

# Second Opinion

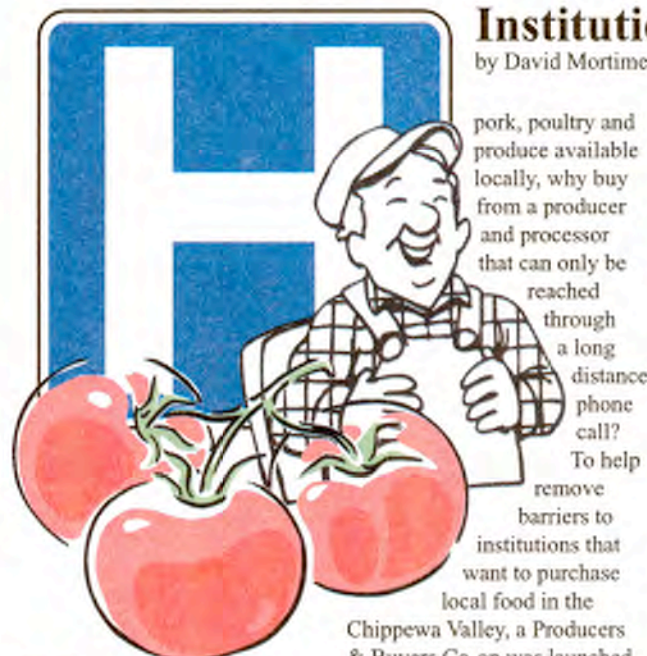
FREE

LOCAL ALTERNATIVE HEALTH AND HEALING

SEPTEMBER OCTOBER 2009



eat  
Local  
Challenge



## Institutions Can Buy Local Food, Too!

by David Mortimer, Sacred Heart Hospital Communications Department

pork, poultry and produce available locally, why buy from a producer and processor that can only be reached through a long distance phone call?

To help remove barriers to institutions that want to purchase local food in the

Chippewa Valley, a Producers & Buyers Co-op was launched June 12. The Co-op, which links local farms with institutions, was organized with the assistance of River Country RC&D and the Co-op's business partner, Sacred Heart Hospital.

The new Co-op facilitates buying and selling for farmers in Eau Claire, Chippewa, Barron, Dunn, Pepin, Trempealeau, Buffalo, Clark, Jackson, Polk, Pierce, and St. Croix counties. Sacred Heart Hospital is a founding partner in the project and committed 10% of its \$2 million food budget to purchasing local food products in order to provide a market to help the organization get off the ground.

"Having a stable market price allows me to do more long-range planning with my farm operation," said Darrel Lorch of Lorcrest Farms, Inc., in Blair, Wisconsin. Lorch also serves as an ad hoc member of the Co-op board.

The Co-op intends to bring new buyers on board as products are sourced and serves institutions such as:

- Universities and colleges
  - Hospitals
  - Businesses that provide cafeteria services
- Currently, the Co-op is working to facilitate the production and purchase of locally produced:
- Meats (Beef, Buffalo, Pork, Chicken, Fish)
  - Fruits & Vegetables
  - Dairy & Eggs
  - Dry Goods
  - Other Locally-Produced Food

"Co-op stocks are an opportunity to invest in the local community and to support sustainable products, local farms, and jobs," said Co-op coordinator Mary C. Anderson, a value-added farmer with extensive direct sales experience. "Support of the Co-op also helps rebuild the local processing infrastructure (e.g., for processing meats, dairy, etc.), and expand local food production by providing a stable market."

The idea for the Co-op began in January 2008, when representatives from River Country RC&D and Sacred Heart Hospital met with area farmers at the Midwest Value Added Agricultural Conference and Wisconsin Local Food Summit. Barriers to purchasing local food (seasonal production, quantity, transportation, processing, pricing and delivery) were first discussed and meetings followed to plan how barriers could be removed for

institutions.

A month later, on July 17, 2008, Governor Jim Doyle visited Sacred Heart Hospital to announce the statewide "Buy Local Buy Wisconsin" (BLBW) grant awards. Governor Doyle chose Eau Claire as the city to announce the grants due to the innovative local food partnership between Sacred Heart Hospital and River Country RC&D Council. (A BLBW grant was awarded to River Country RC&D to pioneer the best way to get local food to local institutions.)

After many planning meetings with local farmers, March 26, 2009 marked the State's formalization of Articles of Incorporation to create the Producers & Buyers Co-op. To date, the Co-op facilitated the purchase of over 26,000 pounds of locally grown product from over 14 local rural communities.

"There have been profound changes over the past century for farm families and rural communities, and in the 1990s alone Wisconsin lost almost 40% of its dairy farms. It's our responsibility to buy local food to support our local agriculture industry," said Rick Beckler, Co-op organizer and Sacred Heart Hospital's Director of Hospitality Services. "We have had an outpouring of warm compliments on our food from patients, our Meals on Wheels patrons, and employees."

**F**ood often has more frequent flier miles than the people that eat it, and during winter months, seasonal fruits and vegetables may even travel through international borders and even across the hemisphere before they reach their destination. Not only does globetrotting food consume a lot of jet fuel and semi-truck diesel, its quality and nutritional content suffers. Even worse, it may have been picked before it naturally ripens or have been treated with preservatives to lengthen its shelf life.

For large institutions, like universities, school systems, and hospitals, established supply chains work hard to ensure the safety, availability, variety, and quantity of food products. But are these systems sustainable? And what is Plan B if supply chains are interrupted by pandemic or other disasters?

One institution in the heart of America's Dairyland—Sacred Heart Hospital, in Eau Claire, Wisconsin—began asking these questions and more. With beef,

- Schools



- Whole Foods Bakery
- Soups, Salads, & Sandwiches
- Organic Fair Trade Coffee & Tea
- Real Fruit Smoothies
- Great Music
- Free Wi-Fi

Coming Soon to Downtown!

210 S. Barstow St.  
Eau Claire, WI

[www.harmonycornercafe.com](http://www.harmonycornercafe.com)

www.asecondopinionmag.com

**Challenge  
yourself  
to eat within 100  
miles of home  
this September!**

**This September  
join the**

# eat local challenge

Sponsored by

**Sacred  
Heart  
Hospital**

Hospital Sisters Health System



**Hahn's  
MARKET**

**THE COFFEE  
GROUNDS**



THE  
NEW  
DEAL



**festival**  
foods

**River Country**  
Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc.



Eat Real.



microcosmic  
market  
food co-op

**SECOND STREET  
MARKET**

**FARM SLOTT FARM**

HAWKINS HOLLOWS

GENESIS ACRES

GOVINS MEATS AND BERRIES

BIG CREEK BISON

GOLDEN HILLS BUFFALO

Not just good, but good for you!



**EAT MY FISH**  
Preservation of Oceans



**Harmony  
corner  
cafe**



**Bohemian Ovens**  
Brick Oven Bakery

**Schaefer's  
Orchard Run**  
Certified Organic Apple Growers

**Becki's  
Olive Salsa**

**Locally  
Wisconsin  
Made**



Launched by Second Opinion Magazine