



Health Sciences North is Building Momentum for Local Food in Health Care

The 3P Mentorship Program cultivates local and sustainable food champions who use the buying power of public institutions to transform the food system. This year HSN increased their local food purchasing by 18% from their baseline by engaging their staff and community through on-site workshops and farmers markets with local partners like Eat Local Sudbury Cooperative. They have provided leadership in the movement in the Greater Sudbury region for local and sustainable food.

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When Kathy Berger started to look at food origins, she said it was “a bit of an eye opener.”

“I joined the 3P Mentorship Program to obtain educational opportunities that will assist my organization as well as my colleagues in the North to increase the use of local product in our healthcare settings,” said Food Services Manager Kathy Berger back in February 2014. “I want to be able to endorse the use of local foods to senior leaders in our organization. The main challenge with this is a consistently stretched budget to meet all of the needs of the department.” Less than a year later, the work of Kathy and her colleagues has put Health Sciences North on the map as a leader in local purchasing in Northern Ontario.

Not only has Kathy led HSN to a cost-neutral 18% increase in local food purchasing for patient meals, she’s also worked with her retail counterpart Stewart Brown at **Marek Hospitality** and with her Directors and VPs to position HSN as a hub of local food activity in the Greater Sudbury Area. The hospital co-hosted the Sudbury Collaboration on Local Sustainable Food workshop with **My Sustainable Canada** that brought together producers and community partners

from across the region. “The event was well attended by staff and community partners. Participants said we should do it every month!” reported Kathy. They also began to work with **Eat Local Sudbury** to support the cooperative’s efforts to have its vendors achieve food safety certifications necessary to sell to the hospital.

The local food journey for HSN picked up when Kathy set out to determine the local food purchasing baseline for the facility. “When you start to look at what you purchase and where it comes from, it’s a bit of an eye



Workshop participants stroll around Ramsey Lake in discussion about building food systems collaboration in Greater Sudbury

429 bed acute care hospital
in **Sudbury**, Ontario

3P Cohort Member:

Kathy Berger
Manager of Food Services

Partial bulk/ retherm with some
scratch cooking

18% increase in local food
purchasing from baseline

1,125 meals served
per day, plus snacks

250 staff engaged

\$1.1 million
annual food budget

\$246,000 increase
in local purchases this year

Group Purchasing Organization
MEALsource

Valley Growers’ potatoes are Kathy’s
favourite Ontario food

11% of last year’s food
purchases were local

29% of this year’s food
purchases are local

\$0 extra dollars spent to
purchase more local food



Participants at the Collaboration on Local Sustainable Food workshop hosted at Health Sciences North hold up their vision for the future of food in the North.

opener," Kathy says. "It's changed our mindset to local food." Eleven percent of patient food purchased in February 2014 was local. Poring over velocity reports and product lists, Kathy found that much of that local food was dairy. There were plenty of quick wins to be made by making switches within the menu to local alternatives. Their group purchasing organization, **MEALsource**, identifies all products of Ontario in their contract reports, making it easy to source local options. The easiest changes to make were seasonal produce from local growers such as fresh strawberries, blueberries, peaches and plums. Some switches were more significant. **"It was a small celebration finding a cost competitive local lasagna that had the same nutritional levels as the existing one!"** remembered Kathy.

“The strategy moving forward will be to always check for a local version of a product before moving forward with a menu change.”

Overall, Kathy affirms their costs have remained consistent, even as they introduced more local food. "Sometimes it's a trade-off. For example, we switched a previous frozen carrot with a fresh carrot that was cheaper but then we had to factor in the prep time. The process might change a little, but the cost stays the same."

Other wins came from asking their existing distributors for local food. **Harvest King**, a local supplier of produce, responded by including "Product of Ontario" on their billings. Summit, another one of their distributors, had already been doing this. These supply-chain level innovations make Kathy's work sourcing and tracking local food easier. "When we start to ask for local, there are little benefits like this," said Kathy. **"Distributors are getting better at being proactive in providing the information... and we are not the only ones benefitting from it,"** she emphasized.

For Kathy, the support of others was key. She is excited about the interest from staff and patients over switches to local food. "Staff members have participated in events and educated themselves and others and enthusiastically supported the mission," says Kathy. "Our staff are proud to prepare and offer local food to HSN's population. We've seen an increase in positive feedback from patients."

Kathy's success was achieved through her dedication to this project. "The 3P mentors and mentees were able to provide guidance, suggestions, and support throughout the project," she adds. But ultimately, she made time to track product origins, calculate her progress, request information from distributors, research, examine contracts, and source new items. Although she admits it is a significant amount of work, Kathy believes a lot of that simply has to do with it being a new endeavor. **"Once you get the hang of things, it's not as hard as you might think."**



Participants at the Collaboration on Local Sustainable Food workshop hosted at Health Sciences North hold up their vision for the future of food in the North.

LOCAL WINS!

Kathy increased her local purchases this year by making some specific product changes. She switched: **1** From RFY meat lasagna to Jiano for local meat lasagna. **2** To VG Meats for local sliced beef and pork. **3** From frozen, imported carrots to fresh, peeled, whole carrots from GFS. **4** To Arctic Gardens frozen vegetables. **5** To Black Diamond sliced cheese.

HSN's local food progress won't stop here. "The products we've changed were deliberately assessed for the long term. Our menu won't change when we have less support from the 3P Mentorship Program and the Greenbelt Fund. The strategy moving forward will be to always check for a local version of a product before moving forward with a menu change."

Looking ahead, Kathy believes it is essential to educate local vendors on food safety guidelines, certification, and resources that will enable them to supply to HSN and other healthcare facilities. Working with Eat Local Sudbury, HSN has already hosted a farmer's market combined with education on food safety in the hopes to reach more vendors. She is also interested in working locally with other local institutions. "The momentum we've built over the last year will continue to get stronger, especially through more interaction with other health care facilities looking to get into local purchasing."

The 3P Mentorship Program is lead by Hayley Lapalme and Wendy Smith. To get involved in the community of sustainable food purchasers, check out the program at mentorship.mysustainablecanada.org, apply to be in the next cohort, or contact hayley@mysuscan.org.