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Media contact:

Erin Baumann, FoodCorps service member in partnership with MSU Extension  
erin.baumann@foodcorps.org  
608-698-3746

### **National Farm to School Month celebrates fresh, healthy foods with kids in Northwest Lower Michigan**

Many activities will occur in schools around Michigan this month as part of National Farm to School Month celebrations taking place across the country. In 2010, Congress declared October National Farm to School Month, recognizing the important role farm to school plays in promoting well-being among children and strong local economies.

“For us, in a rural area, these kids know these farmers, some of them even go to our school. They are helping their friend’s families, and they [the farmers] are helping these kids. Farm to school teaches them that farmers are important to our food program.” says Linda Caswell Assistant Food Service Director, Suttons Bay Public Schools.

Schools in Northwest Lower Michigan will celebrate in a number of ways this month. Many will participate in the Great Lakes Apple Crunch on October 10th (formerly the Michigan Apple Crunch). During this event, school communities celebrate local food by crunching down on an apple at the same time.

Traverse City Area Public Schools will participate in their annual Traverse City Food Day October 14th. Students who eat school lunch that day will eat many local items to celebrate the day.

In Leelanau county, annual pop-up farmers markets are occurring at local schools throughout the month. These markets, created in collaboration with Michigan State University Extension (MSU Extension) Leelanau County, Traverse Bay Intermediate School District (TBAISD) Farm to School, and Taste the Local Difference, and local schools are a one day celebration of local farms. Students are given the opportunity to explore and purchase items at a farm market at their own school, and meet local farmers and vendors. These markets will occur on these dates: 10/3 at Leland, 10/10 at Glen Lake (sponsored by Oryana Community Coop), 10/17 at Northport, 10/8 at St. Mary’s, and 10/24 at Suttons Bay.

FoodCorps, in partnership with MSU Extension will feature local apples during the monthly Harvest of the Month taste tests occurring at Suttons Bay Elementary (10/10) and Traverse Heights Elementary (10/9).

Over the past decade, the farm to school movement has exploded across the United States, reaching millions of students in all 50 states, Washington, D.C. and U.S. Territories. From school gardens and farm field trips to local food on cafeteria trays, farm to school practices help children learn about where food comes from and make healthier choices while also creating new markets for local and regional farmers.

The National Farm to School Network has representatives in every state to help connect schools with local farmers and producers. For more information about farm to school in Michigan, contact Colleen Matts at [matts@msu.edu](mailto:matts@msu.edu) or 517-432-0310. Learn more about the farm to school movement at [farmentoschool.org](http://farmentoschool.org).

Since 2015, Michigan State University Extension Grand Traverse County has served as one of a handful of FoodCorps service sites in Michigan. Service sites are FoodCorps' community partners who provide leadership and oversight to service members. For more information about FoodCorps service with MSU Extension, contact Sarah Eichberger at [eichber2@msu.edu](mailto:eichber2@msu.edu) or 231-922-4836.

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