

Cox makes difference with 100-mile diet crusade

BY HANNELORE VOLPE
Staff Writer

Marsha Cox is inspired by the idea you can make a difference, especially when it comes to making the planet a better place.

To find out what impact you can have by shopping locally, the Lemonville resident helped launch the 100-mile diet at Lemonville United Church last summer with student minister Wanda Stride.

People from the rural church on McCowan Road, south of Bloomington Road, tried to buy fruit, vegetables, meat and even dairy products within a 100-mile radius of their homes.

They started with the premise buying locally would be a big plus for the environment, reducing pollution incurred from transporting and storing food from far away.

As the summer-long experiment continued, the thinking of many in the congregation began to shift.

Mrs. Cox began to realize shipping Canadian food products overseas provides a viable income for these farmers, income they might not have if they only sold locally.

When the 100-mile diet started, Mrs. Cox thought everyone would turn into "organic zealots," but she found the concept of fair trade became an important issue.

"People who were exporting were also buying into the fair trade argument," Mrs. Cox said.

In Canada, the Fair Trade Certified label means farmers and workers in developing countries have been paid a fair price for their products.

You will see the labels on some brands of coffee, tea, chocolate, fruits such as bananas and mangos, cotton garments and more.

YOUR GUIDE TO LEARNING MORE

If you want to learn more about environmental issues, Mrs. Cox recommends several books:

- ▶ *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver. The book explores a year of eating locally.
- ▶ *Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan, which traces food from the soil to your plate.
- ▶ *Ecoholic* by Adria Vasil, a book that highlights environmentally friendly information, products and services in Canada.

Some local farmers, who welcomed church members as customers, also sold many of their crops overseas.

Mrs. Cox began to realize shipping Canadian food products overseas provides a viable income for these farmers, income they might not have if they only sold locally.

Exporting Canadian crops benefits people overseas, who can't grow these crops themselves.

In addition, if Canadians buy Fair Trade products from these countries, "we are helping them," Mrs. Cox said.

"It expands beyond the 100 miles," she said.

Mrs. Cox eventually came to the conclusion you should still follow the concept of the 100-mile diet, but "in season, when you can".

The retired librarian recommended the book *Bitter Chocolate* to other congregation members.

The book, by author and broadcaster Carol Off, deals with the less savoury side of the industry which brings chocolate to our tables.

Lately, Mrs. Cox has turned her attention to water.

The availability of clean water and not using bottled water are two of her newest passions, which grew out of her research on the 100-mile diet.

Changing small things, like not using bottled water — which



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Marsha Cox helped organize a 100-mile diet initiative at Lemonville United Church.

results in mountains of plastic bottles — is something everyone can do.

As a group, the congregation is trying to educate itself on water issues.

The availability of clean water and not using bottles water are two of her newest passions, which grew out of her research on the 100-mile diet.

Many problems seem so daunting, "but we can actually make a difference," Mrs. Cox said.

In her home, she decided to switch to environmentally-friendly cleaning products.

That fact Brian and Marsha Cox have six grandchildren is a prime motivator.

"We are looking at how to improve the planet for them."

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