

Update from the Sooke Region Food CHI (Community Health Initiative) Society

Submitted by Kathryn Kusyszyn

The Sooke Region Food CHI Society is pleased to report a very active phase in our evolution. With financial support from the VIHA Community Food Action Initiative and plenty of volunteer hours, from January 2009 until the present we engaged in a number of local food activities aimed at education and raising awareness.

1. The meat and regulations workshop January 27 was highly successful. Representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport, and the Vancouver Island Health Authority presented information on the changes to meat regulations and food safety regulations in general. Kathleen Gibson, a food systems specialist managing two province-wide meat programs for the BC Food Processors Association moderated a lively discussion informed by local food advocates.
2. On March 7 representatives from The District of Sooke, the CRD, MLA John Horgan's office and MP Dr. Keith Martin's office and family members visited two local farms. Farm history, tours, and a discussion of current challenges to farming combined with a local lunch. The young children particularly enjoyed meeting the chickens and pigs while the adults discussed ways to work collaboratively.
3. The Island on the Edge film screening March 11 along with shorts The Share Farm in Richmond and a slide show from CASA Community Garden drew a crowd of over 200 people including John Horgan MLA and Corky Evans, former Minister of Agriculture. Previous to the screenings refreshments were enjoyed and patrons milled around tables of local food producers, and community groups involved in growing. After the screening Nick Versteeg answered questions and shared stories on the making of the film.
4. Our coordinator, Sheila Wallace, organized a group trip to Cowichan to visit Lyle Young's chicken processing facility. Producers and consumers came away with a better understanding of the realities of this industry.
5. By the time you read this, the Sooke Region Farm and Food Guide will be available on our website: sookefoodchi.ca This document, the result of tireless volunteer hours, showcases

local farms, the country market, restaurants, stores and low-cost food options that feature local food.

On a different note, the Juan de Fuca Agricultural Advisory Commission was disappointed to receive word from the CRD that no resources are currently available for continuing the development of an Agricultural Area Plan. This plan is currently postponed pending further developments.

Upcoming Events

Community Garden Network Day – April 25, 2009

Coming up April 25 is the Community Garden Network Day where we plan for 100 volunteers to work in 3 community gardens in The District of Sooke. These three gardens represent a broad spectrum of Sooke.

The Ladybug T'Sou-ke Nation Garden looks to supporting the well being of their band by growing vegetables and a variety of medicinal herbs found in their culture.

The Edward Milne Community School - the garden is run by students from Culinary Arts Program who learn about compost building, soil nurturing, building beds, pruning fruit trees, seeding, weeding, harvesting and enjoy the wonderful fresh organic flavours to use daily in their cafeteria!

The CASA Community Garden is run by agencies that use the garden as an uplifting and rejuvenating space...and kindergarten classes take part as well.

After the day's labours, The T-Souke Nation is hosting a pit cook of local food for registered volunteers. The BC 150 Foundation is donating \$50 for each volunteer's day of work towards local food initiatives in Sooke.

Sooke Rotary Auction – May 2, 2009

On May 2nd Food CHI will be participating in the Sooke Rotary Auction at SEAPARC - a large event attended by over a thousand people every year.

Our main themes for the next phase are growing and accessing food. We will build on the fantastic models created by LifeCycles and other groups in these areas to establish similar programs in our region. Thanks for all your support.

Thanks to the VIHA Community Food Action Initiative for their support.