

Supporting the Local Economy

The best part of all this has to do with our local economy: Preserving family farm operations, providing jobs in production and processing, and keeping money in our community has a huge economic advantage. Someday, with the support of other regional hospitals, universities and perhaps even public schools, the **Producers & Buyers Co-op** can help create jobs and economically strengthen our region.

Local Food is not just good for our health, it's good for our economy and our communities. It's also part of the Hospital Sisters' Franciscan Mission to be good stewards of the earth and its resources to better serve its people.



To find out more
about Sacred Heart's
Buy Local initiative call the Producers &
Buyers Co-op at River Country RC&D:

715-834-9672

OR
visit their Website:

www.rivercountryrcd.org

Visit the Sacred Heart Hospital website
to find out more about the innovative
programs the hospital has initiated:

www.sacredhearteauclaire.org



there is hope here.

Sacred Heart Hospital Supports

Local Food





Sharing an Idea

On January 24, 2008, Sacred Heart Hospital's Hospitality Services Director, Rick Beckler, attended the Wisconsin Local Food Summit. He

challenged local farmers to create an organization that would remove barriers in order to make buying local food easy for institutions.

Among his responsibilities, Rick is in charge of purchasing the hospital's food with a budget of over \$2 million each year (serving patients and visitors, employees and Meals on Wheels).



Listening to Experts

Rick came back from the Food Summit with exciting news that he had gathered several farmers and local food producers to discuss these barriers. Through these connections, Sacred Heart Hospital began hosting focus groups and planning meetings with farmers

to organize a coordinator to remove these barriers. The hospital's CEO, Steve Ronstrom, pledged up to



10% of Sacred Heart Hospital's food budget to purchasing local food, removing one important barrier to farmers of having a guaranteed market to sell products at a fair local price.

Today, thanks to a new organization, the Producers & Buyers Co-op, Rick purchases food produced locally. The Co-op has helped remove barriers that related to seasonal production, quantity, transportation, processing, delivery and pricing. The Co-op provides an experienced coordinator between buyers and sellers.



Partnering Together

Sacred Heart Hospital partnered with River Country, a not-for-profit, and other local farmers to support grant applications to hire a coordinator and launch the Co-op. A kind of buying club, it serves institutions who wish to purchase locally-produced food. Although located in Eau Claire, the Consortium will reach out to farmers in Chippewa, Barron, Dunn, Pepin, Trempealeau, Buffalo, Clark, Jackson, Polk, Pierce and St. Croix counties.



Local Food is "Green" and Good!

The virtues of local food are well-know. It is fresher, has a longer shelf life, is more nutritious, tastes better and requires less fuel to truck across state lines. Have you



ever had a fresh apple from a local orchard—an apple without paraffin wax



coating it for freshness? You may pay a little more for a humanely raised meat or organic produce, but in the end it's far better than preserved food brought in from hundreds or

even thousands of miles away. With the price of fuel, this is a significant savings. It's also environmentally sustainable!

