Not Your Typical Community Pot Luck: Community Center as Food Educator

Lucy Littlewolf Arias
Little Earth Residents’ Association
Little Earth of United Tribes
Resident’s Association
Little Earth of United Tribes

- Subsidized housing complex in South Minneapolis

- Home to 212 households, approximately 900 residents, and 2/3 or 600 are under the age of 18

- On-site non-profit, Little Earth Residents association
  - Early Childhood Programming
  - Youth development center
  - Teen center
  - Resident Advocate
  - Parent, wellness and empowerment groups
Little Earth
Food Justice Project

Goal:
To improve the health of families and children by providing education, access to healthier foods, traditional foods and food production.
History of Project

• Women’s group established 2004
  ❖ NUTRITION classes: Simply Good Eating, Fare for All, and Dream of Wild Health
  ❖ 2007 incorporated environmental health education: indoor air quality, non-toxic cleaning products, lead and arsenic prevention, and NUTRITION

• Expand NUTRITION education to whole community
  • Focus on youth programming, families, and access to affordable produce (Little Earth Co-op and Community Farm)
Resident Survey

• Is healthy food affordable?
  56% no  24% sometimes  20% yes

• Would you eat more healthy if it was accessible and affordable?
  97% yes

• Would you participate in cooking and gardening activities?
  84% yes
Provide healthier fresher food choices to families and children

- Access to healthier and fresher food
- Knowledge and tools
- Local and sustainable food system
- Emerging community leaders

Organize and community build around an urban farm

Healthy and traditional food education

Community Learning Farm Education
The COMPETITION:

Fast, affordable, convenient and “cultural food”
Provide healthier fresher food choices to families and children

- Follow USDA guidelines for a healthy diet
  - Focus on fruit
  - Vary your vegetables
  - Increase whole grains
  - Calcium rich foods
  - Lean proteins
- Applied to youth programs, groups, and community events
Education: Healthy and Traditional foods

- Seasonal, “super foods”, food to keep you young etc.
- Traditional diet (berries, wild rice, wild game etc.)
  - Local and sustainable food sources
  - Seasonal produce
- Cooking demonstrations
Women’s Group
Fall 2010

Lunch
Salad, fresh fruit, and whole grain pasta with pesto
Community Learning
Farm Education

• Indigenous Farm Conference
• Growing Power Convention
• WEI Urban Farm School
• Compost and vermiculture
• Visiting community experts: WEI “Eco-ware”, Will Allen and Erika Allen, Russ Henry, Emily Moore, Restoring the County Side, Kim Knutson, and many more

• Field Trips: WEI farm, science museum, JD Rivers Children’s Garden, UofM Medicine Garden
Organize and community build around an urban farm

- Little Earth Urban Farm mtgs. with support of WEI and Friends of the Farm
- Earth Day 2010: Work Day and community feast
- Ongoing work days
- Farm planning 2011 growing season
Moving Forward and Sustaining

Revenue to sustain farm, food preservation
Be a model to the community: be a resource for others who want to do better

Continue to provide healthier fresher food choices to families and children

Access to healthier and fresher food

Knowledge and tools

Local and sustainable food system

Emerging community leaders

Permaculture and edible landscape

Healthy and traditional food education

Community Learning Farm Education

Incorporating more traditional food production

Organize and community build around an urban farm
Lessons Learned

• Take steps: change is hard especially lifestyles and how communities view food and what they eat

• Cost analysis is healthy really more expensive? How to best use food dollars. Document...document...document

• Be a model: individually and community

• It takes time to build relationships with local and traditional food producers

• Get everyone involved! Executive directors, finance, teachers, youth workers, volunteers,......
The COMPETITION:

Fast, affordable, convenient and "cultural food"
The New Competition
Meegwitch  Thank You  Pilamaye

- Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing  •  Healthy Foods Healthy Living Institute  •  BCBS Foundation  •  Women’s Environmental Institute  •  City of MPLS  •  Community Action  •  Community experts  •  and Friends of the Farm