

April 2016



A Community Health Dialogue: Apr 15

The Red Lodge Area Community Foundation has teamed up with Beartooth Billings Clinic in an effort to gain insight into the rural health needs of the Carbon County Community. Join us on April 15th for refreshments while we learn about our community's wellness accomplishments and determine how we can strengthen our community's well being! Join in the discussion on April 15th, 10:00 am at the Red Lodge Area Community Foundation, 24 W 13th St. For more information; contact Garrison Daly at garrison@rlacf.org or (406)-446-2820.

Beekeeper Workshop: Apr 30

Whether you're a beginner beekeeper or an old hand, you may be interested in the upcoming training from the Yellowstone Valley Beekeepers. The seminar is April 30th from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm at the Billings Public Library Community Room. Space is limited so contact Lonnie Larson at lnnlrsn@gmail.com or Lynn Meade-Larson at (406) 670-0969. Cost for this training is \$30 and lunch is included.



It's in the Bag

By Therese Picasso-Edwards

Food Access for All is a subgroup of the Food Partnership Council who believes that all of Red Lodge should have access to nutritious food regardless of income. Members of this committee are partnering with school administration and are excited to launch a weekend food program for Red Lodge K-8 students called "It's in the Bag!"

According to a survey entitled *Childhood Hunger and Food Insecurity for Red Lodge K-8 Schools* completed in December 2015, 26 students are said to be in a "lack of food situation." Chronic hunger can negatively affect student behavior, attention and learning. The survey concluded that Mondays and Tuesdays students are observed to be hungry more often than other days of the week, suggesting less food is eaten over the weekend.

By working with local retailers and generous community donations, **Food Access for All** will provide

easy-to-prepare, nutritionally dense meals to K-8 youth to cover missed meals over the weekend. Each food bag will contain two breakfasts, two lunches and two dinners including vegetables and fruit. The food is provided to children free of charge. At this time the idea is to start with an “all-inclusive” plan for students, with an option for families to opt out rather than asking staff to choose or recommend which students would participate.

Fun and informative food and nutrition activity sheets will accompany bags as well as tips for meal preparation. The plan is to pilot “It’s in the Bag” during the four weekends of May. The program will then be evaluated and updated for the following school year.

For more information and to find out how you can help or donate, contact Therese Picasso-Edwards at (406) 425-1343 or Yvonne Johnson at yvonne@rlacf.org or (406) 446-2820.

Farmers Urged to Participate in CTIC, SARE and ASTA Cover Crop Survey of Farmers

A nationwide survey of farmers on cover crop use is seeking insight from growers around the country — whether or not they plant cover crops.

“This survey provides us with a great perspective on why farmers do or do not plant cover crops, what they expect to gain from the practice, and what their concerns are,” says Chad Watts, project director at the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC) in West Lafayette, Indiana, which administers the survey. “Results from the survey help guide policy, research and education on cover crops. In recent years, data from cover crop surveys has been used in testimony on Capitol Hill, featured in the New York Times, and cited in academic journals. People are very eager to hear how farmers view cover crops.”

Farmers can take the survey online at <http://tinyurl.com/ccsurvey2016> until May 1, 2016. All answers to the survey are anonymous, Watts points out. Participants who complete the survey—an easy process that takes no more than 15 minutes, and even less depending on your crop rotations and diversity—have the option of entering into a drawing for a \$100 gift card.

The project is the fourth annual cover crop survey conducted by CTIC in conjunction with USDA’s Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, and the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA) with help from Penton Media. Sponsors within ASTA include Albert Lea Seed, CHS, The CISCO Corporation, LaCrosse Seed, Mountain View Seed, Allied Seed, Curtis & Curtis Inc., Grassland Oregon, Justin Seed and Seedway. For questions or issues on this survey, please contact CTIC project director, Chad Watts via email at watts@ctic.org or by calling (574) 242-0147.

NPR on Chicken

By Chris Mullaney

The Food Partnership Council promotes local foods as a way to improve our consumption of healthy food as well as support our local economy. I heard a compelling story on NPR's Morning Edition on the commercial chicken available in grocery stores. Here is a transcript of the story with Dan Charles, NPR Reporter. He interviewed William Muir, a poultry geneticist and Theo Weening, a poultry buyer for Whole Foods.

DAN CHARLES, BYLINE: A century ago Americans didn't eat much chicken. It was pretty expensive and your depression-era chicken was actually kind of scrawny. It took a bird about four months to grow to a weight of 3 pounds. Today it's a different story entirely. The chickens in this long, dimly lit barn in North Carolina are just 12 days old but growing fast. Compared to their ancestors a century ago, these birds will grow to twice the size in half the time. William Muir, a poultry geneticist at Purdue University, says it's not what the chickens are eating. This change is a triumph of poultry breeding.



WILLIAM MUIR: This is what genetics does is that we can actually make more from less.

CHARLES: It wasn't magic, he says, or genetic engineering. All they did was they got their fastest-growing chickens to mate with each other, generation after generation.

MUIR: We just breed the best to the best and you get the best.

CHARLES: The best at putting on muscle very quickly. These meat chickens, called broilers, are now very different from the chickens that lay our eggs. It's been great for the poultry industry. But according to Muir, it's not so great for the chickens themselves.

MUIR: We're having problems with legs. The birds' legs can't support their weight. We have a lot of problems with splayed legs, joint problems. And this is a major well-being concern if the bird can't walk.

CHARLES: Studies have observed these problems in anywhere from 15 to 30 percent of commercial broilers. These chickens are slaughtered when they're still young. But others are kept in order to reproduce. These are the so-called breeder flocks - the source of the billions of broilers that people eat. And because these birds live longer, they have a special problem.

MUIR: They are so big and heavy, if we let them keep on eating they couldn't reproduce. So we have to get them on a diet, a severe diet. And they are always hungry.

CHARLES: For all these reasons, some animal welfare advocates have been calling on poultry companies to turn back the clock - back to slower-growing breeds of chickens. And these breeds do exist. Poultry producers can order them from the same big-chicken breeding companies that created the fast-growing chickens. There is increasing demand for them in Europe. In the U.S. they're mainly used by farmers who want to raise their chickens the old-fashioned way - running around outdoors. Here is Theo Weening, the global meat buyer for Whole Foods Market.

THEO WEENING: I'm on my way this afternoon to Arkansas to Crystal Lake Farms. He uses a slow-

growing chicken at this time.

CHARLES: Whole Foods now wants all of its suppliers - even those raising large numbers of broilers indoors - to shift over to slower-growing chickens. The shift will take eight years. Whole Foods and a partner group it's set up, the Global Animal Partnership, say that it will affect 277 million birds each year. That's about 3 percent of the country's broilers.

WEENING: So it's a much better, healthier chicken and at the same time a much flavorful chicken, as well.

CHARLES: But Weening admits there will be a cost to this shift. It will take more feed to produce a pound of chicken meat. According to some estimates, 25 percent more. After the Whole Foods announcement, the National Chicken Council, which represents the major poultry producers, released a statement disputing the idea that faster-growing chickens are less healthy or suffering. The Chicken Council also pointed out the benefits of the industry's push for ever greater efficiency over the years. It's cut the cost of chicken and made it the most popular meat in America. Dan Charles, NPR News.

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FPC has several projects or initiatives in the works at the same time. You can get involved in whatever interests you. Contact Martha Brown at mbrown.mt@gmail.com or call (406) 445-7214.