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PRESS RELEASE

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FARM TO SCHOOL TRAINING PROGRAM SUPPORTED BY AREA COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

The Schoharie Valley Farm to School Project Pilots Its First School Food Service Staff Development Day With A Focus on Culinary Arts

Cobleskill, NY - March 30, 2009 - Several schools involved in the Schoharie Valley Farm to School Project were provided with the opportunity to send their food service staff to a culinary arts training session on Friday, March 27th, thanks to the sponsorship of the program through a Bassett Healthcare Community Health Benefit Grant, as well as the support of the Schoharie County Farm Bureau, the Capital Region BOCES Career & Technical School, and Cornell Cooperative Extension Schoharie County. The full day staff development session was held at the Schoharie Campus of the Career and Technical School, with the objectives of giving food service staff more in-depth information about the Farm to School concept, enhancing their culinary skills and techniques, and trying out new recipes that would utilize locally grown produce.

Chef Nancy Iannacone, 2008 New York State "Prostart" Teacher of the Year, discussed organization and set-up, flavoring with herbs, and alternative grains like quinoa with the food service staff of Schoharie CSD and Berne-Knox-Westerlo CSD, guided them in knife-handling techniques and the subsequent preparation of approximately 10 new recipes. Most of the prepared recipes were from a recently developed school food service cookbook entitled, "Fresh From The Farm: The Massachusetts Farm To School Cookbook" by Amy Colter, a Berkshire chef, consultant, writer, and Farm to Table advocate. Regina Tillman, Cornell Cooperative Extension Educator, and Coordinator for the Schoharie Valley Farm to School Project, opened the training session by relating the work of food service staff to the urgency of helping to maintaining a local food supply system and combating the epidemic of obesity in today's

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youngsters. “We want to stem the tide of obesity in our school children and support school wellness policies by increasing the variety and amount of fruits and vegetables incorporated into the school menu,” Ms. Tillman explained. By developing a consistent school-based connection to fresh grown and produced local foods, “Farm to School” is seen as a way to improve the nutritional intake of students, to introduce children to the local food system, and to increase the economic viability of area small farms.

It is hoped that integrating the sampled recipes from the training session into each school’s menu will markedly increase the acceptance of served vegetables by the students. However, the immediate impact of the training was seen in the evaluations and feedback from attendees, all indicating that this was a day well spent with high approval ratings for both the facility and the instructors. Ms. Tillman indicated that with continued community support as was garnered for this piloted training program, and the training’s success in reinvigorating the food service staff, other schools involved in the Schoharie Valley Farm to School Project would be offered the same opportunity in the near future.

Anyone interested in volunteer or sponsorship opportunities related to local implementation of Farm to School, or local farmers who want to be included in a centralized procurement listing for the area’s school food purchases, will need to contact Regina Tillman at the offices of the Cornell Cooperative Extension Schoharie County by calling (518) 243-4303, or emailing her at rmt37@cornell.edu.

About Farm to School:

For more information about Farm to School in Schoharie County as well as in the rest of New York State, visit <http://farmtoschool.cce.cornell.edu>

Cornell Cooperative Extension Schoharie County provides equal program and employment opportunities.

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