

Press Release

Local Food Movement Brainstorming Session with Muskoka Chefs, Farmers and Consumers

November 17, 2010

Local farmers, chefs, food artisans and retailers are gathering to brainstorm how to get more of your next meal grown and prepared in Muskoka/ Parry Sound. According to James Murphy, General Manager of Savour Muskoka, the demand for locally produced food far outstrips the ability of area farmers to produce and distribute it. At one time Muskoka could boast of over one thousand farmers. Today the region's farm population has withered to a shadow of itself.

Faced with this situation, Savour Muskoka, a local organization dedicated to building awareness of the foods and culinary experiences available in Muskoka and Parry Sound, is holding a brainstorming session on November 19 and 20 at the Delta Grandview in Huntsville. This will be the first meeting in a series planned for this winter aimed at developing our local food system.

On Friday evening of November 19th, dairy farmer and community leader Diane Dowling from Kingston Ontario, will recount some of the steps that local farmers, chefs, distributors, community organizations and consumers took to strengthen the local food movement in eastern Ontario. While it has taken six years of work, Kingston area farmers have forged new marketing initiatives making local food available in area institutions. Farm start-up programs have been initiated that help new farmers learn from established operators. Farm apprenticeships and training are attracting area youth to agricultural careers. New farmers can borrow field equipment through a cooperative. As well, over 700 people attended a community forum to discuss what they need and how they can get involved in building a sustainable local food system in Kingston and Frontenac.

Friday evening, a short documentary film titled "New Season Coming" will be shown profiling three different Kingston farm families and their involvement in building community and their local food system. Dowling will take questions from the audience with the aim to help translate her experiences into next steps for enhancing local food in Muskoka and Parry Sound.

On Saturday morning, November 20th, participants will tackle the challenges and values of building a sustainable food system for our region. The focus of the day will be on the question: "What are the issues and opportunities facing Muskoka-Parry Sound as we look for ways to expand production, distribution and consumption of local food?" Invitations have already been sent to many area farmers, chefs, food industry representatives, government agencies and representatives. In addition, several spaces are still available to individuals who share an interest in our local food system. Local farmers have provided some of the food for the chefs serving this event. Admission is free but advanced registration is required. To register contact Sarah Copfer, Savour Muskoka Member Representative at (705) 646-7118 admin@savourmuskoka.com