

## Bear Lake Summer Food Service Farm to School Video Transcript

Just a minute please.

I want some cucumbers.

You want cucumbers? Okay.

Not on my salad.

You want some meat on your salad?

Jenice Momber: Today at Bear Lake School for our summer food program we're primarily serving the walk-ins from the Bear Lake community and our daycare center. The nice thing about the area that we live in, in Manistee County is we have a lot of access to fresh fruits and vegetables and we're taking advantage of that for our summer food programs. Today we're serving some of our commodities with tortilla and ham and cheese and with we're also serving fresh fruit from another local farmer over in the Kaleva area of Manistee County. Grossnickle Farms we have peaches and blueberries. We also have fresh lettuce from Grossnickle's.

Candy Grossnickle: I think this is going on our third or fourth year. I'm not sure and we sell them quite a few products like blueberries, green beans, strawberries most things that are in season.

Mark Coe: And when I heard the schools were interested in getting fresh local products. It was kind of a no-brainer for us for a couple of reasons one is because we have the products and it's another outlet and a source for us to sell but I also have a vested interest. I have an 8th grader now this year 9th grader in school, in one of our local schools and we sell produce to that school. So I know better about the food and the meals that the kids are getting and the fresh produce has been, it's been a huge thing for them and an interesting thing too because some of the kids from the schools work on the farm and it was real exciting to see them tell their buddies, "Hey, we picked that or we grew that." You know and so that's part of time reasons that I'm into the Farm to School Program and what I like to see happening with it.

Momber: Our experience with farm to school and getting started it's just been quite an adventure. You know we started this five years ago. I think this is our fifth year going into it with I'm a dual food service director. I work with Candy and with Bear Lake. We worked with Manistee Area Public Schools and Kathy Gockowski and we work together to make, do the informal bids. We've work with Colleen Matts. She was really the spearhead. She was the one



that got us motivated and going in that direction but I know Kathy and myself were both thinking we live in such an agricultural rich community where our food is being shipped out to other states, other countries and we're not taking advantage of that and why not? We should be doing that and it's a way to help our local farmers find another market.

Grossnickle: I think they should do it. I guess the biggest surprise to me was the asparagus. That was my thought kids and asparagus but they love it. They absolutely love it. So I think it's a good way to promote kids into trying fresh vegetables and it works.

Coe: I see it as an opportunity for the future not only farm to school but farm to institution because I think this is or I know this is branching out in a lot of different directions so it's a business that is growing. You don't start out in business making a ton of money. You grow your business to make money and I think, I'm hoping that in a couple of years that farmers in our area have an opportunity to not only supply fresh local vegetable and produce to the schools on more than a 10 or 20% basis you know at that time in season but what I'd also like to see happen is the capabilities of us in this area getting together and getting an IQF which is a quick freeze machine and storage capabilities and then possibly even be able to brand and freeze and store our local produce to be able to provide it to the schools and institutions later than just a fresh market item.

Momber: What I've learned is network, network, network. Get on Michigan Land Institute. Get with Colleen Matts at TS Mott at MSU. Use your MSU extension office. Call other food service directors that are already doing it. There's a lot of us out there. Connect with your co-ops. SPARK, with Great Lakes, with your distributors, with Van Eerden, Sysco and Gordons. They've got connections there as well and don't think you've got to take it all on at once. Start slow. Start with a couple of vegetables or a couple of fruits and work it in slowly. You don't have to be doing I mean when we first started all we did was corn on the cob in the fall and asparagus in the spring and then we got into strawberries and then we got into apples and now we've got some fundraisers that are going but this is over a five year period so start slow. Start small. Get to know your farmers. Start building a relationship with them. Go out, visit their farms. They love to talk about what they're growing in their land.

Grossnickle: I would like the schools to notify us like in the wintertime to let us know what they want as far as fruits and vegetables. We can plant them and save that for them and sell it only to them and you know it will be a larger amount than what they're doing right now.

Coe: Don't be scared. You know try it out and what does it hurt to try? I mean you might create a market for yourself.

