



# Waushara Food Connections

*Making nutritious food available and accessible to all county residents through sustainable, community-based projects that strengthen the local food system*

**Central Wisconsin Community Action Council, Inc.**  
1000 Hwy. 13; P.O. Box 430  
Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965  
(608) 254- 8353 ext. 243

Sara McKee and Pam Hughes  
Project Directors  
cwac.saram@verizon.net  
cwac.pam@verizon.net

Owner  
Store  
Address

March 29, 2010

Dear Owner,

I am writing to you as the project director of Waushara Food Connections. Waushara Food Connections is a planning project funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and administered through Central Wisconsin Community Action Council. This one-year planning grant is studying the food systems of Waushara County and assisting the community in developing comprehensive approaches that both meet the long-term food needs of residents, and strengthen the viability of local food providing businesses.

The first part of our planning project is a Community Food Assessment to identify the strengths and needs of the county food systems. **As a grocery store owner in Waushara County, your input is valuable to us. We would like to learn more about your business operations and how we might assist you to continue to successfully operate your store in this community.** We also would like to invite you to become a member of our Steering Committee and help guide the community food planning process, which is the second phase of this food project.

We realize that you are very busy and that your time is limited. We are hoping however, that you will be able to find an hour somewhere in your week to meet with us. We will call you sometime next week to schedule a time.

I have enclosed a copy of our interview questions as well as a written summary of our food-planning project. Please feel free to contact me in the meantime if you have questions. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Pamela Hughes  
Waushara Food Connections  
Project Director



# Waushara Food Connections

*Making nutritious food available and accessible to all county residents through sustainable, community-based projects that strengthen the local food system*

**Central Wisconsin Community Action Council, Inc.**  
1000 Hwy. 13; P.O. Box 430  
Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965  
(608) 254- 8353 ext. 243

Sara McKee and Pam Hughes  
Project Directors  
cwcac.saram@verizon.net  
cwcac.pam@verizon.net

## Interview Questions Grocery Stores

1. Where do you get the food products you sell?
2. Do you use more than one wholesale distributor?
3. How does the wholesale distribution system that you use work?
4. Do you have flexibility in purchasing products from local producers and/or other vendors?
5. Do you buy products from local producers? Why or why not?
6. Are there guidelines that address sales of specialty items produced by local businesses? (Honey, cheeses, meats...) What kind of guidelines? Health and safety?
7. Do requirements differ for sale of locally grown fresh produce raised by homeowners and those raised by a business? If yes, in what ways? (Liability, food safety, etc.)
8. If you currently do not buy products from local producers, would you be interested in learning more about opportunities for buying locally?
9. Would your store be interested in exploring the idea of participation in a local food network where you could purchase wholesale food items at a discount by coordinating purchasing with other local grocery stores?
10. What currently happens with your day old bakery and expired food items? (returned to wholesaler; donated to food pantry/second harvest, sold to discount grocery stores?...)

-over-

*Appendix C6: Cover Letter and Introductory Packet Sent to Grocery Store Owners*

11. Is it possible to donate or re-distribute such items to others in the community? What are potential barriers? (liability, time, expense, depends on food item, don't know who to give it to, etc.)
  
12. Would you be willing to collect zip code information from customers over a period of time to identify the location of your current customer base? Once tabulated, this information could be used to assist you with your business and marketing plans. (If interested, someone from the UW-extension office could provide software and analysis assistance.)
  
13. What would help you continue to successfully operate your store in this community?
  
14. How might Waushara Food Connections assist you in this effort?
  
15. Would you like to receive a copy of our food assessment when complete?
  
16. Would you like to be informed of Steering Committee meetings and/or project updates?

	<h1>Waushara Food Connections</h1> <p><i>Making nutritious food available and accessible to all county residents through sustainable, community-based projects that strengthen the local food system</i></p>
<p>Central Wisconsin Community Action, Inc. 1000 Highway 13; P.O. Box 430 Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965 (608) 254-8353 ext. 243</p>	<p>Pam Hughes and Sara McKee Project Directors pam@cwcac.org; saram@cwcac.org</p>

## **Planning Project to Address Food Needs in Waushara County**

Central Wisconsin Community Action Council, Inc. is pleased to announce the award of a \$25,000 Community Food Projects Planning grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The one-year planning grant, entitled Waushara Food Connections, will study the food systems of Waushara County and assist the community in developing comprehensive approaches to meet the long-term food needs of residents, especially those of low income families.

Waushara County's current food system is struggling to meet the needs of a growing low-income population. The recent economic crisis has seen food pantry use in Waushara increase by up to 158%. This year, 52% of the county's school-aged children are eligible to receive free and reduced cost hot lunch. Just as many families are facing financial hardship, many family farms and hometown grocery stores in Waushara County are at risk of economic failure.

To create a more locally-based, self-reliant food economy in Waushara County, Waushara Food Connections will help bring farmers, consumers, and communities together to address food, farm, and nutrition issues. Short-term relief is not enough. Sustainable, community based solutions are needed to increase food self-reliance at both the household and county levels.

Waushara Food Connections is an open-ended planning project with two phases. The first part is a Community Food Assessment to identify the strengths and needs of the county's food systems. To ensure that the voice of the community is heard, this assessment will include focus groups and surveys of county residents, farmers, business owners, and community leaders.

The project's second stage is a community food planning process that will use the results of our Community Food Assessment to set goals and explore, plan, and implement long-term, comprehensive responses to food needs, especially those of low-income families. Some of the needs that may be addressed include increasing the accessibility of locally grown produce, strengthening the economic viability of local grocery stores, and reducing transportation barriers to grocery stores and farm stands. The project will explore various responses to food needs, including initiatives such as a traveling farmer's market, community gardens, Farm to School projects, community kitchens, and educational programs.

*Appendix C6: Cover Letter and Introductory Packet Sent to Grocery Store Owners*

Waushara Food Connections is a planning project whose final outcomes will be determined by participating county residents. By creating partnerships, planning projects, and recommending policies, Waushara Food Connections seeks to maximize the strengths of the county's resources to address its food needs, increase food self-reliance, and expand economic opportunities in the local food production, processing, and distribution industries.

In late August and early September of 2009, Waushara Food Connections will host open community meetings to provide an overview of project goals and activities. The focus of discussion at these meetings will be how to best study the local food system, how to maximize community involvement, and generally, how to proceed. At these first meetings, the Waushara Food Connections Council will be established. This council aims to include a variety of community members, including low-income residents, the agricultural sector, local government, community resource leaders, and area business owners. Committees will be formed to help guide the food study and volunteers will be requested to assist with the development of surveys and to facilitate focus group discussions.

County residents and other interested parties are encouraged to participate in these meetings and in every phase of Waushara Food Connections. All are invited to come prepared to share their ideas; community feedback is much needed to make this project a success.

To learn more about the Waushara Food Connections Project, contact Project Directors Sara McKee or Pamela Hughes at Central Wisconsin Community Action Council, Inc.: (608) 254-8353 ext. 243; (608) 697-4619 or email us at [saram@cwacac.org](mailto:saram@cwacac.org) or [pam@cwacac.org](mailto:pam@cwacac.org).