

# Food Security Network NL Community Report 2013



# About FSN

The Food Security Network of Newfoundland & Labrador (FSN) is pleased to share six stories highlighting community food security initiatives from across Newfoundland & Labrador in our 2013 Community Report.

This report highlights the following innovative community food security programs:

**Alluk, Sangilivallianguinnatuk (Going Off, Growing Strong)**

**Stephenville Level Best Club**

**WestRock Community Centre**

**The Pantry Kitchen & Garden**

**Clarenville Age-Friendly Park Community Garden**

**ACORN-NL**

FSN has supported or promoted each of these initiatives in different ways and to varying degrees. Many of the highlighted organizations have benefited from FSN's numerous resources, including the Best Practices Toolkits and Food Skills Workshops. All of FSN's resources can be found at [www.foodsecuritynews.com/resources](http://www.foodsecuritynews.com/resources)

For more information about FSN visit our website [www.foodsecuritynews.com](http://www.foodsecuritynews.com) and our blog [www.rootcellarsrock.ca](http://www.rootcellarsrock.ca).

Would your community organization like to be profiled in next year's FSN Community Report? Contact FSN to find out more at [info@foodsecuritynews.com](mailto:info@foodsecuritynews.com) or (709) 237-4026.

FSN is a provincial, non-profit organization, with the mission to actively promote comprehensive, community based solutions to ensure access to adequate, healthy food for all. FSN has three core goals:



## Public Awareness

The first step to addressing an issue is to understand an issue. FSN actively works to increase understanding and awareness of food security and its impacts in order to enhance efforts to improve food security province-wide.

## Community Action

Communities understand local issues and have the ability to make meaningful, positive impacts. FSN catalyzes and supports community action to improve food security across Newfoundland & Labrador.

## Diverse Partnerships

Food Security is a complex issue that involves multiple sectors. FSN works to build diverse, strategic partnerships to enhance food security in the province.

# Aullak, Sangilivallianguinnatuk (Going off, Growing Strong)

A new program in Nain, the first of its kind in Canada, is changing the lives of young men in the community. *Aullak, Sangilivallianguinnatuk (Going Off, Growing Strong)*, offers participants the experience of going out on the land, learning traditional skills, and building relationships with community elders. The program grew out of the Nain Community Freezer and started in March of 2012 as a project of the Nain Research Centre.

In 2012-13, the program ran with ten male participants from the ages of 15 to 21. Through the program, each participant has spent an average of 40 days on the land learning about hunting, trapping, fishing, and other traditional skills with experienced hunters. In total, there have been over 400 youth days spent out on the land to date.

Sometimes participants go on group trips with several harvesters, learning how to hunt, harvest, and process country foods. Food harvested through the program is donated to the community freezer, which packages the food in small portions for elders in the community. The participants of *Going Off, Growing Strong* deliver the country food to elders' homes in the community.

Dorothy Angnatok has coordinated the program since January of 2013. She says the program addresses a number of social issues facing youth in the community. There were seven male school-aged suicides in Nain the year before the program started. The program builds resiliency in youth by teaching skills and strengthening social connections.

Dorothy says there are no barriers to entry for participants. All the clothing and equipment needed is supplied by the program. There are 3 skidoos available for trips out on the land. The gas, oil, and bullets that are used are

covered by the program. The youth also take food harvested home to their families.

"They all learned this year how to skin a seal, how to process it, and what portions sizes to put it into for families", Dorothy says. The youth also learned how to process porcupine, ducks, moose, and how to prepare the food. They built a smoke house, built sleds for the back of the skidoos, and learned to set trap lines.

Dorothy sees the changes in the youth as amazing: "They were kind of disconnected from the community and not confident enough to talk to anyone. Now the harvesters are shocked at how the youth will go up and talk to them. They're not walking with their heads down." She says their social skills have improved, and they know the names of all the elders and are eager to deliver food to them.

Through the program evaluation, participants shared that they "didn't know these things before". They feel more connected to the community, and respect has increased, from the participants and the community.

In 2014 the program will continue with 6 new participants. The youth from the first year of the program have graduated and are now considered Junior Harvesters. They will pass on their knowledge to new participants, helping the experienced hunters. Participants will be identified through agencies in Nain that work with youth.

*Going Off, Growing Strong* is managed by the Nain Research Centre, under the Environment Division of the Nunatsiavut Government ([nainresearchcentre.com](http://nainresearchcentre.com)). The centre is dedicated to action-oriented research. The program is expanding into Hopedale, Nunatsiavut. To contact Dorothy Angnatok for more information, call 709-922-2380 or email [dorothy\\_angnatok@nunatsiavut.com](mailto:dorothy_angnatok@nunatsiavut.com).



"They never used to volunteer at community events. Now they volunteer on a weekend to wake up early to go pick up elders, drop them off at a community event, and help out."

- Dorothy Angnatok

# Stephenville Level Best Club

The Level Best Bulk Buying and Cooking Club in Stephenville is weaving together multiple strategies to help families eat healthier. The Club, sponsored by the Stephenville Family Resource Centre and the Bay St. George Status of Women Council, has run since 2009. The program involves bulk buying, cooking sessions, and a community kitchen garden.

When it started, its objectives were to provide a supportive environment for sharing and learning, to increase knowledge and skills of food purchasing and preparation, and to foster a support network for families. Bernice Hancock, Program Director at the Community Action Committee for Southwestern Newfoundland, which runs the Family Resource Centre, says "The need has always been there. The cost of basics such as milk, bread, and vegetables has gone up so greatly in the last 5 years. Having run Healthy Baby Clubs in the area for a long time we have seen the role that nutrition plays."

The Level Best Club changes from year to year according to the funds available at the time. The Level Best model was developed in the St. John's area, and expanded to 5 communities across the province with funding from the Provincial Wellness Program. Bernice says when they were asked to participate they jumped at the chance. Since then the program has continued in Stephenville through regional grants, business donations, and the Community Action Committee's core funding.

The bulk buying sessions give parents the opportunity to access affordable healthy food by purchasing in bulk with other participants. Families each contribute half the cost of their food and the project covers the rest. Participants collectively create a shopping list of nutritious food and essential household items, which are purchased by a coordinator and volunteer from the group. Some past

participants have gone on to be volunteer coordinators of the program. Bernice says the bulk buying club allows participants with low incomes to stretch their budgets.

Participants in the Level Best Club also have cooking sessions and grow some of their food in a garden located on the property of the Bay St. George Women's Centre. Bernice explains that many of the young moms they work with don't have the cooking skills to prepare healthy meals. Six to eight families are given a Basic Shelf Cook Book and basic cooking utensils, then the group selects recipes and prepare meals together. The hands-on gardening activities often work with the cooking sessions so that participants follow their food from seed to plate.

Participants in the program are drawn from the Family Resource Centre's Healthy Baby Clubs and programs at the Bay St. George Women's Centre. Another important partner in the program which also refers participants is the Pathfinder Learning Centre, which provides specialized school programs for at risk individuals over the age of 16.

The participants also go on food label reading tours at local grocery stores with a dietitian. The combination of increased cooking skills, knowledge about nutrition, being more aware of how to stretch your food dollar, hands-on learning, peer support, and learning about other programs in the community all contribute to success for these participants.

Bernice says that feedback for the program has been very positive. Coordinators conduct before and after evaluation with each cohort to measure knowledge and skills gained.

For more information about the Level Best Club, contact the Community Action Committee for Southwestern Newfoundland at 709-643-5399 or [bsgcacnf@nfld.net](mailto:bsgcacnf@nfld.net).



**"One mom said: 'I don't like to cook, but now I have to, because the children really enjoy the food.' She is motivated now, and they're enjoying meals together."**

**- Bernice Hancock**

**"People had the idea that buying fresh vegetables, or healthy food, was more expensive. We do a comparison of that and then they realize that they can afford to buy healthy food."**

**- Bernice Hancock**



“I get further empathy when I go out and speak to food security because FSN is out there getting the word out.”

– Ben Fitzgerald

# WestRock Community Centre

WestRock Community Centre in Corner Brook has made food security high priority. Its staff sees food as a tool to engage people in important community programs. “Malnourishment is the biggest deficit I see day to day, no fuel in the engine. Food is extremely important to us as an organization” says Ben Fitzgerald, Executive Director.

“The key to morale is food. It works well for keeping people engaged, wanting to come back, and healthy. Many people who attend our programs also use the food bank. Most people don’t talk about it much because no one wants to admit that they’re there because they’re hungry” says Ben. WestRock’s staff focus on inclusion and incorporate food in almost all programs to help people feel welcome.

WestRock is a hub of activity, supporting two satellite centres: Farmdale Hendon Neighbourhood Centre and Carter Avenue Elizabeth Street Neighbourhood Centre. WestRock serves 241 social housing units, with an approximate population of 650 in Dunfield Park and 2200 people living in social housing in Corner Brook. WestRock has the mandate to promote health and social well-being of families and the community in which they live, and to help develop a better social environment through recreational, educational and social programs.

WestRock’s Kids Eat Smart Club is an initiative that offers healthy meals to children and youth daily after school. Participants also engage in recreational activities and work on their homework with help from teachers. Ben notes that food is what attracts the kids, they light up as they walk through the door and smell the food. Once they are there they experience the safe haven, companionship, recreation and educational benefits of the program. Funds for the Club come entirely from Kids Eat Smart and WestRock acknowledges their support. A child said to Ben “You can have all the aspirations

in the world for me Ben, but you don’t realize that I eat my lunch out of a Pepsi bottle five days a week because that’s the food I know.” WestRock’s Kids Eat Smart Club is trying to change this by offering healthy foods.

WestRock partnered with Western Health to run an exciting program for children that taught food preparation, cooking, meal planning, Canada’s Food Guide, and physical activity, called Kids in the Community Kitchen (KICK). KICK ran for 12 weeks under the leadership of Western Health. When the funding finished, WestRock carried on activities for another seven weeks, with the new name Food & Fun Camp. The program has been the best attended by kids at the Centre. WestRock hopes to see this program continue and be adopted provincially, due to its great success.

Parent Breakfast is another successful program at WestRock. Weekly, mothers gather for a nutritious breakfast provided by the Centre. The Breakfast creates a space for parents to socialize, discuss important issues, build a support network, and access resources for making positive life choices. Mothers who attend the Breakfast are more likely to enroll their children in the Centre’s programs and engage in activities themselves.

There’s a lot more on the horizon at WestRock. Plans are in the works for a community garden, with mentoring from Blow Me Down Community Garden. WestRock also hopes to partner with the Salvation Army, which operates the area food bank, to enhance services. There is also potential for creation of a soup kitchen to feed more than 50 people a day.

To learn more contact Ben Fitzgerald, Executive Director, at [ben@westrockcc.com](mailto:ben@westrockcc.com) or (709) 634-4077 or visit [westrockcc.com](http://westrockcc.com). To learn more about KICK contact Stephanie Buckle, Regional Nutritionist, at [stephaniebuckle@westernhealth.nl.ca](mailto:stephaniebuckle@westernhealth.nl.ca) or (709) 637-5000 ext. 5257.

# The Pantry Kitchen & Garden

The Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador (ASNL) is using an innovative social enterprise model to offer healthy local food and provide its clients training in growing and preparing food. Since ASNL began designing the Elaine Dobbins Centre for Autism on Clinch Crescent in St. John's, gardening at the site has been part of the plan. Now, ASNL runs a restaurant and garden which allows healthy, local food and skills training to mix.

The Pantry is the Society's restaurant, inside the Elaine Dobbins Centre, which operates Monday to Saturday. ASNL's clients, people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), work both in the kitchen and serving, some independently and some with a job coach, learning job and social skills. Sharon Snow, Chef at the Pantry, says "It's an absolutely fantastic program. It allows clients to come in and get life skills and work directly with a one-on-one coach. At the end of the day they come away with a good perspective on what they've learned."

Local food is a major part of the Pantry's menu, with many vegetables, herbs, and berries coming from ASNL's garden. The Pantry's menu is created based on what's in season, serving up leek and onion soup in the fall, and berry and rhubarb deserts throughout the summer.

The garden grows spinach, lettuces, green beans, peppers, hot peppers, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, rhubarb, apples and more. Seedlings are started in a greenhouse and transplanted in the spring. Greens are also grown in the greenhouse right up until December, when it shuts down for a few months before starting again in the spring. Sharon plans on growing more herbs and garlic for the pantry, as well as more fruit. Tom Taylor, Manager of Property and Facilities, says the garden has doubled in size since it started.

The gardening project was supported by the Bell Aliant Pioneers, retirees of the company, who initially built the greenhouse, patio, and

storage cabinets at the Centre. This year, ASNL clients and staff started a community garden in addition to the kitchen garden. They cleared land, built raised beds and a sign, and filled the boxes with topsoil. They haven't decided yet exactly how the community garden will operate, but are sure it will increase access to healthy food and gardening for ASNL clients and possibly other groups when they begin producing next year.

Tom says "The opportunities are endless. We have the land, area, and a very dedicated staff, willing to work with clients. We could potentially grow more than we can use in our own restaurant and sell it at a farmers' market or at other venues".

Outside groups frequently visit the Elaine Dobbins Centre for tours of the garden, including Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Easter Seals, school groups, and summer camps. A Client who learned about gardening at the Centre recently demonstrated how to plant garlic to a visiting group.

The Pantry and kitchen garden complement ASNL's Supported Employment and social and recreation programs. Clients working in the garden and kitchen benefit by learning job skills, social skills, and life skills like time management. Sharon says that the clients involved with the garden and The Pantry also leave with knowledge about eating healthily.

Finding funding for the Centre's programs has been one of the largest challenges. Support for the program has come from the Grand Concourse Authority, Friends of Pippy Park, and MUN Botanical Garden, who share their resources and expertise. FSN is supporting the community garden initiative through mentoring and use of the Community Garden Best Practices Toolkit. To learn more about the Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador and The Pantry, visit [www.autism.nf.net](http://www.autism.nf.net).



"You know where it's grown, where it comes from. Vegetables are picked at their peak freshness and used that day."

- Sharon Snow



“It was a good opportunity for intergenerational mixing with the other participant groups. It’s very important that seniors and youth groups get together for activities.”

– Marjorie Sparkes

# Clareville Age-Friendly Park Community Garden

Community wellness is a priority in Clareville, a town that has been putting itself on the map as an age-friendly place to live. The newest accomplishment is the creation of the Clareville Age-Friendly Park. The park includes a community garden which brings together a wide range of groups collectively working to increase access to fresh, healthy, affordable food for local residents of all ages.

The Town of Clareville and the Clareville and Area Recreation Association (CARA) partnered to develop the plan for the Age-Friendly Park. The park is located in a high traffic part of town on underutilized land with close proximity to seniors’ housing, schools, a daycare, and a family resource centre.

“The area where the park is needed beautification... People are now commenting on how beautiful it is. A lot of people are in there using it, passing by it on the nearby walking trails and making positive comments... I see a big difference in the area” says the Town’s Recreation Director Garry Gosse, “We have a big vision and hopefully will be able to see that come into fruition. The support was there and people are really enjoying it”.

In 2013, ten raised beds were built for the Community Garden with support from a Job Creation Partnership Grant. Beds are offered free of charge to community groups to create a community space where local groups network, mentor, and inspire each other.

Participant groups of the first growing season in 2013 included Ability Employment Corporation, Autism Society of NL, Clareville Retirement Centre, Gather seniors’ group, Neighbourhood of Friends Family Resource Centre, Swan Avenue Seniors Group, Toddlers Corner day care, Twin Towns seniors’ group, and Youtube Community Youth Network.

Marjorie Sparkes is a volunteer with the Gather seniors’ group which had experience gardening and composting before joining the Community Garden. Marjorie sees many benefits to the garden, “It makes seniors feel younger and have opportunity to do something that is useful and has benefit, has a real purpose to it” says Marjorie, “Some groups didn’t have previous skills or knowledge in gardening. Gather participants, mostly seniors, do have a fair bit of knowledge that they shared.”

Danielle Quinton and Cindy Powell Szabo work with Ability Employment Corporation, empowering clients with intellectual disabilities and youth to acquire and maintain employment. The Community Garden was a good fit with their social programming. Participants grew a variety of crops, sampled the harvest, and made scarecrows. Their 6 tomato plants produced over 200 tomatoes! Ability plans to grow two more beds next year and involve more clients at the garden. “(Community gardening) helps people realize where food comes from, that it just doesn’t come from the grocery store,” says Cindy, “you can actually grow it yourself without harmful chemicals and appreciate the process”

After a successful first growing season momentum and excitement are high. This fall the Town added water access and washrooms to the park. There are plans to add another three vegetable beds and ten flower beds to the community garden. Next year, gardeners hope to engage nearby schools, grow more food to share in the community, and host a harvest celebration. A committee and policies will be developed this winter with help from FSN’s Community Garden Best Practices Toolkit.

To learn more contact Garry Gosse at [cara@clareville.net](mailto:cara@clareville.net) or visit [www.clareville.net](http://www.clareville.net).

# ACORN-NL

The Atlantic Canada Organic Regional Network of Newfoundland and Labrador (ACORN-NL) is a sustainable, not-for-profit organization which promotes and encourages a viable organic agricultural industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. ACORN-NL's vision is a sustainable organic industry that makes local organic food available to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

To make that vision a reality, in 2013 ACORN-NL was contracted by the Department of Natural Resources, Agrifoods Division to create a strategic plan for the organic and ecological agriculture sector in the province. ACORN-NL enlisted assistance from ACORN, their parent organization in Atlantic Canada, which supports regional organic agriculture networks with expertise, training, networking, promotion and other services. The aim of the strategic planning process was to find common goals and to envision the future for the sector.

Sarah Crocker, a producer in Portugal Cove, coordinated the strategic planning process. In February 2013 a strategic planning session was hosted in St. John's, followed by a survey with producers to gather baseline information. An Advisory Board, consisting of long-time supporters of the sector, led the process.

"All other Maritime provinces had already completed strategic planning, so ACORN-NL gathered best practices from those. We kept in mind the unique agricultural landscape and culture of NL. The strategic plan is now an action plan for the province. ACORN is excited to work on those actions as a partner to ACORN-NL" said Theresa Richards, ACORN's Executive Director.


Key action areas in the strategic plan include 1) increased government collaboration with the sector, 2) public awareness and outreach, 3) support for organic certification in the province, 4) improved sector infrastructure, and 5) improved sector strategy.

The first big achievement coming from the new strategic plan is increased support for organic certification. The strategic plan recommended a cost-sharing program to assist producers seeking organic certification. "We thought that was years away but then within four months the provincial and federal governments launched that through Growing Forward 2, directly as a result of the suggestions in the strategic plan. That's been empowering for people, to see results" said Theresa.

"Individual farmers may see themselves as small, but given that we import so much food into the province, they can make a big impact on food security." Sarah says, "It only takes a few farmers to make a farmers' market so much more vibrant and full of produce. We are seeing an increase in the number of market gardeners and people are increasing production and feeding off consumer demand."

In the coming year ACORN-NL will support its member producers who choose to pursue organic certification. The relationship between ACORN-NL and ACORN will continue to develop through more planned education and networking events, including greenhouse production workshops in Newfoundland. ACORN-NL will continue to apply for funding to hire a coordinator to guide implementation of the strategic plan. To read the full strategic plan visit [rootcellarsrock.ca](http://rootcellarsrock.ca)

ACORN-NL is a largely volunteer run organization, with a membership open to all. "ACORN-NL membership has increased since starting the strategic planning process" notes Theresa. "People are perhaps feeling more like they have a voice that makes an impact. It's nice to see that problems can have solutions and to be involved in that." Membership with ACORN includes membership with ACORN-NL. To learn more visit the ACORN ([www.acornorganic.org](http://www.acornorganic.org)) and ACORN-NL ([acornnl.wordpress.com](http://acornnl.wordpress.com)) websites.



"There is a lot of trust between producers and consumers about organic and ecological practices. To advertise or easily explain your products as organic it is important to have third-party certification."

- Sarah Crocker



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