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## Farm-Raisers

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# Farm-raisers

## Fundraisers with a farm-fresh, healthy twist

As rates of childhood obesity rise across the nation, schools are under pressure to serve healthy foods in cafeterias as well as establish policies to curb the availability of unhealthy foods and sodas on school campuses. Many schools have banned the sale of sodas and candy during school hours. However, outside of the cafeteria and vending machines, school fundraisers are another source of unhealthy foods on campus. Ninety-one percent of schools nationwide use fundraisers as a means to raise school funds, 81 percent of these schools sell cookie dough or greeting cards (Conners, 2006). There is a growing interest in exploring creative ways to raise funds without using unhealthy foods.

Farm-raisers are an alternative fundraising method that brings healthy, farm-fresh foods to schools, raises funds for school programs, and supports local family farms. Farm-raisers raise school funds through the sale of fresh, local and healthy foods. Our brief research found as many as 27 different schools and/or districts, non-profits and community based organizations in the U.S and Canada using innovative farm-raisers. Farm-raisers are also used as educational tools, to conduct classroom activities with math, language, economics, nutrition, science and chemistry. Farm-raisers can be developed between a local farm and PTA, PTO or with the help of a non-profit or community based organization. Highlighted below are some examples of farm-raisers that emphasize a direct connection between farms and schools.

**Community Supported Agriculture (CSA):** Schools in Oak Park, Illinois and in Irvine, California conduct farm-raisers through the sale of CSA baskets. PTA members and students sell subscriptions of locally grown produce baskets to parents, teachers and community members. For every basket sold the PTA receives between \$1 - \$5, the farm receives the remainder. If basket subscriptions are renewed with every growing season this farm-raiser can offer a steady stream of funds for the schools, as well as for the farm.

**Fresh from the farm school lunch:** Seven Generations

Ahead, a non-profit organization in Oak Park, IL in collaboration with local farms, PTA organizations and a high school food service provider sold healthy school lunches to children made with fresh and local foods during school lunch periods, replacing the hot meal option for the day. This fundraiser has led to significant reforms in the district's lunch program.

**U-picks to U-sell:** In Northwest Michigan, Steve Silverman promotes his U-pick apple operation to girl scouts, church groups and schools. Group organizations pick apples at a discounted rate and re-sell them for a profit.

**Holiday gift basket sales:** Wisconsin Homegrown Lunch sells holiday gift boxes made with local specialty items such as cheeses, maple syrup, vegetables and meat products as holiday school fundraisers. Items in the holiday boxes are also sold as individual items.

**A day at the farm:** Remlinger Farms in Carnation, WA promotes "a day at the farm" to daycares, preschools and grade schools. For every \$10 farm pass sold for the event, the school receives \$2. Turn your next farm field trip into a farm-raiser, add a nominal fee to the original farm tour rate and pass the additional funds to school PTAs.

**Marketing specialty and value-added farm products:** Value added farm-raisers are often coordinated by a third party. For example, with the support of the Food System Economic Partnership Farm to School project based in Ann Arbor, MI, three area schools sell value-added products such as honey, dried cherries, meat and poultry from multiple farms in five counties.

**Fresh from the farm food events:** Schools can plan a local dinner event or a wine or food tasting at a local farm. For example, the Plate & Pitchfork in Portland, OR hosts \$95 per plate farm dinners and tours, with proceeds benefiting two organic agriculture education centers and a CSA fund which donates CSA shares to low-income families.

# How to organize a farm-raiser

In addition to schools, organizations such as girl scouts, church groups and other community-based organizations can also develop farm-raisers. A few considerations before conducting a farm-raiser are:

1) **Set clear goals:** Whether the intent of the farm-raiser is to incorporate school curriculum, encourage parent involvement, promote healthy foods in schools, or raise money for a short or long term objective, it is important to articulate it before beginning.

2) **Timeline:** How long will the farm-raiser activity continue – is it a one-time event or is it a longer activity?

3) **Cost:** Consider the audience for the farm-raiser (parents, students, teachers) and set a price that is affordable. The cost factor is especially important for farm-raisers that are planned for every week or month.

4) **Your location:** Proximity to a farm or a source of farm-fresh foods is important and will greatly influence the type of farm-raiser activity you can coordinate.

5) **Coordination:** Set clear expectations on who will be managing the farm-raiser – the school or non-profit organization, the farm, or another entity, as well as what resources are available from these organizations to conduct the farm-raiser.

As a first step, assess the capacity at which your school or organization can engage in a farm-raiser. If the farm-raiser you are planning requires special food handling, storage or processing, plan ahead to meet those requirements. Secondly, contact your nearby farms and any local organizations with an interest in agriculture and health to see if any farm-raiser programs exist in your area or if they are willing to collaborate on creating such a program.

## Additional resources & farm-raiser events

Homegrown Holiday Sales: Wisconsin Homegrown Holiday Fundraiser, Madison, WI

<http://www.reapfoodgroup.org/farmtoschool/fundraiser%20WHL%2006%20ORDER%20FORM%20AND%20BROCHURE%20Midvale.pdf>

Fresh From the Farm Lunch: Seven Generations Ahead, Chicago, IL [http://www.sevengenerationsahead.org/pilot\\_healthy\\_lunches.html](http://www.sevengenerationsahead.org/pilot_healthy_lunches.html)

Farm Tours/Activities: Full Belly Farm Yolo County, CA <http://www.fullbellyfarm.com/hoesdown.html>

CSA Farm-raiser: Tanaka Farms Irvine, CA <http://tanakafarms.homestead.com/index.html>

Produce Sales: Ohio's Fruit Growers Marketing Association <http://web.tusco.net/fruitgrowers/fund.htm>

Fresh From the Farm events: Windrose Farms Paso Robles, CA <http://www.windrosefarm.org/>

Conners, Diane. 2006. Farm Raisers Make Cents for Schools: Great Lakes Bulletin News Service. Michigan Land Institute. <http://www.mlui.org/growthmanagement/fullarticle.asp?fileid=17084>

**For assistance and additional information on farm-raisers, please contact:**

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