

1.FNE01-380:CSA Partnership with Community Food Security Project  
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2. My goal was to develop a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) partnership among Peacework Organic Farm, other local organic farms, and the Northeast Neighborhood Alliance (NENA) Greater Rochester Urban Bounty (GRUB) project. I hoped to assist GRUB in starting a CSA in the neighborhood of their 3½ acres of market gardens in the North Sector of Rochester, an area where the median income for a family of 5 is under the poverty level. I also planned to serve as their technical advisor in establishing organic methods in their gardens. By partnering with GRUB, I hoped that our farm could find a more effective approach to providing organic produce to a severely underserved part of the population. I also hoped that by bringing the organic produce farms in this area together, we could increase our sales at the Abundance Cooperative Market while coordinating back up production for the GRUB CSA.
3. Our farm: Peacework Organic Farm has grown slightly to 18 rented acres where my partners Greg Palmer, Ammie Chickering and I produce vegetables, herbs and flowers for 40 local families and 240 families who are members of the Genesee Valley Organic Community Supported Agriculture Project in Rochester. We also do some sales to Wayne County and Rochester stores, the Abundance Cooperative Market in particular. 2004 will be my 23rd year of making my living at organic vegetable farming. The GRUB market garden consists of a larger plot of 3½ acres, the "Vineyard," and 3 smaller gardens on vacant lots. Since 2000, when NENA staff people, Shirley Edwards in particular, cleaned out the "Vineyard," (49 truckloads of trash), the gardens have evolved in a very positive direction. The third farm manager, who stayed for 2 seasons, did soil testing, established rotations, composting and developed more growing areas. Vandalism continues to be a serious problem. Last summer, every tool of any value was stolen, including their rototiller. This winter, they are building a barn, which will have a secure storage area and a burglar alarm system.
4. When this project began in 2001, staff people at GRUB had had no experience in using organic methods. There have been four changes in the garden staff and two changes in marketing staff since that time. This turnover has made it difficult to train the staff in organic methods and CSA. Using grant funds, project head, Shirley Edwards, has gone to a NOFA conference and she is in place for the duration. Aura LaBarre, farm manager in 2002-3, used half of the training funds, and then left for Wisconsin. In December 2003, on my recommendation, GRUB hired Katie Lavin who was an apprentice on our



farm during the 2003 season. She was one of the best apprentices we have ever had with a sound grasp of organic principles, a sharp mind and an endless capacity for hard work while remaining cheerful! Katie is committed to staying with the project for several years. This winter, Katie, and the new marketing manager, Arturo, used the rest of the training funds in the grant to attend useful conferences for additional training in organic methods and direct marketing. So it is my hope that the situation with their garden will finally stabilize. Katie intends to seek out a person from the NENA neighborhood to train as her eventual replacement.

The turnover at GRUB has been paralleled by the turnover in produce managers at the Abundance Cooperative Market. The current manager, Melody Noveroske, is the fourth since this SARE project began. She is the first to have real experience in retail management and is making dramatic improvements in display and sales, while reducing shrinkage.

5. I have convened an annual meeting of the area organic farmers every spring. This has helped the succession of managers at Abundance to get to know the local farmers and has kept us in touch with one another. Produce sales have risen steadily since the store opened in 2000. By making sure the produce managers are familiar with local farmers, this has helped increase sales of locally produced food. I will append a report on Abundance sales to this final report.

I have met regularly with the various farm managers at GRUB to advise them on organic methods, certification, and available resources. In 2002 and 3, I reviewed the garden plans with the manager, advised her on varieties, and facilitated the acquisition of materials for composting. During the growing season each year, I have inspected the gardens several times, also dropping in at odd moments to see what was going on. This winter, I reviewed seed orders and rotation plans with the new manager, Katie Lavin. I provided the first marketing manager, Angelique Stevens, with a copy of my book, Sharing the Harvest, and answered her many questions about starting a CSA. During the summers of 2002 and 2003, our farm gave a special tour of our farming methods and CSA for GRUB staff and the group of 12 teenagers in their summer work-training program. When Arturo took over marketing, I once again made sure he had a copy of my book and was familiar with the CSA concept.

I provided NENA with plans for constructing a walk-in cooler. My partner Greg and I were prepared to help with the construction. Greg inspected the sight and helped with measurements. For reasons that were not explained, NENA decided to order a ready-made walk-in refrigeration unit from a Rochester supplier, so the instruction in do-it-yourself walk-in construction did not take place. I suspect that the project was short-handed during the fall months when there were two months between the departure of the previous



staff people and the hiring of Katie and Arturo. It was not until this winter that the gardens had a secure place in which to install a walk-in. Also, surprisingly, it was not until after persistent reminders that the electric company finally hooked up electricity to the garden site. So there has been a steady stream of obstacles to the smooth progress of this project.

6. As a result of this project, GRUB finally has a competent farm manager in place who is committed to staying for a few years to assure continuity. In 2003, they initiated a CSA with 3 shares, a tiny project to be sure, but it was a start. This season, they intend to recruit a dozen families. Their eventual goal is a 50 member CSA. So far, the GRUB gardens have provided enough produce for this modest number of shares. There is still the possibility that in the future, GRUB will need supplements from other local farms.

I believe that it is preferable for them to start small and do a good job, than to overextend themselves and give CSA a bad reputation in their neighborhood. By providing excellent shares for a dozen families this year, they will create good will and that will enable growth in the future. The garden finally has a secure barn, a cooler and a new supply of equipment.

The annual meetings of local produce farmers has helped build cohesion among us and provided the Abundance Coop produce managers with the opportunity to get to know us. The current manager plans to present the farmers who attend this spring's meeting with the store's produce projections for the coming season and her specifications for quality and pack.

7. The challenges of growing food in an inner city garden are different than on a rural farm. Vandalism and theft of equipment has plagued GRUB. Even plants have been stolen. The farm manager described setting out transplants one day only to find that they had disappeared by the next morning.
8. I have not been able to get precise figures on Abundance produce sales, but they have roughly doubled each year.
9. Although this project has taken much longer than I anticipated, I think that GRUB and Abundance are headed in a healthy direction. I have learned that the personnel challenges for alternative institutions are actually greater than the technical difficulties. With the modest pay scales available, it is hard to find people with the high level of skills necessary to make an urban garden or a food coop successful. My next steps with GRUB are to continue offering advice and support. Their crew and trainees will come to our farm again this season for a tour. I am urging their staff to go door to door around the circumference of the "Vineyard," recruiting neighbors to get involved in the gardens and the CSA. I think it would help if GRUB could provide staffing for a weekly evening cook out in the garden for neighborhood teens. By getting them on the side of the garden, they will help protect it from vandalism. In the



garden where most of the plant theft has taken place, I have recommended that they plant a row of cherry tomatoes along the path that neighborhood people have been using for them to eat. Maybe GRUB can win their allegiance by sharing with them, instead of fighting theft.

10. I plan to continue advising GRUB and working with Abundance to increase sales of local produce. I have also provided the manager in charge of frozen meat sales with a list of local organic meat producers. I have made a point of attending the coop annual meetings to help support those members who already understand the importance of buying local and to help educate those who lack this understanding. I have contributed to the discussions of store policy on purchasing. I have started working with a graduate student on a project to reveal where the money goes on a number of products sold at the coop to better inform coop members about market spread.
11. There have been several articles in the Rochester press about the GRUB project. With the assistance of students from the University of Rochester, GRUB has created a high quality newsletter with articles about the gardens and distributed thousands of copies in the city. Attached, find copies of this newsletter, the GRUB brochure and the Abundance project selection policy. I have also written letters and an article for the Abundance newsletter on the value of purchasing from local farms. NENA staff gave a workshop on this project at the NOFA-NY conference in 2002.
12. Elizabeth Henderson  
March 21, 2004

Peacework Organic Farm  
2218 Welcher Road  
Newark, New York 14513

Dear Friends,

I am writing to you because in the past you supplied produce of some kind to the Genesee Food Coop. The Coop will be reopening this spring as the Abundance Cooperative Market at 62 Marshall Street. I thought it might be useful for all of us to get together at least once to talk about supplying the coop. By sharing information about crops, we may be able to close gaps, so that the coop has a steady supply from local farms and so that we are not competing with one another. We might want to share the growing of crops that the coop particularly wants, but which require a lot of labor, such as green beans. Each farm could take a week or two. The coop board is very committed to buying local. With a little coordination, we may be able to make more local produce available.

Another possible shared market is in the works. The Northeast Neighborhood Association (NENA) is planning to start a CSA based on 3 acres of inner city gardens. With luck, they will be able to supply most of the food they need for their shares. They do not have room for all the crops they would like to include, such as sweet corn, potatoes, winter squash, carrots, onions, cabbage, broccoli. We could help them get started if our farms pledged to supply some of the crops they need.

If this sounds interesting to you, please put on your calendars a meeting for Wednesday, April 4, 2001, at 7:30 pm at Abundance Cooperative Market. We can combine the meeting with a chance to tour the new store.

Please let me know whether you plan to attend or not. Thanks!

Best wishes for a bountiful season with seasonable weather!

Elizabeth Henderson  
315-331-9029  
ehendrsn@redsuspenders.com



Peacework Organic Farm  
2218 Welcher Road  
Newark, New York 14513

Dear Friends,

A whole year has gone by since some of us met at the Abundance Cooperative Market at 62 Marshall Street to tour the new store and talk about supplying the coop. The store has done well this first year, but it could do better. Abundance is firmly committed to selling produce from local farms first. With a little coordination, we may be able to make more local produce available. There are also two grant possibilities from Ag. and Markets. As a group, we might be able to access some money to help promote the Coop, NENA and other outlets for our produce.

The Northeast Neighborhood Association (NENA) is planning to start a CSA based on 3 acres of inner city gardens. With luck, they will be able to supply most of the food they need for their shares. They do not have room for all the crops they would like to include, such as sweet corn, potatoes, winter squash, carrots, onions, cabbage, broccoli. We could help them get started if our farms pledged to supply some of the crops they need.

If this sounds interesting to you, please put on your calendars a meeting for Wednesday, April 3, 2002, at 7:00 pm at Abundance Cooperative Market.

Please let me know whether you plan to attend or not. Thanks!

Best wishes for a bountiful season with seasonable weather!

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Dear Friends,

A whole year has gone by since some of us met at the Abundance Cooperative Market at 62 Marshall Street to talk about supplying the coop with more local produce. The store has done much better in its second year. Produce sales have doubled. Abundance is firmly committed to selling produce from local farms first. With a little coordination, we may be able to double their sales again.

In 2002, the Northeast Neighborhood Association (NENA) started a CSA based on 3 acres of inner city gardens. They hope to increase the number of members in 2003. With luck, they will be able to supply most of the food they need for their shares. They do not have room for all the crops they would like to include, such as sweet corn, potatoes, winter squash, carrots, onions, cabbage, broccoli. We could help them with these bulkier crops if our farms pledged to supply some of the crops they need.

If this sounds interesting to you, please put on your calendars a meeting for Thursday, April 3, 2003, at 7:00 pm at Abundance Cooperative Market.

Please let me know whether you plan to attend or not. Thanks!

Best wishes for a bountiful season with seasonable weather!

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Dear Friends,

Yet another year has gone by since some of us met at the Abundance Cooperative Market at 62 Marshall Street to talk about supplying the coop with more local produce. The store continues to do better with every year. Produce sales have doubled again. Abundance is firmly committed to selling produce from local farms first. With a little coordination, we may be able to double their sales again in 2004.

The new produce manager Melody Noveroske would like to meet with all of us to explain the changes in procedure that this increased volume entails. With a limited staff, the coop needs our help in making sure we deliver our produce ready to set out in the cooler. Melody would also like a write up on the growing practices of each of our farms to post or make available for coop members. If you have not already written a short piece for the coop, please consider doing it now before we get too busy in the field.

If this sounds interesting to you, please put on your calendars a meeting for Wednesday, March 31, 2004, at 7:00 pm at Abundance Cooperative Market.

Please let me know whether you plan to attend or not. Thanks!

Best wishes for a bountiful season with seasonable weather!

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## Product Policy

Approved by Product Policy Cmte on November 12, 2003

Approved Unanimously by Board of Directors on February 11, 2004

Preamble: To more fully express the mission of the Abundance Cooperative Market to provide safe, healthful, nutritious food and other products at a reasonable price to the Rochester community, while, at the same time providing the coops product buyers a set of guidelines to better inform their buying decisions, the Board of Directors establishes the following policy.

When choosing its products, Abundance Coop gives priority to those that are:

- Raised or produced using organic practices.
- Locally produced, when available. Local means in the Rochester area, then moving out in concentric circles from there.
- Produced and packaged to have a minimal impact on the environment.
- Not genetically modified or containing genetically modified organisms or hormones. However, because formal labeling of such ingredients is not in place, Abundance may unknowingly sell goods with such ingredients.
- Produced by companies that adhere to socially responsible practices, including using fair trade practices and/or paying fair wages.
- Produced without animal testing.
- Supportive of cooperatives or family-owned or independent companies.
- Free of artificial ingredients, additives and/or preservatives.

Since we strive to meet the needs of as many members as possible, we also carry products that do not meet a substantial portion of the above priorities. When a product does not fit a substantial portion of the above priorities, these additional criteria should be met:

- The product is the only product in that category provided by our main suppliers with no acceptable substitutes; or
- If there are other products in that category that better fit the above criteria, the product in question meets at least one of the above criteria, and is either more affordable to the Rochester community or is in great demand by shoppers.

Abundance provides information about products or ingredients whenever possible, so that shoppers can make informed choices.

Abundance works with local producers, whenever practical, to improve the quality of ingredients so their products