a deeper awareness of the problems of hunger and poverty in our county – in my village and town. I think this small organization can make a difference for many of our neighbors. Lending my time, energy, and expertise allows me to be a part of making that difference." - Carol Pynchon

Clip & Mail

Name: _____

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Check all that apply:

☐ Here's my tax-deductible donation to help further GardenShare's work to solve the problem of hunger : \$ _____

_____ Please use this gift to provide Farmers Markets tokens to needy families

_____ Please use this gift where GardenShare needs it most

☐ I'm interested in volunteering with GardenShare. Tell me about the opportunities.



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CALENDAR

May — **Farmers Markets** open, check the Local Food Guide at gardenshare.org for exact details

June 14 — GardenShare's **Annual Dinner** fundraiser will be held at Jake's on the Water in Hannawa Falls. A great dinner with locally sourced food, a silent auction, and raising money to support GardenShare. Save the date and watch for more details.

September — **Hunger Action Month**

September 11 - Save the date for the **Fight Hunger 5K**, a run/walk to raise money to support GardenShare's work

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Our mission:

Gardenshare's mission is to solve the problem of hunger in St. Lawrence County through policy advocacy work and by strengthening the food system to benefit all County residents.

Our vision:

Healthy Food – The County has a vibrant, local food system where our food choices are healthy for us, for our communities, and for the environment.

Healthy Farms – Farmers are able to make a living that supports their families, contributing to a robust local economy.

Everybody Eats – Everyone in the County has access to enough nutritious and affordable food to sustain a healthy lifestyle. When food assistance is needed, whether from government or private sector programs, it is provided in dignified ways that respect both the receiver and the giver of assistance.

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