

Local

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Harvestin' the County means locally grown

Good food is good for all



PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE INTELLIGENCER

Local growers Vicki Emlaw, her daughter Sage, Jenna Empey, and program co-ordinator Emily Robson enjoy fresh organic peas at the Harvestin' the County media day.

By Sara Beck

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PRINCE EDWARD — One needs not look far afield in Prince Edward County to know the harvest is underway for a cornucopia of crops. But, there's a new harvest here.

Harvestin' the County is the newest local marketing initiative from the county's municipal economic development office. The month-long campaign in August encourages county residents to buy locally grown and produced foods.

"This campaign is about both awareness and impact," said Dan Taylor, Municipal Economic Development officer, speaking at a media event at the Picton IGA earlier this week. "People can make a difference by choosing to buy locally produced food. Small decisions like that can have a big impact on the community," he said.

In his speech, Taylor highlighted that the month of August represents 2.3 million "meal occasions" for county residents, if you count 25,000 people eating three meals a day. That represents a lot of buying power.

"We've been looking for positive messages in the agricultural community," he said. And this is one of them.

The campaign is more than just about raising awareness. It also includes a challenge in the form of a pledge.

"It's like a skate-a-thon or a walk-a-thon," Taylor explained. But instead of pledging money, residents are encouraged to pledge that they will spend a certain amount of their August food bill on locally grown goods.

Taylor says the idea for Harvestin' the County came from a group called Locavores based in San Francisco. This August they're promoting the "hundred mile meal," which means buying food that comes from a hundred-mile radius around one's own home. The county is a lot more concentrated than that, but the region supports some excellent products, he said.

Those products range from fruits and vegetables to wines and beer, artisan breads, maple syrup, jams, fish and meats as varied as beef and bison, ducks and quail, emu and elk.

Harvestin' the County isn't just focused on small businesses and roadside stands. Taylor also recognized the importance of having supermarkets like the Picton IGA support the program. Convenience is a major part of people's purchasing decisions and having locally grown products accessible in the big stores helps to make it easy to buy county foods.

It's also important to be able to recognize county foods when you see

them. That's why the campaign also includes the design of brand stickers that will clearly label locally grown foods.

Craig Desjardins of the PELA Community Futures Development Corporation presented a cheque for \$2,500 to support the campaign.

Local producer Vicki Emlaw of Vicki's Veggies pointed out that buying locally is not just good for our community, it's good for the environment and good for our health. "How far away is Chile?" she asked. "Let's say it's two thousand miles. If you buy apples imported from Chile, you're burning a lot of fuel to get them here. If you buy them from

Waupoos, they're fresher, they've got more nutrients, and you're burning 19,980 miles less worth of fuel."

Many county products will be highlighted at a Harvestin' the County lunch on August 22 in Belleville. Tickets are available online or from Slickers county Ice Cream, Books on the Bay, Taste the county, Fromage Black River Cheese, county Farm Centre and Aman's Abattoir.

To make a pledge for Harvestin' the County, to buy tickets or to find recipe ideas, information on eating in the county, seasonal availability of foods, and a forum, visit www.the-county.ca/harvestin.