Food Matters Manitoba’s Growing Local 2010 Food Security Conference will be February 19-20 at the University of Winnipeg. The conference will be a chance to showcase existing food security projects and develop new skills, as participants work towards greater food security in Manitoba. Over two days more than 30 workshops and presentations will include:

- A Farm to Cafeteria Forum
- Success stories from small farms
- Food justice and democracy issues
- A Youth Gathering with special speakers
- Premiere of the Mel Johnson School Gardening Film
- A Local Food Banquet on Friday evening
- And much more!

A full list of workshops and registration information will be available at the beginning of January. For more information please phone 204-943-0823, toll free at 1-800-731-2638, or e-mail growinglocal@foodmattersmanitoba.ca, or check the Food Matters Manitoba website at www.foodmattersmanitoba.ca for more info.

Growing A Manitoba Local Food Economy: A learning & discussion session with Ken Meter, Farm & Food Economist

On January 14 from 1:00-4:00pm Ken Meter of the Crossroads Resource Centre in Minnesota will be the keynote in a half day learning and discussion session on Growing Manitoba’s Local Food Economy. The afternoon will include local food economy success stories and presentations, interactive dialoguing on strengthening Manitoba’s local food economy, and more. This afternoon will be of interest to those working in Community Economic Development and Municipal Planning especially, but all local food enthusiasts are welcome to attend. It is being held at St. Matthews Maryland Church at 641 St. Matthews in Winnipeg. Please RSVP to 1-800-731-2638 or growinglocal@foodmattersmanitoba.ca. The Canadian CED Network and Food Matters Manitoba are pleased to be co-hosting this event, with additional support from Health in Common, Community Futures, and Heifer International Canada.
Nestled in what is known as Winnipeg’s Pan Am Forest, just south of Grant Avenue at the Pan Am Pool, are several asymmetrical garden plots that were used to produce food for Winnipeggers this summer. These plots weren’t established or tended by City employees though; they are tended by four Winnipeg farmers who don’t own land of their own. These four industrious and innovative Winnipeggers are Coral Maloney, Simon Hon, Danielle Mondor, and Leigh Anne Parry, and they call themselves the Landless Farmers Collective. So how do four young Winnipeg residents end up growing food on City property? Read on and find out how.

**Step 1: Prove You Can Do It**
The Landless Farmers Collective started working together in 2008, operating a 90-share CSA on rented land near Ste. Adolphe. They all have experience working on farms in rural areas where there was ample space and resources to farm. They wanted, however, to reduce fossil fuel consumption associated with the growth and transportation of their food, and they also wanted to work where they lived (in the city), so in 2008 they partnered with West Broadway Development Corporation on an urban agriculture project at Klinic on Broadway. At this site a variety of veggies were grown for The Good Food Club, Broadway Neighbourhood Centre, and Agape Table, thus beginning their transition to farming in an urban context.

**Step 2: Find Some Land**
Finding land to farm on in the urban environment is not easy. When you think about where you can farm in the city many possibilities are available but you have to ask a lot of questions before committing to anything and you have to respect existing land use and user needs, Collective member Coral Maloney notes. She points out that the group looked at civic, corporate and privately held property, and they had to be very conscious of the lands’ condition, previous uses, and potential future use.

**Step 3: Put a Solid Plan in Writing, Get it to the Right People, then Convince Them it’s Worth Trying**
When using privately held land, contracts and proposals are a MUST. The Landless Farmers’ initial proposal had phases of development, aerial maps of garden plots, and acknowledgement of current uses of the space. From a food producer’s perspective their plan considered drainage, shade, water sources, soil quality, and microclimates, which showed the groups expertise. They talked a lot about the partnerships that would be formed and the benefits to the landowners, with references to relevant articles and websites where others are succeeding with similar projects. Coral said that they “took a stance that what they would do would be valuable and then proved it”, adding that “the more you can demonstrate your commitment and thoroughness the better off you are from the start”.

As with any multi-partner initiative, working with several different City departments did present challenges, but Coral notes that for the most part they were quite supportive and willing to see what the group would do with the innovative project. The group had to work with departments such as Nuisance (insect) Control, Land Use, Zoning, Parks and Open Space, and Building Services. Things like the natural weed control methods the group preferred to use concerned the City, so Collective members had to prove their methods would work and address every concern with clear solutions. Simon Hon notes that your ability to address concerns is what most people are worried about anyway.
Step 4: Get Growing & Involve the Community

The Landless Farmers started developing the Pan Am Pool site in fall of 2008. At that time the plots were established by cutting and turning the sod, which was then covered with leaf mulch, then four-way dirt to keep it all in place. In spring they worked the beds in by hand and had adequate soil for planting. They used companion and succession planting techniques and unique row designs to maximize space and minimize soil compaction, and although they only farmed about half an acre at the Pan Am site the plots provide enough food for all the farmers, 12 CSA families, weekly sales at the Osborne Village Farmers Market, and sales to 6 local restaurants. The group keeps their carbon footprint low by delivering their veggies via cargo tricycle and bike trailers and are looking to expand the garden beds next year.

Many ask if vandalism is a problem, but the group has found that for the most part people aren’t interested in the labour required to do any significant damage to the garden plots. Collective members note that passers-by tend to pull whatever is along the edge and keep walking, so vandalism problems are minimal – though in the fall geese vandalized more plants than people did all summer. Since Collective members are on site tending the plots every day they talk to people from nearby apartment buildings, pool users, and City staff, who have even started looking out for the gardens. The Collective also works with neighbouring Grant Park High School Grade 7 students, both on site and in classrooms, to teach them about food justice and sustainable food production.

Step 5: Acknowledge Those that Helped Make it Happen

A critical part of this or any project that involves partnerships and support from outside sources is acknowledging those that helped make things happen. The Pan Am Forest garden site has beautiful signs with useful information for passers-by that acknowledge their partners. Part of the challenge of the Collective’s work in the Pan Am Forest is the uncertain nature of it, given they only have a 5-year contract with the City. Not owning the land means you can lose it at any time, which gives them extra incentive to make it work for everyone involved.

This group of committed young Winnipeggers have proven that partnering with the City to produce nutritious food is a win-win situation and they have provided an example of a successful urban farming model for others to learn from. Coral notes that it is important to call what they are doing farming, not gardening though, to get beyond peoples’ concepts of the two and more clearly demonstrate what it is all about. “We are growing food to sell as one of our main sources of income and want farming to be recognized as a valued career.”

The Landless Farmers are presenting at the 2010 Growing Local Conference in Winnipeg this coming February (see first page for more information on this event).
Most farm women know how to work with the products their families grow, but very few take it to the next level and develop new food products from their crops and share their knowledge about its benefits widely like Elaine Edel from the Morris area. Elaine and her husband Melvin have raised five sons on a few thousand acres southwest of Morris. The boys have families of their own now, but four are still in the area and two farm with Melvin. The Edel’s grow wheat, barley, canola, soybeans, oats, and flax, but Elaine is known best for her healthy recipes and money saving tips.

Elaine’s work with soybeans began when she tried to make soy milk from the beans they grew on their farm. Although cooking came naturally to her, the scientific aspects of food development did not, so she read studies and bought books. Her neighbour happened to know a professor at the University of Manitoba, and he convinced her to take her soy product for nutritional analysis and testing, then to the Food Development Centre in Portage La Prairie. Through this process Elaine was encouraged to develop a soy crème product, which had a much longer shelf life and cost less to bring to market. She experimented with butters, spreads, creams and other soy products, but her staple remained the soy crème that she used in most of her cooking and baking.

Although she got government grants and a lot of help from the Flax and Soy Councils, Elaine still had to spend a lot of her own family’s money to develop her product. Her husband Melvin recalls many trips to Portage and Winnipeg to have products undergo nutritional analysis, packaging, and labeling, which all added to their costs. Elaine had started this process as a way of earning some off-farm income to help her family meet their financial needs, but given the costs and time investment she decided not to pursue it any further.

While taking her soy product to market was not something she pursued, Elaine’s concern about preparing healthy meals from nutritious food and her need to save money to help her families bottom line remained important to her. Indeed, her greatest pleasure had always come from sharing information and learning from others, while seeing people eat healthy food and save money. Thus, the development of her cookbooks emerged.

Realizing she still needed to earn an income to help keep her family on their land, family & friends encouraged Elaine to publish her recipes and tips for eating well and saving money. With the help of her sister Elaine wrote her first book “Winnie’s Winning Ways”, which she actively promoted at fairs and conferences. Several more books followed, then she created a website and monthly newsletter to carry her message of healthy eating and saving money even further. Since many of the recipes only cost a few pennies to make, she developed a loyal following.

Flax is another Manitoba food crop that Elaine likes to promote. Most of society had forgotten its value until recently, but Elaine has been working with it for decades. She says that she originally saw a Flax Council booth at an Ag show and thought, “Flax is for paint”, but then she researched the product and found its myriad of health benefits and began working with it in her cooking. It is a powerful seed that contains protein, lingams, and omega-3’s, plus fiber, all of which help maintain optimal health. It is also suspected to be a major anti-cancer food.
Elaine’s knowledge and love of cooking came from her mother and grandmother, whose stove she stood at as a small child (on a chair), helping cook for the family. She also learned early on how much time and money a family can save if they eat healthy food made from scratch. “Those experiences play a part in how you feel about things” Elaine asserts, adding that people knew how to cook foods that kept them healthy. She asserts that “Eating well doesn’t cost a lot, but you need to know what to buy and what to do with it. Most people don’t know about these things now-a-days and we are paying for it with our health.”

While the health benefits of soy and flax are currently being rediscovered, through her dedication to healthy eating Elaine never forgot this. “When I was young nobody ever said how important food was to our health” Elaine notes, “but with diet related illnesses on the rise people are now rediscovering foods that will keep them well.” Elaine’s focus was always on these things, and she sees advertising for junk and packaged foods that claim they are healthy as a huge problem, which upsets her and makes her want to help even more people “wake up to what healthy eating is all about”, which she tries to do one cookbook, one phone call, one visit, and one newsletter at a time.

Her book titles include Soy Satisfied, Eat More Whole Grains, Cooking Without Mom, From your House to Ours, Carefree Catering, and the original, Winnie’s Winning Ways. Elaine also writes a monthly newsletter that includes tips on cooking, nutrition, gardening, cleaning, and more. Her books are sold mainly through her website at [http://www.winnieswinningways.ca](http://www.winnieswinningways.ca) and through word-of-mouth.

_Elaine is presenting at the 2010 Growing Local Conference in Winnipeg this February._

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<td>Jane Reinhardt-Martin, Rd, Ld</td>
<td>Visit Jane Reinhardt-Martin's site and learn about the many advantages of flax in one's daily diet.</td>
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<td>SoyQuick Soymilk Maker</td>
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Flin Flon Container Gardening Project Grows!
written with the assistance of Christa McIntyre of the Norman RHA

The Flin Flon Chapter of the Manitoba Food Charter has hosted Free Container Gardening workshops in their community for two years now. The project is open to all interested individuals or families who reside in the Flin Flon, Creighton, Denare Beach and surrounding areas. The free container gardening project has proven to be a great opportunity for those who have never tried gardening and for those who are currently not gardening. Participants receive free gardening supplies and have the opportunity to watch a gardening demonstration, receive helpful tips, and ask questions.

This project originally began because a committee of dedicated folks wanted to find a fun and easy way to promote food security their community. Christa McIntyre of the Norman RHA helped lead the project. She says that the committee choose to promote food security through gardening because they thought it would appeal to individuals and families in their area, and chose container gardening because they wanted to start small and see how the community would respond.

Members of the organizing committee think that the project has gone well because there are no financial barriers, it has been promoted well, is well organized with clear direction and support to participants, and because people want to produce their own food. Now that they have had two successful years they are considering developing permanent garden beds in the community and several participants from nearby Cranberry Portage are working to secure funding to develop garden beds there too.

McIntyre notes that the best part of the project is the way it has grown from year to year. “Our first year started out with 100 families and because of the enthusiasm and interest in the community it grew to 186 families the second year.” Workshop surveys have indicated that people really wanted to learn how to garden but didn’t know where to start or didn’t have access to garden plots. McIntyre knows that because of this project people were able to try gardening and she says that many participants are “excited to be growing their own vegetables and herbs.”

McIntyre notes that the biggest challenges have been around finding an outlet who can supply them with the large volume of pots, soil and cages that they require and finding a place to store all the supplies if they come in early.

Organizing committee members get to work on the project as part of their jobs elsewhere, which makes a big difference in terms of having people who can help make it happen each year. McIntyre stresses that dedicated organizers are important to any project that grows to such a large size.

Gardening workshops take place in June each year and are fully funded through HEIFER International Canada’s Local Food Projects, facilitated by the Manitoba Food Charter.
GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES
THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS

The following links were provided courtesy of Foodforethought, an information service that encourages dialogue and exploration of innovative trends in the global food system. To subscribe contact editor@foodforethought.net.

World Hunger and the Will of Our Governments: G8 countries show lack of will to address global food crisis One in six people worldwide go hungry everyday and the number of people suffering from chronic hunger has reached the record-high figure of 1 billion this year, all while the world produces enough food to feed everyone. World leaders met at the World Food Summit in Rome to tackle this growing crisis, but leaders are backing out on promises made earlier. Hundreds of billions are spent by wealthy governments to bail out banks and financial institutions, but the G8 countries are trying to cut a promised $20 billion agriculture fund for the poorest countries to only $3 billion. With literally millions facing life-threatening hunger, and the economic crisis and climate change hitting the poor hardest, governments are ignoring the most basic of human rights. Two viewpoints on the recently concluded World Food Summit are presented in the links below. ActionAid and Via Campesina are two organizations with different criticisms of the summit, which most viewed as a “missed opportunity.” You can read more at http://www.actionaid.org.uk/102192/news.html or http://www.viacampesina.org/main_en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=819&Itemid=1.

Chocolate Industry Report Card Shows Widespread Failure to Protect Children After 10 years of promises, protocols, and initiatives, the children of West Africa remain at the mercy of the cocoa industry. The Harkin-Engel Protocol is a voluntary protocol agreed to by the chocolate industry to ensure US chocolate products are not made using forced child labour. However, a recent report issued by the Department of Labor revealed that child labour persists in the world’s chocolate industry. Labour rights advocates suggest that given the clout of corporate cocoa, the power to change farm conditions rests with them. Some companies have taken the initiative to address the issue through other forms of certification that include labour, environmental, and organic standards. See ILRF’s scorecard assessing chocolate companies and their efforts to stop the incidence of child labor at www.laborrights.org.

Are there Better Ways to End Poverty and Hunger? Mark Winne, author of Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty, explores the state of food insecurity in America in a fast-paced article entitled The Season of Discontent. Feeding the hungry is now estimated to be an astounding $100-billion-a-year enterprise, which fills stomachs but fails to provide empowerment. To read the full article go to http://www.markwinne.com/the-season-of-our-discontent/ or see www.markwinne.com to learn more about the author and his work.
FOOD SECURITY RESOURCES & EVENTS

The Canadian Farm Business Management Council Agricultural Webinars

Announcing the Availability of Nourish: Food + Community DVD
WorldLink is pleased to announce the release of its latest film, Nourish: Food + Community, a valuable tool for food system education and outreach. Nourish traces our relationship to food from a global perspective to personal action steps. Hosted and narrated by Cameron Diaz, the Nourish DVD features interviews with bestselling author Michael Pollan, good food advocate Anna Lappé, British chef Jamie Oliver, and Edible Schoolyard founder Alice Waters. In addition to a half-hour television special, there is a collection of 11 short films. The purpose is to start conversations about our food system that encourage citizen engagement. Learn more about the Nourish initiatives http://www.nourishlife.org/.

“Eat Smart, Meet Smart: How to Plan & Host Healthy Meetings, Events and Conferences” Eat Smart Meet Smart will help you plan meetings, events and conferences that are healthy for your participants – and healthy for your organization. This guide provides ideas on how to make healthy food choices and add physical activities that will help keep participants alert, productive, and engaged while at work, and encourage healthier food choices at home too. It is by the Western & Northern Canadian Collaborative for Healthy Living and can be found at http://www.actnowbc.ca/media/08-024%20Eat%20Smart%20Meet%20Smart%20Booklet%20May%2026.pdf.

Western Canadian Holistic Management Conference, February 8-10 in Russell
Topics include Finding Purpose in Peril, Building a New Economy, Profitable Farming, Cropping and Land Management, and Financial Management. Speakers include John Ikerd, Terry Gompert, Pam Iwanchysko, Don Campbell, Ann Adams, Blain Hjertaas, Tony & Fran McQuail, and Ralph and Linda Corcoran. Online registration began December 1. For more information contact www.mbforagecouncil.mb.ca or call 1-204-622-2006.

Seedy Saturday ~ February 13, 2010 at Fort Whyte Alive
The 10th annual mid-winter gathering Seedy Saturday takes root at Fort Whyte Alive and is your chance to celebrate prairie biodiversity with a full day of workshops, displays, vendors and visiting. This grassroots garden show offers inspiration and information on heritage seeds, organic gardening, native plants, and urban agriculture. Bring your seeds and join the fun of the seed swap too. Admission to Fort Whyte will be free! Watch for more information at http://www.friendsconservatory.com/ or http://www.fortwhyte.org/.

Funding for Food Matters Manitoba comes from:

[Images of Canadian and Manitoba flags, and a logo of Heifer International]