

Food Security Network of Newfoundland & Labrador

2012 Community Report



About the Community Report

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 2012 Community Report.

The programs detailed in this report include community gardens, bulk buying clubs, community kitchens, and farmers' markets. Find our Best Practices Toolkits on those four types of programs at www.foodsecuritynews.com/resources if you're interested in starting up a new initiative in your community. For more information about FSN and to access resources and support to start a new project, hold a workshop, or give a presentation about food security, visit us at www.foodsecuritynews.com.

Would your community organization like to be profiled in next year's FSN Community Report? Contact Rick Kelly, FSN's Communications Coordinator, to find out more at richardkelly@foodsecuritynews.com or (709) 237-4026.

Cover Photos

Clockwise from top-left: MOMS, courtesy of the Family Outreach Resource Centre; Averee's Garden by Sandra Dominie; Grand Falls-Windsor Farmers' Market courtesy of the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor; St. Patrick's Organic Community Garden by Sarah Ferber

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St. Patrick's Organic Community Garden

The St. Patrick's Organic Community Garden in Carbonear is new on the gardening scene at less than a year old. They had a fantastic growing season in 2012 to get them started, and what really made the difference wasn't the weather. There are 23 plots at the garden, but in May 2012 when the soil was delivered over 70 people showed up to lend a hand - Carbonear knows how to put the community into community gardening!

Florence Button, one of the garden's organizers, told FSN about all the support that has made the garden a reality. Land was donated by St. Patrick's Parish. The Town of Carbonear cleared the land, provided tools, water, lighting, and helped transport materials. Local businesses and individuals donated soil, seeds and food scraps for compost. Students and staff from the College of the North Atlantic built the raised beds, shared gardening expertise, and made the garden's sign. A local saw mill donated wood that volunteers used to build the fence. These are just a handful of the contributions that were made and the garden continues to receive incredible community support. "People have been amazing. To see that garden this year and



the way that it grew; it was so beautiful! We had so many people involved, young children and youth and seniors... it had to be that way, community driven. There was no reason for it not to be vandalized, nobody protected it as such, but every time we drove by it was just as it should have been. It was incredible. It became a part of the landscape” says Florence.

The garden formed its roots at a healthy living workshop for seniors in 2010, funded through the Provincial Wellness Grants program. Donna Nolan, Regional

Nutritionist with Eastern Health, and Cathy Parsons, Marketing and Public Education Officer with MMSB, facilitated the workshop. The goal was to gauge public interest in a community garden, and with over 35 people in attendance there was clearly great interest in the concept. A committee was formed and two information sessions were held in 2011. The original plan for 14 raised beds was quickly expanded due to the high interest.

The organizing committee played a vital role in setting up and managing the garden in ways that reflect community interests. Garden organizers referred to the FSN Community Garden Best Practices Toolkit.

When asked to offer other towns advice for starting a garden, Florence shared these thoughts: “Any community that has any chance of doing this I really encourage to do it. A strong committee is really important. Inclusivity is important. Whoever is organizing it has to ensure that it is community-driven. When you get the community involved at the grassroots level like this it is going to be successful. However long it takes, the journey will be a great learning experience. When it’s a very open community project, people become involved almost in spite of themselves. Don’t exclude anyone.”

“When you get the community involved at the grassroots level like this it is going to be successful.”



Photo by Sarah Ferber

Kim Dooley, one of the dedicated committee members, told FSN how gardeners use Facebook to let each other know when they'll be busy or out of town so that people can help each other out. The Facebook group has also become a way for gardeners to show off their bountiful harvests, get to know each other better, and inspire others to get involved.

Children are welcomed into the garden where they get to participate in planting and special activities like rock painting and games. "At first some of the children weren't interested, saying 'I don't like vegetables or dirt' but by the end of the season they were right up to their elbows. You see them learn how to play outside and show interest in the insects and soil and what to plant. They're excited about growing things!" says Kim.

The St. Patrick's Organic Community Garden has a mission: "we believe that everyone has the right to healthy, sustainable, local food and that we are part of the answer to making this a reality for everyone in the area". After only one growing season they are on their way.

To find out more about St. Patrick's Organic Community Garden visit their Facebook group:

www.facebook.com/groups/stpatsgarden

Hopedale Community Freezer

The community freezer in Hopedale, Labrador, is getting an upgrade this year that will allow it to serve the community even better. A community freezer is a freezer where country food, wild hunted fare such as moose, caribou, seal, partridge, and geese, is donated and stored until given out to families and individuals who are lacking their own. The current community freezer program in Hopedale has been operating for over 2 years with two chest freezers. A new walk-in freezer is about to be installed that will greatly increase the program's capacity.

The freezer program improves access to traditional foods that many would not otherwise be able to obtain. Limited free time, high cost of supplies such as bullets and fuel, and access to snowmobiles are all barriers to some families going out on the land to hunt. Wayne Piercy, AngajukKâk for Hopedale, says that many in Hopedale do not have the time or resources to go out and harvest country foods themselves because they either work full-time or can't afford the equipment.

Hunters donate to the freezer year-round as different animals are harvested. The freezer currently targets elders and low income families, who can access one meal a month from the freezer. More than 30 people in the community of about 550 currently use the freezer. With the new larger walk-in freezer, organizers



Photo courtesy of the Hopedale Inuit Community Government

hope that the whole community will be able to benefit from the program.

Piercy says the concept of the community freezer is based on the Inuit way of sharing. “If one household had some, they would share with whatever household was in need.” The result is that everyone has at least a bit of something. The community freezer program in Hopedale also partners with a similar program in Nain. Last year Hopedale sent porpoise meat to Nain, which sent char in exchange. The Teen Support Group in Hopedale also makes donations to the community freezer. The group does outings twice a year and any fish they catch are donated to the freezer.

“Fresh food is expensive to buy, and doesn’t last long because of the poor quality when it arrives.”

Expanding the Community Freezer was a goal of the *NiKigijavut Hopedalimi* (“Our Food in Hopedale”) Community Food Action Plan, developed through a Community-led Food Assessment supported by FSN in 2009-2010. Fran Boase was the coordinator hired to implement the Action Plan in 2011-2012. Speaking of the need for the freezer, Boase says “Some of the elders who get food from the community freezer don’t have any family who can hunt for them”.

Improving access to country foods is important because of the food security challenges faced by communities along the coast of Labrador. “Cost of living is high; Fresh food is expensive to buy, and doesn’t last long because of the poor quality when it arrives”, says Piercy. The decline in the George River Caribou herd is also adding to difficulties accessing country food.

The new walk-in freezer will come with other tools for use by community members. A meat saw and food wrapper will be available to prepare donations to the freezer, and also for use by community members preparing their own harvest. Anyone



Photo by Kristeen McTavish

who uses the tools will donate a portion of their meat to the freezer. Portions will be packaged for different sized families, so that anyone can come in and get enough for one meal.

Next steps include a new program that will pair experienced hunters with youth and elders. The three generations would go out hunting together, harvest wild meats, see different techniques from past and present, and share stories. This program aims to encourage youth to learn hunting techniques and history, and hear first-hand how the times have changed. Boase says that youth in Hopedale are interested in becoming better hunters and in learning how to cut up and pack meat.

The community freezer program is supported by many partners. Funds to purchase the freezer came from Trent University, while funds to implement the *NiKigijavut Hopedalimi* Action Plan came from the Public Health Agency of Canada. The Hopedale Inuit Community Government maintains the freezer, the Canadian Rangers in Hopedale are installing the freezer, and the Department of Health and Social Development of Nunatsiavut Government are supporting hunting activities when they can.

For more information contact the Hopedale Inuit Community Government: (709) 933-3864

Mercy Centre for Ecology & Justice Community Garden

If you cut across the diameter of an apple you will see a five pointed star at its centre. Many of the blossoms that turn into the vegetables and fruits that we eat are also shaped like five pointed stars. To the Mercy Centre for Ecology & Justice, the five pointed star is a symbol that we are all connected in a reciprocal relationship with nature and the universe. The Mercy Centre for Ecology & Justice's mission is to promote the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of all creation and to live in a spirituality flowing out of the sacredness of all creation.

From its beginnings in 2003, the Mercy Centre quickly identified a need to connect low-income families in the St. John's area with fresh, healthy locally grown produce. Organizers also saw the opportunity to engage youth in growing food. The result has been a six year community gardening initiative that is still thriving today. Mercy Centre organizers see physical connection with the land as a practical expression of their mission.

“The first purpose was to engage youth in organic gardening so that they could learn the skills of gardening; skills that were traditionally known to their elders but were being lost”, reflects



Sister Mary Tee, coordinator of the Mercy Centre for Ecology & Justice. “The second purpose then was to engage youth so that they could experience what it means to be a contributing member of the larger community and help feed those in need. The third purpose was to offer a healthy respect and appreciation for the land so that youth could see themselves as part of all creation and all creation as part of them; and then with such awareness of the mysteries and miracle of life in a tiny seed, a greater wisdom and consciousness could be found.”

Over the years thousands of pounds of fresh food has been donated to food banks and meal programs by the Mercy Centre’s gardeners. This was made possible by the generous support of several farmers in the

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area who shared their acreage and contributed expertise. From 2003 - 2009, prior to the Mercy Centre establishing its current home on Mount Scio Road, garden land was donated by farmers Colin Lester, Hector Williams, Robert Walsh, and the Searl Family.

Starting in 2006 the Mercy Centre began partnering with the Association for New Canadians (ANC) to provide access to land to participants in the Association’s language training program, many of whom were new residents to Canada who brought with them a wealth of knowledge on food production. That relationship continues today and ANC participants often visit to tend their plants, harvest fresh food for their families, and participate in events like presentations and workshops on food security and food skills given by FSN.



Photo courtesy of the Mercy Centre for Ecology & Justice

In 2012 a new initiative was started called Growing Health, a partnership with Nature NL to connect consumers of mental health services with gardening at the Mercy Centre, based on the belief that working in and with nature does wonders for the mind, body, and soul. Through the project dozens of new visitors have experienced what the Mercy Centre has to offer and a new greenhouse and composting toilet were added in 2012.

The Mercy Centre for Ecology & Justice offers other impactful programs beyond the garden, including public education on the New Universe Story, a three-week nature-based summer camp for children, an annual fair trade Ten Thousand Villages Sale, and a youth choir that addresses social justice issues called Music and Song to Right the Wrongs. To support all of that amazing work, the Mercy Centre for Ecology and Justice formed its first Board of Directors in 2012.

To find out more about the Mercy Centre for Ecology & Justice visit the Sisters of Mercy website (www.sistersofmercynf.org) or contact Sister Mary Tee at teersm@hotmail.com or (709)722-0082.

Grand Falls-Windsor Farmers' Market

There are new Farmers' and Community Markets starting every year in Newfoundland & Labrador. The idea for the Grand Falls-Windsor Farmers' Market came out of the Town's downtown re-development plan. The plan called for new fountains, new lights, and a new farmers' market. As the re-development moved forward, so did the market.

The Town's goal was to support local farmers and crafts people. When they put out a call for interest in the market five farmers and seven other vendors showed interest in having a venue to sell their goods. The Town first discussed a physical building, but decided that an open-air market using large tents provided by the Town would be a better approach.

How successful is the market? The market ran every Saturday, with 400-500 customers throughout the day and most vendors selling out. The market opened on June 30th, 2012, timed to coincide with a large biannual flea market adjacent to the farmers' market, and ran until December. Organizers even held a trial second market day on Fridays because of interest from vendors.



Photo courtesy of the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor

Gary Hennessey, Economic Development Officer with the Town, says that the farmers are all very pleased. Some vendors have doubled their sales in comparison to their other sales avenues. Food products on sale include beef, quail and duck eggs, vegetables, and occasionally fish. Vendors use the market's Facebook page to let people know if they'll be at the next market and what products they'll be carrying.

“We are establishing a permanent, fixed location for consumers to consistently access local food.”

Hennessey explains that the vendors benefit from having a venue that they never had before. The Town promotes it for them, handling all the advertising of the market. Other businesses in the area, such as a nearby coffee shop, also serve market customers on Saturdays and have seen increased business on market days.

Dr. Michael Bland, an organic beef farmer, is hoping to increase awareness of his business while selling at the market. Bland got into agriculture on a smaller scale initially, without plans to sell commercially, but business has increased due to word of mouth. He's hoping to have more orders of larger cuts of beef in the winter, after the market ends.

Bland was surprised that many didn't know about the extent of local agriculture. “50% of the people I meet there have no idea that there is any agriculture near Grand Falls-Windsor.” Bland says. “It's amazing how people don't know what's there”. Bland thinks there is great potential for agriculture in Newfoundland “if you want to put your back into it”.

Consumers also benefit from having one location to access healthy, local food. “We do have many of our farmers who do sell locally to Sobeys and Dominion here and they also set up in their own locations from time to time to sell as well, but now,” Hennessey says, “with the Farmer's Market we are establishing a



Photo courtesy of the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor

permanent, fixed location for consumers to consistently access local food.”

Hennessey was afraid that bad weather might turn away customers, but on one Saturday with major wind and rain the vendors still sold out. “All in all”, he says, “it was a very nice summer for the market.” On really hot days throughout the summer kids played in a nearby water fountain and families used the picnic tables available at the market. “It’s becoming a real social point for the community”, says Hennessey.

The market does face challenges. Some farmers are too busy to come to the market to sell on a Saturday. Hennessey is looking to attract prepared food vendors and entertainment to the market to increase the number of vendors. To make the market more sustainable the Town would like to see farmers and other vendors eventually take over the market in the form of a coop.

FSN’s resources for farmers’ markets were used in developing the Grand Falls-Windsor Farmers’ Market. The Town used FSN’s Farmers’ Market Best Practices Toolkit when considering the structure of the market, and the newly developed Farmers’ Markets Food Safety Handbooks were valuable in developing market policies.

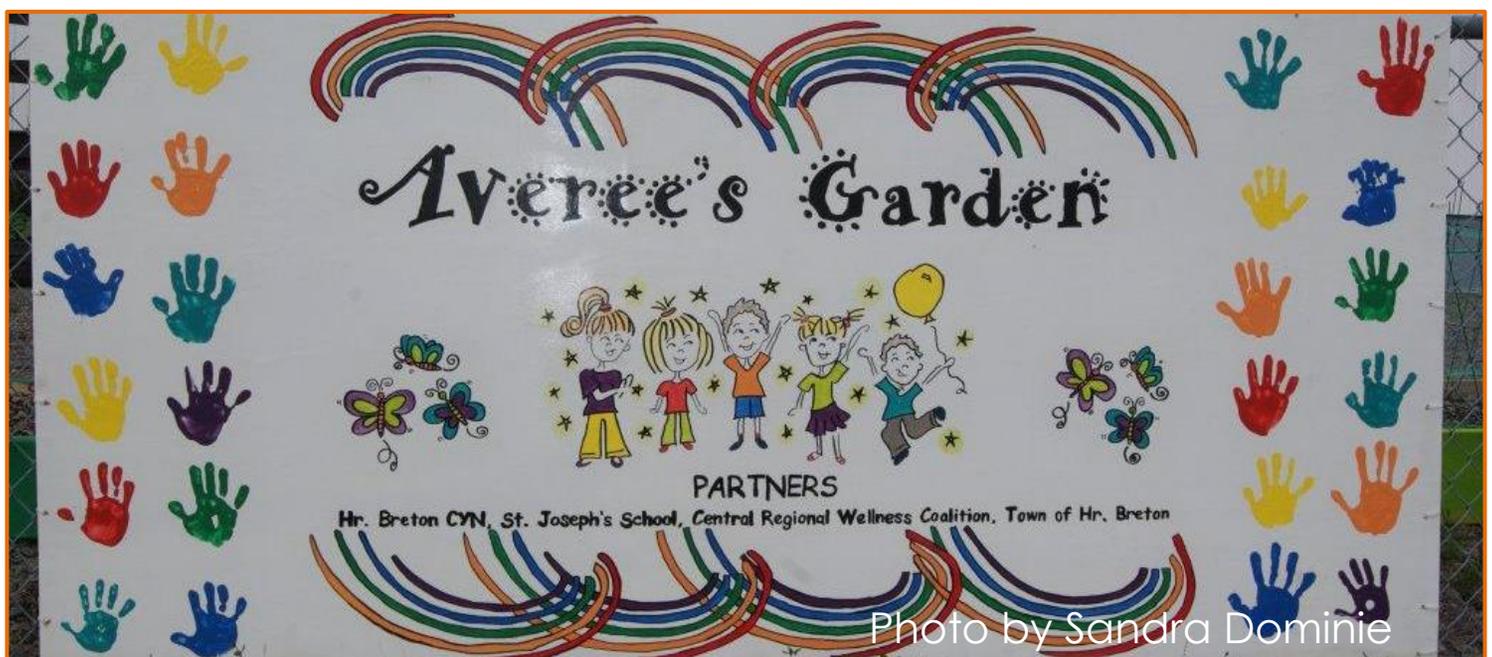
Visit the Grand Falls-Windsor Farmers’ Market on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GrandFallsWindsorFarmersMarket

Averee's Garden

Averee's Garden in Harbour Breton is dedicated to the memory of Averee Pierce, a grade 2 student at St. Joseph's School in Harbour Breton who passed away in March of 2012. The Garden is a partnership between Averee's Purpose, a foundation started by Averee's parents, Terri and Rod, the Town of Harbour Breton, the Harbour Breton Community Youth Network, St. Joseph's School, and the Central Regional Wellness Coalition.

Sandra Dominie, a Public Health Nurse with Central Health, first began organizing the garden early in 2012. She says she had always had an interest in gardening and was looking for a summer project for kids in the community. Last year she attended an FSN Teleconference on School Gardens where she heard about the Happy Valley-Goose Bay Children's Community Garden. She started bringing in partners for a gardening project and applied to the Central Regional Wellness Coalition for a grant of \$2000 to start the garden. Dominie's daughter was friends with Averee, which led to the garden becoming a project for Averee's classmates, the grade 2 class at St. Joseph's School, as a way to remember her.

The garden is located on the property of the Community Youth Network, where the grade 2 students and parents came



together to build six raised beds. Seedlings were started in the spring inside the school by the grade 2 class. A grow station, one of the project's biggest costs, was purchased to hold the plants. Every day two students from the class would go with Dominie to check temperatures, water, and tend to the plants.

“To see how good the kids feel about themselves is the real accomplishment.”

In the summer, children enrolled in the Community Youth Network's summer camp (grades 2 to 6) took care of the garden. They built signs labeling everything growing in the garden. Dominie did workshops

with the summer camp on life cycles, 'how things grow', and Canada's Food Guide. She says the children loved it. "Especially the grade 2's who had started the garden earlier," she says. "Knowing it was named after their classmate, Avereë, made it hold a special meaning for them."

The garden grew peas, beans, zucchini, carrots, potatoes, basil, chives, onion, pumpkin, flowers, and more. Children in the summer camp tasted snap peas for the first time. Dominie says that was a highlight for them. Herbs grown in the garden were sold to a local store, raising over \$200 for Avereë's Purpose. Most produce was saved for a fall harvest party.

In the fall the same children, now in grade 3, continued to take care of the garden. A harvest party was held in October to coincide with World Food Day (October 16th) to use up the garden's vegetables. Overall there were over 150 participants in the garden over the year. Dominie says the children were proud of what they had accomplished and learned a lot.

At the beginning of the project the children would say "are you serious, that's not going to grow!", but by the end Dominie heard "we grew that? No way!" Most of the children had never seen plants grow all the way from seed to vegetable before. Even the parents were skeptical of how well the seeds would grow. There are not a lot of gardeners in Harbour Breton, but Dominie thinks



some of the adults were converted with the success of Averee's Garden. Dominie and her kids now have a back yard garden, and other families are planning their own gardens.

Some of the challenges the garden faced were rocky soil and a lack of knowledge about gardening. A few 'community champions', avid gardeners, helped the garden succeed by offering advice on choosing seeds and planting.

Terri Pierce, Averee's mother, says that the school garden has brought the community closer together. Averee's Purpose, started in 2009, raises awareness and money for research into Batten Disease. The Town has declared October to be Batten Disease awareness month. Averee's Purpose also holds bottle drives and a Walk of Light. Averee's Purpose has raised over \$22,000 for the Batten Disease Support & Research Association.

The plan for next year is to do more education, compost at the garden, and expand to involve more grades at St. Joseph's. The organizers would also like to get better soil and a greenhouse. On the effect of the garden, Dominie concludes "The good growing is a bonus. To see how good the kids feel about themselves is the real accomplishment."

For more information about Averee's Garden contact Sandra Dominie at [**Sandra.Dominie@centralhealth.nl.ca**](mailto:Sandra.Dominie@centralhealth.nl.ca)

Family Outreach Resource Centre MOMS Healthy Living Program

The Family Outreach Resource Centre in Corner Brook has offered family resource programs to families with children aged 0-6 since 1994, including a Healthy Baby Club, child care, and various parent and child programs.

In 2011 The Centre received \$20,000 in funding from the Provincial Wellness Grants to provide a 12 month healthy living program called MOMS involving activities such as cooking sessions, bulk food buying, education sessions with guest speakers, and field trips and outings to local farms. Though that funding has ended, the program continues in a smaller form.

The MOMS group consists of new mothers ranging from teenagers to those in their early 20s. Bonnie Randell, Executive Director of the Family Outreach Resource Centre, explains that the centre was offering programs for young families, but was aware there were food security issues not being addressed. “Many of our participants can’t afford nutritious food or haven’t learned cooking skills from their parents”, Randell says.

To improve food skills and access to nutritious food, the MOMS program includes a Level Best Bulk Buying Club and regular cooking classes. The Bulk Buying Club is a way for the group of young mothers to save money by buying healthy food in bulk and splitting it among them. The club operates occasionally,



Photo courtesy of the Family Outreach Resource Centre

with each participant contributing \$15, which the centre matches. The group reads store flyers together for deals on bulk goods. A coordinator works with them and encourages healthier choices. “They can buy a larger yogurt package and split it among them. Randell explains, “It’s really beneficial.”

The group also gets together to make healthy meals and snacks. The meals are always simple, low cost recipes that the participants could make at home. They make meals and snacks such as pizza, spinach lasagna, and yogurt with fruit. The cooking program often introduces participants to food they never would have tried on their own. Many participants said they would never eat spinach, but were convinced once they had tried it. Randell says the participants really enjoy learning to cook. Along with cooking, participants also learn about food safety and sanitation.

“It’s cheaper to buy pop than milk. It’s a shame that it comes down to those choices.”

“Seeing that families are not managing, not able to afford healthy food – it’s cheaper to buy pop than milk”, Randell adds, “It’s a shame that it comes down to those choices”

Participants in the MOMS program are recruited through the Centre’s Healthy Baby Club, other programs offered by the centre, and word of mouth. Randell says that the weekly get-togethers with other parents form a big part of the participants’ social lives. Other topics covered by the MOMS group include healthy lifestyles, information about education options, and resume writing. A food security topic is covered every week.

The Family Outreach Resource Centre is funded through the Community Action Program for Children, Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP), and provincially through the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services. To learn more visit www.familyoutreachresourcecentre.com



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