

p.e.a.c.h. – People for Environmental Action & Community Health

Tax exempt 501c3 non profit founded in Spokane Washington in 1999

Mission

p.e.a.c.h. is dedicated to creating a sustainable local economy and increasing food security with the production of fresh, local safe food and making this food accessible for all residents, regardless of income.

Summary:

p.e.a.c.h. programs are dedicated to getting more food produced and consumed in Spokane. At p.e.a.c.h. we believe the current industrialized food system is the leading cause of disease and economic dysfunction that plagues our nation. Currently in the U.S. 90% of all food dollars are spent on processed, chemical-laden, nutritionally vacant food. Here in the U.S., one of the richest countries in the world, we are starving from nutritional deprivation, even as we get increasingly overweight as a society. At p.e.a.c.h. our work is focused on solutions to the industrialized food crisis. We aim to dramatically increase the production of fresh local food and make this food accessible to everyone in Spokane, regardless of income. We all know that fresh, minimally processed food leads to a healthier body. We aim to show that by producing fresh food locally under a non-profit model, the factors that drive food cost up will be eliminated and we will be able to provide fresh, wholesome local food at reasonable prices. As individual health increases, health care costs decline. Other advantages to growing more local food is that it will create jobs, engage our low income and at-risk families, improve our environment and bolster economic stability in our community.

There are two major problems with getting more healthy local food into production. The first is that it takes substantial labor to grow food in a healthy sustainable manner and furthermore, the cost of farmland prohibits most individuals from going into farming. In addition to labor and land cost, it takes a lot of expensive infrastructure to set up even a small farm. Our goal is to tackle all these barriers through a new way of producing local fresh food as a non-profit model.

Our Fresh Future for Spokane model has a farmland trust, a farm school and a program to coordinate local labor for food production. Farmland will be acquired through capital campaigns and donations from individuals. We also have a land bank provided by local individuals with farmland who are willing to let us farm their land. p.e.a.c.h. has a program called Farm Hands that networks with numerous institutional systems in our region to secure labor hours for food production. There are many thousands of non-payroll labor hours that already exist in our community and the Farm Hands program redirects those labor hours into the production of local food. Farm Hands are provided by teens and adults doing community service, folks on public assistance, service-learning students from universities and public schools, selected inmates on work release, boy scouts, youth groups, and local volunteers to name a few. Farm hands provide a positive contribution to our local food system and simultaneously teach valuable skills to each participant in the Farm Hands program.

In 2008 we leased and set up a two-acre farm. It took hundreds of volunteer hours to establish a greenhouse, start bedding plants, setup field crops, weed, harvest and market the fresh produce. This was so successful that we recently decided to find 10+ acres of farmland to establish the p.e.a.c.h. Farm School. Our goal is to acquiring the land this fall. The Farm School will have cows for milk and beef, chickens for eggs and meat, goats for milk, and a full spectrum of produce that grows in our region. The farm will produce cheese, bottle milk and make value-added products like pasta sauce, pickles, jams, jellies and more. This farm will be set up to show how sustainable practices create a closed-loop ecologically balanced ecosystem. The farm school will house a handful of farm apprentices for the farm season and host thousands of local public and private school children throughout the year. Our goal is that the graduates of the Farm School will be matched with land from the p.e.a.c.h. farmland trust and remain under the protective umbrella of the non-profit farm model. We will select students for the program who are committed to staying in the Spokane community and working on our local food system. These farm graduates will become trusted, skilled food producers enabling the future wellbeing of our community. Farm School graduates will be networked with all other p.e.a.c.h. farmers and share resources and Farm Hands.

The next big step will be to set up the infrastructure for the p.e.a.c.h. Farm School. For this project to succeed, we need to effectively coordinate the community-based labor that will be the backbone of transitioning this new acreage into production. In 2009 we established relationships and worksite agreements with the Department of Corrections, Spokane County Juvenile Court Services, Career Path Services, St. Georges School, Valley School District and various organizations that coordinate volunteers. With funding from Inland Northwest Community Foundation along with private donations, we will hire a part-time Farm Hands Coordinator position that will start January 1, 2010. This position will be ongoing to ensure we have the labor necessary to take the Fresh Future for Spokane program to the next level. Once the Farm School is producing farm produce and products, we hope to fund the Farm Hands Coordinator position from the revenue generated from the farm.

The average Spokane resident does not have easy, cost-effective access to fresh, minimally processed local food. Most people currently do not know how to grow a garden, and most people do not even have the skill to reliably pick out fresh produce, meat, eggs or dairy. Through our program we will expose thousands of school children, Farm Hands, visitors and apprentices to practices related to selecting seed and growing and harvesting for flavor. We will empower these folks to grow their own food and become skilled at picking fresh produce. We will encourage all people to grow their own food. The other critical need we address is simply to get much more local food into production to feed Spokane citizens.

We are a working partner with the Spokane Regional Health District to create a food assessment that will be release in 2010. Basically what we have learned from our research is that people who are low income have less access to fresh wholesome food because their neighborhoods tend not to have large grocery stores, they lack the skill to grow a garden and many do not have reliable transportation. As we get more food into production we will have a focus on how to get this food to the at-risk populations. We will also target the areas middle-class with less expensive, fresh, local alternatives to

conventional grocery stores. So our main population focus is on low and middle-income. We will be engaging thousands of school children through school field trips and many youth through our Farm Hands program. Our geographic area of focus is Spokane County.

We currently partner with

- Spokane Regional Health District
- Department of Corrections
- Spokane County Juvenile Court Services
- Valley Public School District
- St. George's School
- Career Path Services
- Community Minded Enterprises

We get funding from United Way, Combined Funddrive, individual donations, corporations, grants and our annual fundraiser. We are currently in a growth stage for our decade old non-profit. When we formed our organization we got funds from individuals and memberships. In our third year we received our first grant money from New Priorities foundation (this foundation is no longer in existence). In our fourth year we got a grant from Washington State Department of Ecology for a two-year project. We successfully finished the work and turned in all required reports. We went on to write many grants with no funding provided which we were told was due to the downturn of the dotcom era. We then decided to give up on foundation funding. Instead we started a business with the hopes of creating a revenue source for our non-profit. Just over five

years ago we started Fresh Abundance LOCAL & Organic Foods with the goal of providing revenue for p.e.a.c.h. and a market for the 60+ local farmers we work with. We are happy to say that the grocery store is alive and well but has not reached profitability yet mostly due to the economic down turn of this last year. We believe that Fresh Abundance will reach profitability in 2010 and can begin to funnel money to p.e.a.c.h. Running the grocery store and working closely with so many local farmers has given us the ideas for the programs we now have. With such strong programs and new ideas on how to make Spokane healthy we are again seeking foundation support. Our program work has matured and we know our work will have a large positive impact on the citizens of Spokane.

p.e.a.c.h. History

Ten years ago a group of moms dedicated to nurturing healthier, safer food for Spokane founded a non-profit and started building relationships with local farmers, buying local organic/safe food, and selling this nutritious food to our community.

In the early years we worked on eliminating pesticides, educating parents about toxic exposure, we aided an impoverished neighborhood to eliminate a toxic waste site and we engaged Spokane in a two year campaign on what zero waste would look like in our community.

Five years ago we changed direction from focusing on the problem to dedicating our resources to working on the solution. Thus, our passion was born for local safely grown food.

Today we are still the same core group of passionate moms who founded p.e.ac.h. We have blossomed into a strong community resource with many programs dedicated to strengthening our local food future.

p.e.a.c.h. Programs

p.e.a.c.h. Farm School—in search of a new permanent home.

Apprentice Program

This program trains apprentices into farmers and then matches them with land from the Abundant Harvest Farmland Trust. We select folks for the program who are committed to staying in our Spokane community and working on our local food system. These farmers will become trusted, skilled food producers enabling the fresh future and well being of our community.

Farm HANDS

This program brings a diversity of hands to the land to grow local food. Farm Hands will be provided by teens and adults doing community service, folks on public assistance, service learning students from universities and public schools, selected inmates on work release, and local volunteers. Farm hands provide a positive contribution to our local food system while they acquire valuable skills and inspiration for growing their own food.

Annual Tomato Plant Give-Away

In the spring we grow several thousand tomato plants on our p.e.a.c.h. Permaculture Farm. We give these plants to low income families with a goal of encouraging these folks to grow their own food. We select seeds that can be easily saved and we pass this information along with the gift of these plants.

LOCAL Safe Farmer Certification

Our program privately certifies local farmers that are using organic methods and sustainable farming practices. This certification gives local consumers confidence and allows these producers access to the vast Fresh Abundance marketing network.

Abundant Harvest Farmland Trust

We actively acquire land through purchase via grant funding, willed estates, generous gifts and fundraising. This property is maintained by the p.e.a.c.h. Farmland Trust, which protects it from development and preserves it as an agricultural resource.

Community Roots Market

We run a year round, indoor/outdoor, buy-local farmers market. This venue provides access to low cost vending for local farmers, back yard gardeners, artists, and crafters.

Here is a link to a longer article the Spokesman did on our work in July 2009.

<http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2009/jul/15/harvest-of-health/>

“Let food be thy medicine and medicine thy food”
-Hippocrates