

The NE IA Food & Farm Coalition met on Feb 7, 2008 at the Winneshiek County Extension office in Decorah. Present: Eric Nordschow, Lyle Luzum, Al Peake, Mary Steen, Teresa Wiemerslage, Dan Lane, Mark Storlie, Don Arendt, Linda Long, Kyle Holthaus, Charlie Baier, Brenda Ranum, Rick Edwards, Frank O'Neill, Trampus Curtain, Solveig Hanson, Liz Rog, Gary Shindler, Karla Organist.

Teresa welcomed everyone and introductions followed. Liz shared copies the new local magazine Inspired that features the Oneota Co-op's move and expansion.

## **Agenda:**

### **Old Business**

**Producer Mini-Grants** - The news release and applications for the mini-grants are available online and from county economic development offices. There was some discussion on who is eligible to apply. NIFF Coalition members agreed that if the producer lives in one of the five counties and yet their farm is located just across the line in a neighboring county, they can apply for the grant funds. Applications are due March 1, 2008. Karla shared there has been lots of interest in Fayette County and many new ag calls are coming into their office. Lots of good media coverage on the grants has occurred in the five counties as well.

**Leopold Communication Workshop** - Teresa, Eric Nordschow, Johnice Cross and Brenda Ranum attended the Leopold sponsored workshop, "Communicating the Local Food Message" on Jan 25 with Sue Futrell and Angie Tagtow. It focused on framing a good consistent message that can brand your work. More information is being sent to help us develop the key messages for our initiative. It won't necessarily take a lot of money to create these messages. We will be developing and using these messages with our upcoming webcasts.

**Speaker Ideas.** The funding from the Leopold Center has been extended past March 30, 2008 so we have more time to decide on a speaker. We're still collecting ideas for speakers. Teresa will send the list out to the NIFF Coalition members for their input.

**Assessment Updates**—a summary of all assessments including those with the FFI can be found at [www.iowafoodandfitness.org](http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org), Click on Regional Team, Click on Regional Assessment Update

- o Still waiting on the Economic Impact assessment
- o Most of the Asset Maps are posted at [www.niffcoalition.org](http://www.niffcoalition.org), click on Resources, then Survey work. Teresa showed us the following Asset Maps:
  - Fruit & Vegetable Producers
  - Local Meat & Egg Producers
  - Farmer's Markets
  - Grocery & Food Stores
  - Convenience Stores
  - Food Processors
  - Public Lands & Trails
  - Restaurants With Local Foods (Under Development)
  - Hospitals, Care Centers & Dining With Local Foods (Under Development)
- o Groups that would like to post these maps on their website (ex. Economic Development), can contact Teresa and she'll send them the link.
- o Al suggested we add as much information/detail as possible so we can link consumers with producers with institutions.

## **New Business**

Brenda shared that at our next NIFF Coalition meeting on March 6, Hal Shroer will be coming to our meeting. Hal Shroer is an independent business consultant with over 20 years experience in the food industry. He comes recommended by Rich Pirog of the Leopold Center and he is available to us for technical advice through the Alces grant we were awarded through the Leopold Center.

The following NIFF Coalition members volunteered to meet and eat with Hal on the evening of Wed., Mar. 5 at 6:30 pm: Teresa, Brenda, Lyle, Al Peake, Kyle Holthaus.

Hal will also meet with NIFF Coalition members before and/or after the meeting to address the following questions, as well as others:

- What is a rough percentage break-out on the types of customers we expect to serve (i.e., Groceries, Schools, Nursing Homes, Restaurants, CSA's, Farmer's Markets, Hospitals, Direct Marketing, etc.)?
- What products do we expect to sell, and what is our rough percentage break-out for these products (Meat, Dairy, Fruits, Vegetables, Value-added Processed, etc.)?
- Do we have processing facilities available for each of our product categories?
- - What is our anticipated overall volume when the business is mature, what is our expected start-up volume, and how many years are needed to reach maturity?
- How many producers do we expect to have when our business is mature?
- What assumptions have we made regarding the approach concerning sales, aggregation, scheduling, processing, and distribution?
- How are products to be differentiated, and what percentage price increase over the commodity price increase (if any) do you expect to obtain from our customers?
- What assumptions have we made regarding the costs of sales, aggregation, scheduling, processing, and distribution? (Showed Hal's value-added chain diagram)

Marketing & Food Systems Initiative Workshop – Tuesday, March 11, 2008 We have been asked to present (10 minutes) about the NIFF Coalition. Teresa and Mary Steen will be presenting on our behalf.

NIFF memers gave feedback on the January FFI County Planning Team webcast that highlighted the work of the NIFF Coalition to date. Teresa also shared what will be covered on the February and March webcasts.

Teresa reviewed the information to be shared in the webcasts for the NIFF producer meetings Feb 25-29. The goals/outcomes of the meetings were shared:

- o Reconnect with producers and partners involved in planning the original strategic plan
- o Introduce the NIFF Coalition and FFI to farmers and lenders
- o Present the results of the 2 years worth of data collection (What have we learned?)
- o Educate lenders and producers on the opportunities for NE IA farmers in the area of food production
- o Collect feedback from participants on the data presented and the current direction of the NIFF Coalition and F&F Initiative
- o Potential Titles for the Feb. Producer/Ag Lender webcasts:
  - Farming for the Future
  - Bringing Diversity Back to Agriculture – And Succeeding
  - Inspired Farm Income

- Feed Your Neighbors An Acre At A Time
- Success Options for that Extra Acre
- Grow Your Buck Locally
- Locally Grown Food Grows Local Dollars
- Back to Basics – Success for Farmers and Communities
- **NIFF Producer Meetings** (DATES ARE STILL BEING FINALIZED)
  - Feb 26: Allamakee County, Site TBD, 11:30-1:30 pm
  - Feb 25: Howard County, Cedar Valley Produce Auction, Elma, 11:30---1:30 pm
  - Feb 27: Fayette County, Site TBD, noon-2 pm
  - Feb 27: Winneshiek County, T-Bocks, Decorah, 7:00 - 9 pm
  - Feb 28: Winneshiek County, T-Bocks, Decorah, 11-1:30 pm
  - Feb. 27: Clayton County, Extension Office, Elkader, 7:30 – 9:00 pm
- Handouts/resources should we have ready for the meetings –
  1. Market Maker
  2. NIFF and F&F Pamphlet
  3. Ken Meter’s Information
  4. Key Points Learned About Agriculture Related to Local Food Systems

**Announcements:**

Scholarships are available to producers if they want to attend the "Transition to Organic" webcasts in Jan-Mar. Howard and Allamakee are hosting the meetings.

Upcoming Dates:

**February County Food & Fitness Planning Team Meetings**—Discussing a Local Food System. Encourage Food Producers to go to these meetings

Feb 7: Clayton County Planning Team, 6-8 pm, Central State Bank, Elkader.

Feb 20: Allamakee County Planning Team, 4-6 pm, Dining Center at Waukon Wellness Center.

Feb 20: Winneshiek County Planning Team, 4:30-6:30 pm, Hovde Lounge, Preus Library, Luther College.

Feb 21: Fayette County Planning Team, 4-6 pm, Fayette County Extension office.

Feb 21: Howard County Planning Team, 6 – 8:00 pm, Hospital, Cresco

Feb 27: Regional Team meeting, 11 am-2 pm, Site TBD.

**Feb 8-9: Women Adding Value to Agriculture Conference**, The Hotel Winneshiek, Decorah – Almost 70 participants with an additional 30 presenters/committee members

**March 11: Marketing and Food Systems Initiative Workshop**, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, Gateway Hotel and Conference Center, Ames. NIFF Coalition is presenting.

**March 13: Safe Food Handling on the Farm**, Location TBD, 11 am-3 pm. Offered by Catherine Strohbehn, PhD, RD. CFSP/ ISU Extension, Hotel, Restaurant and Institution Management Specialist

**March 17: Marketing Fruits and Vegetables** (with a focus on farmers’ markets, local groceries and food coops.) Presented by ISU Value-Added Ag program staff. Location TBD, 1:00-4:00 pm.

The program will cover:

- Regulations (state and federal) for marketing to Farmer’s Markets and to groceries and food coops
- Buyers requirements and protocols for buying local produce

- Planning to sell into these markets and how to do it successfully (farmer presenters)
- Business Analysis/Strategy Assessment for individuals selling to these markets. (Guidelines for farmers on how to do a year-end analysis to assess the success of selling for the year and to identify areas for improvement or change in the coming year.)
- In addition, we will offer the opportunity for participants to take part in a mentoring relationship with an established, successful marketer for 2008.

**March 22: Blazing a Trail, Part III.** Organic agriculture conference, NICC Center, Cresco.

**April 1: Organic Crops Workshop** presented by Harriet Behar from MOSES. Time and location to be finalized.

**Upcoming NIFF Coalition meetings:**

Mar 6, noon-1:30 pm, Winn Co Extension

April 3, noon-1:30 pm, Winn Co Extension

May 1, noon-1:30 pm, Winn Co Extension

June 5, noon-1:30 pm, Winn Co Extension

Final discussion was on framing a message/BRAND for the work that we're doing in NIFF around this initiative. The WKKF Food and Fitness Initiative will require us to have a Communication Plan for our Community Action Plan. Recommendations for promoting key messages:

- Signs on the road
- Tags on Food and in Institutions
- Information on all field days with kids

Meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Notes submitted by Brenda Ranum