

**Winneshiek County Food and Fitness – County Meeting #1
Summary of Focus Group Data and Meeting Notes**

Strengths:

- **Local Food System**
 - Oneota Food Co-op (best local foods retailer in the region)
 - Vibrant Farmer's Markets
 - Locally grown food producers selling directly to consumers (GROWN Locally)
 - Several restaurants committed to local foods
 - Critical mass of consumers interested in buying locally
 - Diverse small farms in region
 - Good soil for growing food
 - Scenic value of region (for farmers, tourists, etc.)
 - Good labor experience
 - Seed Savers – can provide genetics, access to quality seeds and education to producers
 - Gardening Clubs

- **Local Fitness & Play**
 - Park & Rec System and Programming in Decorah
 - Luther College Facilities and Programming
 - Tradition of athletic events – Elvelopet, Barnelopet, etc.
 - Schools committed to physical activity for students
 - Trails System(walking and bike)
 - Fitness Centers
 - Some churches encourage physical activity
 - Multiple playgrounds and parks
 - Outdoor Sports – Fishing, Hunting, etc.
 - Pedestrian-friendly communities
 - Scenic value for recreation and outdoor activities
 - Inwood for dancing in Spillville
 - Camping facilities in the region

Opportunities:

Local Food System

- Schools - lunch programs, snack programs, healthy cooking/eating education and homework; involve families
- Pre-School and childcare centers
- Luther College Dining Services – students, faculty, staff
- Hospital, senior centers, and nursing homes to grow local food markets so farmers have a larger demand and can afford equipment necessary for processing.
- Oneota Co-op
- Grocery Stores
- More restaurants serving local foods
- Year-round promotion of local foods – eating with the seasons
- Promote & support of value-added local food products (artisanal cheeses)
- Create connections for consumers (individuals, restaurants, etc.) and producers (directories & internet interfaces)
- Service learning connected to producing and eating local foods – involve youth
- Increased farm income connected to high corn prices for ethanol could create farm diversification opportunities related to food

Local Fitness & Play

- Schools (access to gyms and education)
- Bike to school programs
- Exercise through transportation – walking/biking to your destination
- Parks
- Trails (biking, walking, horse trails) and overnight parks
- Contiguous trails to afford longer bike rides/runs, but still family-accessible
- Outdoor recreation (climbing, paddling, swimming, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, etc.)
- Luther College facilities
- Decorah Community Center
- Educate adults and youth re types of physical activities available
- Service learning connected to increased active living
- Older youth model/mentor younger students

Local Health

- Focus on health as a standard in all aspects of life – more focus on local community and economy by residents
- Schools are onboard with promoting a broad view of healthy lifestyle, not just in PE class
- Link local food with recreational activities to increase tourism and improve local economies
- Educating families how to be active, play and eat together and make healthier choices
- Involve motivated groups of people to educate and promote local healthy foods, active living, healthy choices

Challenges:

- **Local Food System**
 - Lack of consumer awareness to find local foods and benefits of eating
 - Shortage of extended season producers and products (not available year round)
 - Shortage of processing facilities in region
 - Consumer expect cheap food - difficult for producers to make decent return selling locally
 - Lost widespread appreciation of good food
 - Increased costs in transport for delivery of local foods
 - Negative industry messaging – need to speak with one voice
 - Food safety (insurance?) and Preparation (cooking skills)
 - Food storage

- **Local Fitness & Play**
 - Rural set-up causes excess reliance on automobile
 - Lack of time due to busy schedules for working parents, children
 - Lack of awareness about priority regular fitness should play in our lives
 - Climate – winter activities can offer more activities but require equipment
 - Trails need to be connected
 - Families not active together

- **Local Health**
 - Childhood Obesity
 - Lack of service learning in region
 - Families not eating meals – time, cost, knowledge of what & how to cook healthy