



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Salad Made Simple” takes root in Watertown Schools

Farm to school pilot program brings local food to students

Watertown, NY - Offering fresh, healthy food choices to area children while supporting local farm businesses is the driving force behind the new “Salad Made Simple” pilot program. This fall, over 600 middle school students in the Watertown City School District have the weekly option of eating locally produced salad at lunchtime.

The new salad initiative is being tested with the goal to develop a model that makes sourcing and serving local produce easy for schools and farmers. The Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA), Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Jefferson County and Food Venture Advisors are implementing the pilot, which is making fresh salad available to fifth and sixth graders at W.T. Wiley Intermediate School from September through December of this year. Depending on feedback from school staff, students and producers, the program may extend further into the school year.

Patti LaBarr, Watertown City School District Superintendent, is “beyond grateful” to the partners who have supported the salad bar pilot. “We are thrilled the program focuses on New York-grown products,” she said. “Students will be learning about the benefits of healthy eating and enjoying a salad at the same time. Another win for our district!”

Students, too, have been receptive to the new salad offerings. During the program’s trials, coordinators overheard positive comments from students like, “Yeah, salad today,” “It was really fresh,” and “Oh good – I like salad.”

The “Salad Made Simple” effort is part of the “Drive for 25” initiative, which has been spearheaded by Assemblywoman Addie Jenne (D-Theresa) and supported by the New York School Nutrition Association. The initiative would provide increased state funding of up to 25 cents more per lunch for schools that meet set goals for expanded usage of local food products.

Drive for 25 has received a total of \$600,000 in state funding over the last two years. Funding from the program has been used to purchase indoor grow racks in 11 North Country schools, helping schools produce their own salad vegetables while providing hands on gardening experience to students

throughout the school year. Minimally processed storage crops like carrots are also making their way into area schools. These crops are produced locally and available year-round.

"It is so important for our economy that our children have access to fresh local food," said Assemblywoman Jenne. "They are smart consumers, even in middle school, and understand quality and value. Ensuring that our farmers around the state can get their product in front of some of the toughest customers in society - our children - will generate demand for good food into the future."

"The Drive for 25 initiative helps the North Country because we are rich in agricultural resources," she added. "We get the best return on our investment with benefits for our farmers and the grocery buyers of tomorrow."

During 2016, the Drive for 25 program included 16 participating school districts, 15 local farms selling directly to schools, over 12,000 students consuming local food in school and over 40,000 pounds of 43 different local food products offered at lunchtime. Updates from the 2017-2018 school year will be made periodically in the months ahead.

"This option for schools to provide salad in the cafeteria fits perfectly into the vision of the overall program," said Josh Bakelaar, Director of Local Economies and Agriculture at ANCA. "Kids get healthy food while farmers get access to new markets. It's a win-win."

"We're so pleased to work in partnership with the Watertown City School, CCE, the NNY Food Hub Initiative and local producers to make it happen," added Bakelaar. "We are looking forward to transplanting the successes of this model into the other schools participating in Drive for 25."

For more information about the Drive for 25 Farm to School Grant or the "Salad Made Simple" program, contact Josh Bakelaar at jbakelaar@adirondack.org.

[ANCA](#) is an independent nonprofit organization working to build dynamic local economies that sustain thriving communities in Northern New York. Since 1955, ANCA has leveraged the investment of hundreds of millions of dollars into the region in sectors that drive sustainable local economic development.

[CCE of Jefferson County](#) provides unbiased, educational outreach to the North Country through research, education and demonstration in Food and Agricultural Systems, Life Skills, Community Enhancement, Rural Stewardship, and Youth Development.

[Assemblywoman Addie Jenne](#) represents the 116th Assembly District, the so-called River District stretching from the shores of Lake Ontario in Jefferson County to the banks of the St. Lawrence River in the town of Massena in St. Lawrence County and includes the cities of Watertown and Ogdensburg and the towns of Canton and Potsdam. She serves on the state Assembly's Agriculture Committee and is chair of the state Assembly's Task Force on Food, Farm & Nutrition Policy.

Attached: one (1) photo

Photo Courtesy of the Office of Assemblywoman Addie Jenne

Caption: Assemblywoman Addie A.E. Jenne joined fifth graders in Diane McCormick's class for lunch in June at Wiley Intermediate School in Watertown. Assemblywoman Jenne and the students dined on greens harvested earlier in the day from the school's grow racks. The grow racks were purchased with funding from the state's Farm To School pilot program underway in in Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties. This fall, the middle school is piloting a new "Salad Made Simple" salad bar program.

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