

Food Security Network of Newfoundland & Labrador

2011 Community Report



About the Community Report

The Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador (FSN) is proud to release this Community Report highlighting the great food security work happening across this province. Individuals, organizations, and community groups all around Newfoundland and Labrador are working to address food security challenges that they see in their communities.

We hope that these stories of community action inspire you to start a food security initiative in your own 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:
GROWDAT Farms; FEASt; Western Environment Centre; Happy Valley-Goose Bay Children's Community Garden

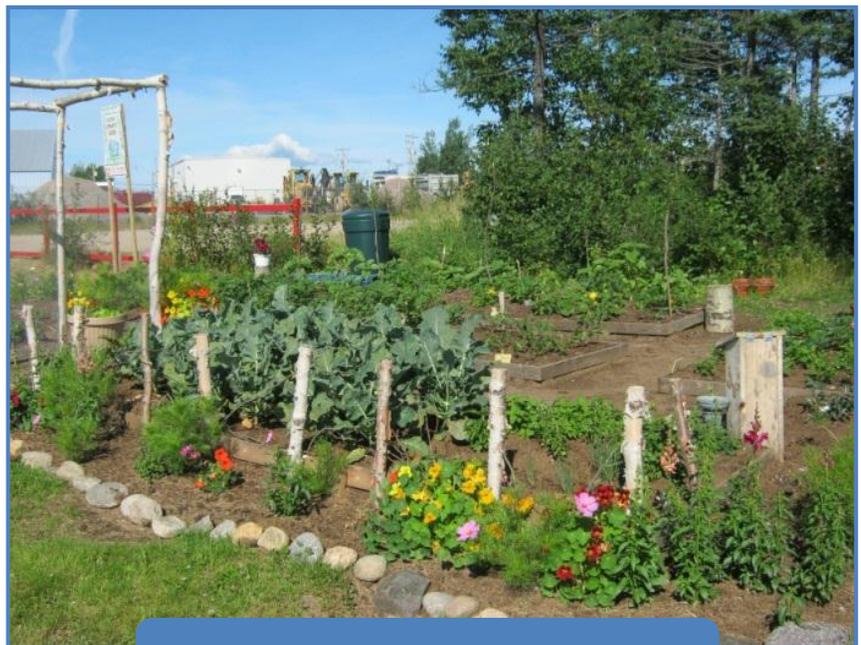
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Happy Valley-Goose Bay Children's Community Garden

Students in Happy Valley-Goose Bay learned about something new this year: seed starting. It's all thanks to a new volunteer run initiative that sees elementary school students planting seeds in April to be transplanted to a children's garden in the summer. The program has partnered with the Town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay's summer recreational program. Children in the summer program tend to the children's garden throughout the summer months.

About 150 students from the Grade 2 class at Peacock Elementary School and the grade 4 class at Queen of Peace Middle School started and tended to the seedlings destined for the Happy Valley-Goose Bay Children's



Children's Community Garden

Community Garden. Peacock Elementary received a \$1,000 Community Wellness Grant from the Labrador Regional Wellness Coalition, which was used to buy seeds, soil, and a three tiered grow station capable of holding 750 seedlings.

The children grew lettuces, chives, lemon balm, mint, stevia, oregano, Butterfly bushes (for a butterfly education program), ground cherries, strawberries, tomatoes, pumpkins, zucchini, potatoes, broccoli, beans and more. Flower seedlings were also started for a flower bed surrounding the vegetable garden. When the seedlings were ready the students from both schools were bussed to the garden over two days for planting.

“It’s all on a volunteer basis”, says Jill Airhart, one of the garden coordinators, “They’re not forced to participate; we have to fight them off because they all want to volunteer”. Every day a team of students watered all the seedlings and checked on their own, with a great sense of pride at seeing them grow. “Children love worm composting”, she adds, “one little girl was saving up all her scraps from home to bring to the worms”

About 60 children in the town’s Summer Recreational Program help out by watering and composting three times a week. Once a week, they attend a workshop or special activity, including a Butterfly education workshop, learning about lady bugs, composting, vermicomposting (worm composting), learning to

“Northern communities really need good food; food is so expensive, and the quality is really bad by the time it gets here.” - Jill Airhart

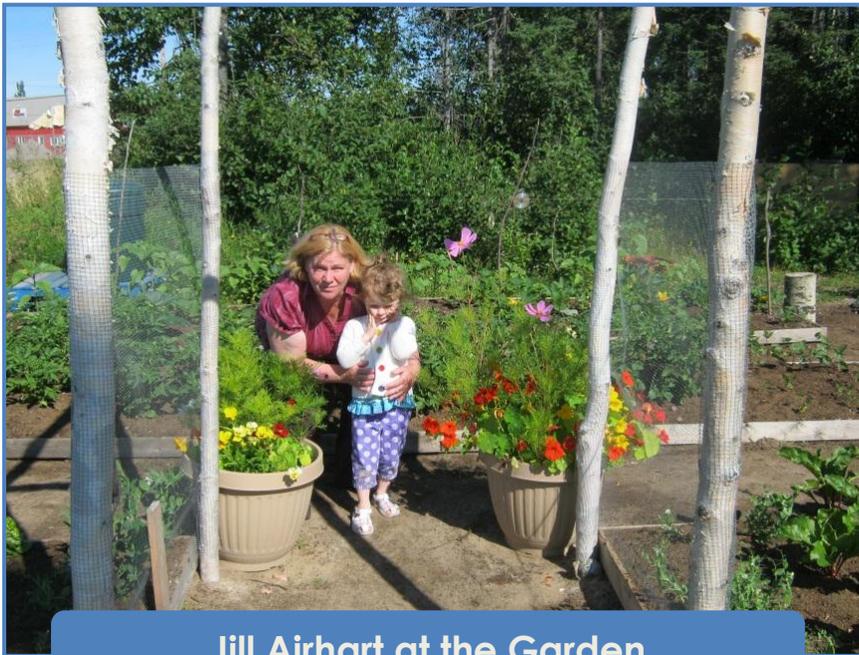
prepare a salad, and visiting a farm to learn about the animals’ lifecycles.

The coordinators of the program are all volunteers, as well. Val Crawley lends her expertise as a Master Gardener, and Mary

Anderson, trained in environmental education of children, teaches the participants to have a sense of environmental stewardship. Parents have also visited the garden to help with planting. Officials from both schools are involved and the school board are supportive, as is the town.

Jill Airhart, who manages the new Happy Valley-Goose Bay Community Outdoor Market, heard an interest in a childrens’ garden from the community while coordinating a regional community food assessment of Upper Lake Melville. The community food assessment, part of a larger project by the Food Security Network, found gaps in community food security and identified community priorities to address them.

As for the children: they love the garden. Radishes were one of the first crops ready early in the summer, and all the kids tried them and liked them. A harvest day was hosted this fall, 2011, as well as nutritious food preparation at the schools using food from the garden.



Jill Airhart at the Garden

The coordinators have big plans for next year. They hope to see the program expand to include High School students, and are searching for funding to build a greenhouse so that the children can grow a wider variety of vegetables.

The program this year had an overwhelming response from interested children and volunteers, and has already won an award. In June, MMSB named Peacock Primary's grade 2 class Waste Reduction Heroes for their composting and recycling efforts.

For Jill, the highlight of the program was watching the children watch the plants grow. "It's almost magical, the way they respond to it; they've all got these little green thumbs. The plants like them, they grow really well, and the kids calm down and are really content, happy, and peaceful."

For more information about the Happy Valley-Goose Bay Children's Garden contact Jill Airhart at jairhart300@gmail.com.

To watch a video highlighting Peacock Primary and the Children's Garden through the Our Greener Future Program of MMSB, visit <http://bit.ly/w0QlyE>

Western Environment Centre

The Western Environment Centre (WEC) is an environmental education group located in Corner Brook. Formed in 1998, WEC is dedicated to educating about all environmental topics such as energy efficiency, water conservation, recycling, organic gardening, and composting.

In the past few years WEC has started a number of projects that address their mission to educate about gardening and other food security topics. Since 2009 WEC has operated the West Coast Farmers' Market at the Majestic Lawn in Corner Brook. It opens from July to October from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM, with one early market in June for Environment Week. Since 2010 WEC has operated the Blow Me Down Community Garden, located in the Blow Me Down Ski Park in Corner Brook. The garden has been funded by the Provincial Wellness Grant Program, TD Friends of the Environment, The College of the North Atlantic, and the City of Corner Brook.

The West Coast Farmers' Market is more than just a venue for consumers to buy fresh local produce, and handmade crafts. The market is focused on addressing healthy eating, environmental



Preserves at the West Coast Farmers' Market

health, and social health. As a weekly event throughout the summer with vendors, coffee and tea, and live entertainment, the market has become a community gathering place where people are able to network and build relationships and foster community dialogue. WEC has also used the market as a venue

to provide information about energy and water conservation and other environmental education, as well as to promote the community garden.

By running the market, WEC hopes to create awareness about the connections between food and the environment. They believe that face-to-face interaction between consumers and producers fosters a greater understanding in consumers of how food is produced locally, and increases support for local growers.

Visitors to the market will find fresh seasonal produce, homemade preserves, jellies, jams & chutneys, honey, baked goods, handmade hats and wood crafts, local artisans' displays, as well as coffee and tea, and live entertainment.

The Blow Me Down Community Garden began in 2010 with 17 4'x8' plots. In 2011 the garden was expanded with an additional 8 plots to accommodate a long waiting list, as well as an 8'x24'



Workshop at the Blow Me Down Community Garden

greenhouse. The greenhouse will allow garden participants to start their seedlings early before transplanting to their garden plot. In addition to gardening, community garden participants attended workshops on various topics, including starting transplants and building composters.

WEC highlights the environmental benefits of gardening as the motivation to start the Blow Me Down Community Garden. The garden is an answer to the problem of unsustainable global food production. It offers garden participants an alternative to buying

food produced in that system, as well as an opportunity to learn about how food is grown. All food grown at the garden is organically grown, without pesticides or other harmful chemicals. The garden also addresses the high cost of healthy food and relatively low cost of less healthy processed foods.

WEC's different projects complement each other and contribute to a growing movement of food security work. Their initiatives are raising awareness and building momentum around environmental issues, local food, food security, gardening, and farming in the Corner Brook area.

For more information about WEC visit www.wecnl.ca

Kittiwake Economic Development Corporation

Farmers on the Kittiwake Coast are benefiting from a Buy Local Campaign launched in 2007 by the Kittiwake Economic Development Corporation (KEDC). KEDC conceived the idea for 'Keep it in Kittiwake' in 2006 to highlight the high quality of vegetables and fruits grown within the region, which stretches from the Eastport Peninsula to the Lewisporte area.

By bringing all farmers in the area together, KEDC set out to obtain an inventory of the food products being produced in the area and to educate consumers on the benefits of buying local in order to increase purchasing of local products.



Participating retailers were linked with local farmers in order to provide locally grown produce in grocery outlets. Participating stores were provided with marketing materials such as signage, stickers, brochures and other information about

the benefits of buying local. The strong messaging of the materials encouraged people to buy local to keep hard earned money in the area, to support the local economy and to provide customers with the freshest, best-tasting food.

KEDC expanded its initial Buy Local Campaign in 2008 by working with restaurants in the region to highlight local products, including produce, seafood, desserts and wines. Participating restaurants were provided with promotional items for the campaign as well as information on the benefits of buying local.

The program was further expanded in 2009 based on feedback about a lack of supplier contact information. In response to this,

KEDC developed the Buy Local Suppliers Database, which includes product lists, contact information, delivery information and any special instructions from suppliers of baked goods, berries, beverages, seafood, meat and poultry and produce. A printed binder was distributed to 170 grocery retailers and restaurants in the region throughout the summer of 2009.

KEDC's successful Buy Local Campaign is continuing in 2011 with additional marketing and an updated local suppliers' database. This year, additional signage was provided to 20 grocery retailers, as well as an updated copy of the suppliers' database.

The Buy Local campaign had the support of 38 communities including retailers, restaurant owners and farms. The binder deliveries included nearly all communities in the region. In total, the campaign reached over 100 communities and 170 retailers and restaurants.

In 2010, the Buy Local Campaign received a Community Economic Development Award for excellence in best practices from the Newfoundland and Labrador Regional Economic Development Association.

As a result of the Buy Local Campaign, awareness of locally produced food was raised within the region among retailers and general consumers. Retailers felt the Buy Local Campaign was successful in raising awareness about what is available. Some retailers indicated that consumers are now asking specifically for local products, and felt that the Buy Local Campaign aided in contributing to this change in mindset. Many grocery retailers now have their own 'buy local' campaigns.

KEDC continues to visit retail outlets to discuss the campaign with management, ensure signage is available and in place, maintain new contact information for the database and post new information to KEDC's website.

For more information about KEDC and the Keep it in Kittiwake Buy Local Campaign, visit www.kittiwake.nf.ca

Smallwood Crescent Community Centre

Executive Director Darrell Jackman describes the Smallwood Crescent Community Centre as a social environment, where people are constantly stopping by in order to participate in activities, share stories about their day, and ideas for new programs. Summer is an especially active time at the Smallwood Crescent Community Centre. Families are invited to participate in recreational activities, such as swimming, hiking, and nature walks, and the Centre also hosts a family camp.

In summer 2011, the Centre coordinated a new facet of their programming, funded through a Provincial Wellness Grant: a square-foot garden initiative that is creating the opportunity for neighbourhood residents to grow their own lettuces and vegetables. The neighbourhood is abuzz with interest in these activities, and the program has allowed thirty families to grow their own food this summer.

The Smallwood Crescent Community Centre, located in Marystown, is one of eight Community Centres that have been



Lettuce in a resident's square foot garden

constructed in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing neighbourhoods. The Centre's services are open to the general public; however, programming is focused on the interests and needs of persons who reside in the neighbourhood.

The Centre offers a wide range of services, including job-finding assistance, after school programming, and homework assistance. Since its establishment, Smallwood Crescent Community Centre has helped people to find meaningful



Carrot harvest

employment, meet their educational goals and secure the resources necessary to pursue their interests and dreams.

According to Mr. Jackman, the garden program is an extension of existing food-related programs that have been occurring at Smallwood Crescent in recent years. In 2007, a vacant building in the neighbourhood was converted into a community kitchen, which offers cooking classes on

a regular basis. This has been a very popular program in the neighbourhood, with more than 70 people registered last year. Each session is coordinated by a Community Kitchen Support Worker who teaches a recipe and leads food preparation activities. Participants help to prepare the meal, and then take the food home with them when the activities are completed.

Recently, the Centre has expanded their services in order to allow persons residing outside of the neighbourhood to participate as well. The success of this program spawned a community garden initiative, which grows food for the kitchen. Growing a garden is one way that the Centre is attempting to ensure the program's sustainability.

In 2011, the Centre received a Provincial Wellness Grant in order to support the container gardening initiative. Darrell says the idea came about after seeing the success of the community kitchen program, and talking with neighbourhood staff and residents. The square-foot gardening program, launched this year, has created thirty five garden boxes, which measure three feet by three feet. Inside of these boxes, there are nine one foot

by one foot containers. Those persons or families who wish to grow their own food are given pre-assembled boxes, soil and seeds.

So far, thirty of thirty-five boxes have been distributed. The overall plan is for people to keep the vegetables that they grow, and to reach out to persons living on low-incomes who may have difficulty securing access to fresh produce. As a result of the grant these boxes are distributed for free. Participating seniors have mentioned that the program is allowing them to begin gardening again. "Saving money on food is important to them, as well as young families", says Darrell.

Mr. Jackman also noted that partnerships have been instrumental to their program successes. Funding from the Department of Health, support from Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, and dialogues with the Burin Peninsula Environmental



Tomatoes on the vine

Reform Committee (BPERC) have all been important to the garden program's development. Toolkits released by the Food Security Network have also provided ideas and suggestions for the community kitchen and gardening program. While Mr. Jackman hopes to see the program continue to grow in years to come, he acknowledges the need for more funding in order to support the initiative next year.

For more information about the Smallwood Crescent Community Centre visit www.smallwoodcrescent.com

GROWDAT Farms

In 2005, Terry Dobbie and his wife, Sharon Gullberg, were wondering why they were living to work instead of working to live, so they sold their townhouse in Ontario and moved to Cavendish, NL to build their dream home and start GROWDAT farms. Terry had grown up in Ontario but visited Cavendish in the summers as a child. He says the land and the people make him feel at home. Terry also had some strong motivations for wanting to grow food.

Terry started the farm in 2007 on some former farmland in Heart's Content with his aunt, Donna Bishop. Donna had experience farming before, but Terry



Terry Dobbie carrying strawberries

says he knew nothing about farming beforehand and couldn't even start a tractor. He thinks it's his engineering background that makes him want to solve problems and learn how to farm.

"Having no experience was a huge disadvantage, but the one positive is that I have no bias towards organic or conventional farming. I'm trying to learn as much as I can from as many sources as I can." Terry says that common sense is his only guide, and he has chosen to grow organically at GROWDAT Farms.

Social, environmental, economic, and health concerns, such as the impact of commercial farming on climate change and the high cost of healthy food, drive Terry to consider alternative forms of farming. The high rate of diabetes in Canada (Newfoundland and Labrador has the second highest rate of diabetes in Canada) is another reason he wants to grow healthy food. Terry thinks that many of our problems have to do with the

way we produce our food. Terry sees GROWDAT farms as a way to help address these issues by growing healthy, local food in a sustainable way.

GROWDAT farms contributes to a sustainable food system by selling fresh, healthy produce at an on-farm store, to restaurants and retailers, and, through a newly formed Community Shared Agriculture program (or CSA –

also known as Community Supported Agriculture). In a CSA consumers share the risks and benefits of growing food by paying for a weekly box of produce up front at the start of the season. CSAs are a way for consumers to learn about the seasonality of foods while supporting farmers and getting a fresh basket of the fruits and vegetables that have grown well in a particular week.

GROWDAT Farms delivers the CSA boxes from Heart's Content to Whiteway, while other members pick up their own produce. CSA members receive a weekly e-mail with information on how things are growing, problems, successes, what to expect in their food box, and recipes.

GROWDAT stands for Growing Resources Organically with Donna and Terry. Donna handles most of the greenhouse work while Terry crawls up and down the fields pulling weeds and squishing slugs. In addition to Terry and Donna, summer students, WWOOFERS (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms - www.woof.ca), and Terry's parents help out with the daily activities on the farm.

“Why does a head of broccoli cost more than a Big Mac?”

– Terry Dobbie



Farm store at GROWDAT Farms

The farm opens in late May with sales of flowers, bedding, and container plants. They sell fresh, organically grown berries, vegetables, and herbs throughout the season into the fall. GROWDAT also has a strawberry U-Pick, where consumers can pick their own strawberries in the field. At harvest time the GROWDAT Market stocks a variety of dried herbs, jams and preserves made from their own fresh produce.

As Terry enters his 5th year of farming, he says he has learned a tremendous amount about agriculture and farming, but he has only scratched the surface of what he needs to know. "I'm not trying to save the planet," Terry says, "but I'd like to make a difference in my little corner of it."

For more information about GROWDAT Farms, visit www.growdatfarms.com

FEASt (Food Education Action St. John's)

Food Education Action St. John's was established in 2007. The organization's mission is to cultivate change from the ground up, harvesting healthy communities while getting to the root of food systems. FEASt organizes events, maintains a website, has an annual local food photo competition, has released a local food colouring book, and hosts local food potlucks and regular meetings.



Spring FEASt Fest 2011

If you're located in St. John's, you might recognize some people who are involved with FEASt from the organization's events and activities. Throughout the summer, FEASt volunteers run

weekly workshops at the St. John's Farmers' Market, in order to increase skills sharing and get people excited about consuming and producing local, sustainable foods.

If you're located elsewhere in the province, you might recognize two FEASt members, Costa Kasimos and Andreae Callanan, from the Root Cellars Rock blog (rootcellarsrock.ca). Costa and Andreae share delicious recipes, garden how-to's, and information about edible wild foods in Newfoundland and Labrador. FEASt's members and volunteers are passionate about local food production, wild food harvesting, and preparing local food meals. They are eager to pass on information about food issues in engaging and accessible ways.

St. John's. FEASt volunteers prepare maps that show where each participating garden is located, and those who wish to see the gardens walk, ride their bikes, or drive around the city to visit the space and get a chance to speak with the owner. This is a great way for urban gardeners to share their spaces with those who are interested in learning how to garden, or are looking for new ideas for their gardens at home.

For the past two years, FEASt has also run a family garden program in Pippy Park, which they've received funding for through the Provincial Wellness Grant Program. Laura Nelson-Hamilton coordinated the project in 2011. "Despite the poor weather conditions at the start of the season, we had a fantastic time at the Family Garden this summer", Laura says. "We saw participation double, and families had a chance to try their own hands at growing food for themselves. Each family was given two rows to plant, and we also had communal potato, tomato, salad, bean, and zucchini plots. This was nice because it meant that food was shared among the group each week."

In order to make the program fun for young children, crafts and outdoor activities were also organized each week. Summer Student Nikki Collins led these activities and they were the highlight of the season for many of those who took part. According to Laura, "Children learned about wild food harvesting and were able to identify edible berries that grow around the garden. It was really exciting to see them become so involved, and I think their parents appreciated their newfound interests in eating vegetables, fruit, and greens too!"

FEASt will be taking a break this winter, but its members look forward to coming together again in spring in order to plan another year of events, activities, and programs.

For more information about FEASt, and to get involved, visit www.feastnl.ca



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