

## **GROWING FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN IOWA**

Over 50 members from 13 District Farm to School Teams gathered in the Gallery of the Memorial Union on March 10<sup>th</sup> to consider strategies for increasing local food activities. The workshop was funded with a Team Nutrition Grant through USDA and hosted by Iowa Department of Education Bureau of Nutrition, Health and Transportation Services, Iowa State University Families Extension, and Iowa Department of Agriculture (IDALS).

Patti Delger, Project Director for Bureau of Nutrition's Team Nutrition program, and Maury Wills, Bureau Chief of Agricultural Diversification & Market Development from IDALS welcomed participants and challenged them to continue their grass roots efforts to bring food grown locally into school districts as ways to further education of students and improve regional economies.

Catherine Strohbehn (HRIM Extension Specialist) and Mary Kay Madsen (Bureau Consultant) shared information about the ingredients needed for successful Farm to School Programs, including the need to clearly communicate product needs through the use of specifications or product descriptions. Chef Cyndie Story, R.D., PhD, who developed curriculum for USDA's Produce University, sent slides that were used for part of this presentation. Dr. Strohbehn discussed food safety controls to consider as part of the farm to school purchasing, including use of school gardens as a source for school meals menu items. Mary Kay Madsen reviewed steps in the procurement process required as part of participation in USDA Child Nutrition Programs. After lunch, a panel consisting of Strohbehn, Madsen, and IDALS Marketing Director Tammy Stott responded to participants' questions in areas about food safety, procurement, sourcing of product, and promotion of farm to school efforts. Through the IDALS' Farm to School program, several marketing and curricula tools, such as the A is for Apple initiative, have been developed.



Kelly Crossley from Independence, Heather Widmayer from Iowa City and Stephanie Conant from Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness, shared their success stories in growing farm to school in their areas, and identified challenges that had been met and how these were resolved.

HRIM doctoral student and certified chef Nathan Stokes demonstrated ways to introduce and prepare some of the vegetables that can be grown in Iowa, such as beets, butternut squash, cabbage, broccoli, and carrots. Participants were intrigued with the suggestion of beet cake! He provided tips on how to handle and fabricate these products efficiently in the school meal kitchens while demonstrating proper use of knives and the concept of mise en place.



Information about Team Nutrition can be found at the Bureau's web site, [http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=373&Itemid=1332](http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=373&Itemid=1332), including the Iowa Gold Star cycle menu and recipes for use of locally grown items and promotional materials. Information about local food use in foodservices can be found at [www.iastatelocalfoods.org](http://www.iastatelocalfoods.org). More information about Farm to School in Iowa can be found at the IDALs website, <http://www.agriculture.state.ia.us/AgDiversification/farmToSchoolProgram.asp>, or USDA Farm to School website at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/F2S/Default.htm>