

'Buy local! Buy fresh!' program going strong

By Rebecca Ring

The word is out. Many say it is better for the environment, health and the local economy to buy local products. To promote this, the Buy Local! Buy Fresh! map was created in 2005. "It is a full colour, easy to read, year round reference guide to farms, stores, farmers' markets and restaurants that sell local food. It is the largest public resource of its kind in Wellington County and grew from a group of concerned citizens that gathered a few years back looking to create a resource on how to purchase local food," says Project Coordinator, Kate Vsetula.

"More and more people are looking for the opportunity to know how their food is raised and where it is coming from." The map has been a huge success and continues to grow and reach more markets. In the three years since it began, over 70,000 maps were printed and distributed. In 2005, there were over 30 participants named on the map, which has more than doubled, with over 60 on the 2007 map. Of those, about one-third are located in Guelph/Eramosa.

The map initially targeted local consumers and tourists but has grown to become an invaluable guide for restaurants, retail stores and markets that want to offer local food. They can contact the producer direct and request specific items. Vsetula recently surveyed the participants, who said the map



is their most valuable marketing tool, after word-of-mouth and signs.

Vsetula says the map covers a wide range of listings, from farm gate sales to full service markets and restaurants. "Farmers and consumers have found it

easy to read, with a great legend. At a quick glance you can see if the location is seasonal or year-round, what is available and when, hours of operation and special features, such as pick-your-own produce," she says. Agricultural fairs and events are listed as well.

A growing movement is the CSA program, or Community Supported Agriculture. Customers pay into a plan and receive a basket of food each week. "This is a quickly growing movement," says Vsetula, "It's a great way for local consumers to be connected to the farm and eat in season. They can learn about the ebb and flow of farming. One season, there may be a bumper crop of one item and a smaller yield of another. Consumers are more in touch with the farming experience and where their food comes from." Other perks of joining a CSA are community gatherings, potlucks, and in some cases, "getting your hands dirty" by helping out on the farm in return for a reduced rate.

This year, there are two new initiatives of the program. The first is the "Seeds of Change" food tent, sponsored by the Rural Urban Committee of the Guelph Rotary Club. It will be at the Guelph Jazz Festival on Wyndham St., Saturday, September 8 from 11:30am to 7pm. Local chefs will prepare dishes from locally produced food, which people can buy to "enjoy a taste of Wellington County."

Second event

The second event, Wellington Rural Romp, will take place on Saturday, September 29 from 11am to 4pm. Sixteen farms will offer farm tours where everything from alpacas to ostriches, goats to sheep can be found. The growers will be on hand to answer any questions. Some will offer wagon rides and corn mazes.

"Bring a cooler to take home some farm fresh goodies. Pick up your Rural Romp Passport at any participating farm and have it stamped at three or more locations for your chance to win some great prizes!" says Vsetula.

"This is certainly the peak time of year to check out local farms. Buying local is a major, growing food trend. It's a huge buzz," says Vsetula, "Our map helps consumers do this and establish a relationship with local farmers and build trust."

Project sponsors include the Guelph Community Health Centre, The County of Wellington and The Wellington-Waterloo Economic Development Corporation. The BL!BF!Map is available free to the public at regional public libraries, township offices, tourism outlets and select restaurants and health food stores throughout Guelph and across the county.

For more information, visit www.food-link.ca or contact Kate Vsetula, Project Coordinator at 519-821-5363 ext.335 or wellington.buylocal@sympatico.ca.

Region supporting innovative community Rd. Watch program

Halton residents can assist police in reducing the number of incidents of aggressive or unsafe driving through the Community Road Watch Program.

Whenever residents see vehicles being operated in

an unsafe manner, they are encouraged to submit a Citizen Report Form to Halton Regional Police.

"This is an excellent program that the police operate with the aid of Halton residents," said Regional Chair Gary Carr. "The program empowers residents to make the Halton community a safer one."

Citizen Report Forms can be found online at the Halton Regional Police Services website at www.hrps.on.ca. Completed forms

can be dropped off in one of the secure drop boxes that are located throughout the community at participating police stations, business and libraries, or you can fax a copy to the Halton Regional Police Service at 905-845-0381.

Once a completed form has been submitted, the police will send a letter to the registered owner of the vehicle that was observed to be driven in an unsafe manner. If a second complaint is made against the same vehicle, the police will send a second letter and may follow up with a phone call or visit. A third report against a vehicle will result in a third letter and a personal visit to the vehicle's owner by a Halton Regional police officer.

"I encourage every Halton resident to participate in the program and join Halton Region and the Halton Regional Police Service in keeping Halton one of Canada's safest communities," continued Chair Carr.

For more information about the Community Road Watch program, please contact the Halton Regional Police Service at 905-878-5511 in north Halton, or visit the website at www.hrps.on.ca.



NEW ISLAND IN THE POND: The dry summer seems to have resulted in lower water levels around Rockwood. This pond, near a frequented walking trail, has a new island in the middle, which is usually covered in water. The pond is home to many birds, turtles, frogs and other wildlife, and was once home to a family of beavers. *Rebecca Ring Photo*

Acton Legion news...

Continued from page 12

Might be a good time to bring some friends to the Branch to share the facilities you enjoy all the time.

*Yours in comradeship,
Jim Hayes, Branch 197 PRO.*

Ladies' Auxiliary News:

Our deepest sympathy is being sent to Sue Poulsen and family for the loss of a dear husband and father.

Our general meeting is being held this Thursday, Sept. 6 at 7:30 p.m. Remember to pay your dues, must be paid by December, 2007 in order to be in good standing.

Sunnybrook vets will be visiting the Branch Sunday Sept., 9 entertainment and dinner will be served by the Ladies Auxiliary. If possible try to attend and give our vets a warm welcome.

*Yours in comradeship
L.A. President
Annamarie Lowin.*

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