Think Globally, Eat Locally

Eleven-year-old Birk Baehr set the stage with his five minute summary of the world food crisis (YouTube). Fifty local folks gathered at Haggard Library for the main act: to learn how to get involved with the local food scene. **Todd Moore of Lucky Layla Farms**, **Matt Hamilton of Genesis Beef**, **Amanda Van Hoozier of City of Coppell Community Gardens and Farmer's Market** and **Michele Cary-Dave, locavore activist** made the case for eating locally. Benefits include less use of fossil fuels and environmental impact to transport the products, fresher products, knowing the food producer and growing practices, and feeding the local economy.

The City of Coppell hosts one of the area's most vital farmer's market. Amanda Van Hoozier extolled the benefits it brings to a community: adding vitality to a space and a sense of place; becoming a destination by bringing in others from outside the city; serving as a gathering place for people and conversations about food; enhancing quality of life; and engaging citizens (23 residents serve on the Board). Coppell's market is a collaboration between the Parks, Health and Street Departments. The market stimulates the local economy and incubates new small businesses. It provides a venue for local growers to receive fair value for their products and allows customers to get to know the growers. Coppell's market will be open through the winter this year.

Coppell's Community Gardens have grown to two locations since 1998, producing 100,000 pounds of fresh, organic produce distributed through Metrocrest Social Service to the hungry. One hundred percent of the produce raised goes to improve the lives of those without access to fresh food.

Todd Moore knows each of his cows and calls them by name. He has recently purchased more land in East Texas for his operation. He credits Whole Foods for their support in promoting and selling his products. Lucky Layla (add link) is one of the few area sources for raw milk. (add link to http//:realmilk.org) The farm store is open Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. through 6 p.m. at 3721 N. Jupiter, Plano 75074 across from Collin College.

Matt Hamilton runs the family pasture-fed beef ranch near Durant and will soon open a pasture-fed butcher shop in McKinney. He explained that getting the phrase "organic" added to a product has lost a lot of its meaning. Knowing your farmer and the means used to create the product is the best way to be sure about the quality and safety of your food. Matt reminded that when visiting farmer's markets, it is important to sk if the vendor is the grower, where the produce was raised and what procedures were used.

Michele Cary-Dave asks you to vote with your purchasing dollar. Know where your food comes from. Get familiar with the seasonal produce. Ask for local foods at your stores and restaurants. Seek out places to find local foods. Join a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program (add link) or a community garden, shop at a farmer's market or start your own backyard garden.

The passion and dedication of each of these panelists left the audience inspired and ready to take the first step on the path to supporting local foods. Statesman Edward Everett Hale said, "I am only one, but I am one. I can't do everything, but I can do something. The something I ought to do, I can do."