

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

Boundary County

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Farm to Table fundraiser celebrates local food production in Boundary County

AT A GLANCE

A fundraiser for the nonprofit Gardeners for Regional Organic Wellbeing featured food grown at the community garden as well as from many other Boundary County producers.

The Situation

A local nonprofit, Gardeners for Regional Organic Wellbeing, or GROW, has provided low cost organic garden plots to residents of Bonners Ferry and the surrounding area since it was created in 2009. The organic garden is also used as a teaching garden for the UI Extension, Boundary County Master Gardeners and gardening classes. Produce from the GROW plots is donated to the local food bank and sold at the local farmer's market. GROW has a number of annual expenses, including utilities, garden supplies and salary for a part-time garden manager.

Our Response

Previously, fundraising raffles were held each spring and fall using items solicited from local businesses and community members. This year, GROW decided to use a Farm to Table theme for a fundraising dinner. It was hoped that this would provide a venue for socializing and building community while celebrating local food production.

The resulting fundraiser was called the Farm to Table Local Gourmet Feast, and it was promoted in the local weekly newspaper, an online newspaper, featured on a local radio show and in a local magazine. Tickets were sold for \$40 each, and ticket sales were capped at 100 attendees. Community response was tremendous, with an outpouring of locally produced food, flowers, decorations and donations for the raffle and silent auction. A local farmer supplied all the



The GROW! Community Garden is situated on land owned by the Trinity Lutheran Church in Bonners Ferry, ID.

flour for the homemade breads and desserts from their new stoneground flour mill business. The same farming family made hummus from chickpeas grown on their farm. A GROW member and Master Gardener donated roast beef from their farm. Owners of a new blueberry farm made cheesecake with blueberry sauce and honey from their own hives. Organic vegetables provided from the GROW plots included baby greens, carrots, fingerling potatoes and beets. Fresh-pressed cider was made by a local farmer from apples grown at the GROW garden. A local fruit grower that has a dried fruit business supplied 5 lb of dried cherries for the salad. In addition, local restaurants and businesses supplied homemade soup, locally produced beer, fresh flowers, fresh fruit desserts, milk (both cow and goat) that was used to make fresh chevre and farmer's cheese for the salad, a lamb hors d'oeuvre and dried wild mushrooms for the meat sauce. Raffle and silent auction items provided some additional revenue but were not the main focus of the event.

Program Outcomes

The fundraising dinner was held Saturday, Oct. 15, from 6-9 p.m. at the Boundary County Fairgrounds. Attendees raved about the food, which was served by students from the Bonners Ferry FFA and the local alternative high school. There were four appetizers followed by a tomato and roasted pepper soup, a salad of baby greens, homemade bread, homemade butter (made from locally produced cream) and a main course of roast beef, roasted beets, smashed fingerling potatoes and roasted carrots, served with wild morel cream sauce. The local brewery brought two small kegs of their own beer, an India pale ale and a wheat beer. The wine offering, purchased from a local wine bar, was an "O" wine (O stands for opportunity), that provides scholarships to low income woman to support their education. Coffee was supplied by a local roaster.

A major program outcome was the recognition of our community's ability to provide for its own food. With this concerted effort to create a feast from local production, we learned about our local suppliers, including producers of fresh and dried fruit, vegetables, milk, eggs, cheese, beer, cider, beef and wild mushrooms. We learned to make fresh cheese from local milk, and how to use local stoneground flour from different types of wheat grown in the Kootenai Valley. UI Extension educator Kate Painter is creating a database of local suppliers from this effort. She plans to create a web-based version in the future.

Another outcome was the enhancement of community partnerships. Creating this meal from local suppliers, and then sharing the meal with the community enhanced relationships across diverse groups. Attendees included traditional growers and aspiring farmers, both young and old, as well as community leaders. Together we celebrated our local bounty. And in the process, we surpassed our fundraising budget for this event, earning over \$3,200, due in large part to the generous donations from the community. Plans are already underway to have another Farm to Table fundraiser next year!



Participants at the Farm to Table Local Gourmet Feast learned about the organic community garden maintained by the nonprofit organization GROW.



The menu from the Farm to Table fundraiser featured donations from many local suppliers as well as from the GROW garden.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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