University of Missouri Extension, in partnership with the Missouri Council for Activity and Nutrition (MOCAN), is contracting with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) to implement the Missouri Farm to Institution Project. The project is funded through a U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) grant. Overall, the project intends to increase the number of Missouri institutions serving healthy, locally grown food; create new market opportunities for Missouri farmers; and improve the health of Missourians.

Farm to Institution involves purchasing and using locally and regionally grown and raised products in schools, hospitals, child care centers, universities, prisons and other institutional settings. It may also involve school or worksite gardening, cooking classes, farm tours, farmer/chef visits, Harvest of the Season and special food related events.

Bill McKelvey, MU Extension, is Project Coordinator for the Missouri Farm to Institution Project. In a recent interview, he said that the project’s initial focus will be on schools, building on the momentum from other efforts to improve school lunch such as Let’s Move!, the National Farm to School Network and the Childhood Nutrition Reauthorization Act.

Throughout the grant period, the Missouri Farm to Institution Project will provide tools to help Missouri institutions make connections with local farmers and local food. The project will also assess the current status of (continued on page 2)
farm to school activities in Missouri; develop of a media campaign; conduct regional networking and training events; and create a farm to institution resource guide.

Research shows that farm to school programs impact students, school foodservice personnel and farmers in a variety of ways. For example, students consume more fruits and vegetables and have greater knowledge of agriculture and healthy eating. School foodservice personnel increase the amount of fresh fruits and vegetables served and schools see increased revenue thanks to increased participation in the school lunch program. Farmers diversify their markets, secure contracts for their products, increase collaboration and establish grower cooperatives.

Missouri is home to a number of farm to school and related programs. At least 125 schools involve students in fruit and vegetable gardening and at least 15 schools incorporate locally grown food into school meals and snacks.

As part of the Missouri Farm to Institution Project’s outreach efforts, Bill is organizing regional workshops that will be held in early 2011. These workshops will be educational and will provide information about starting and improving farm to school programs. Workshop attendees will benefit from networking with others in their region who are working on related projects.

If you would like more information about the Missouri Farm to Institution Project or are interested in receiving a monthly newsletter with updates and information about farm to school related events and opportunities, please contact Bill McKelvey (McKelveyWA@umsystem.edu).

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MU Extension Project Coordinator Working to Increase Local Food in Missouri Institutions (continued from page 2)

Through experience and professional development trainings, many MU Extension regional specialists around the state are knowledgeable about farm to school and farm to institution efforts in Missouri. Several regional specialists currently assist in the development of school and community gardening programs. In northeast Missouri, regional specialists are engaged in a variety of farm to institution activities in conjunction with the Scotland County Healthy Lifestyle Initiative. To locate local MU Extension offices and regional specialists, please visit:

http://extension.missouri.edu

The National Farm to School Network (http://www.farmtoschool.org) is a good resource for finding out about farm to school projects around the country.
You are invited to participate in a Peer to Peer Exchange in Rolla, Missouri! The theme of this exchange is Community Food Systems. Join the discussion with other grantees and MU Extension specialists about best practices, opportunities and challenges of food-related projects such as community and school gardens, farmers markets and farm to institution projects.

Facilitated small group discussion and a visit to one of The Community Partnership’s community garden sites will be beneficial for those who are currently involved in a food-related project and those who are not yet but are considering it.

When: Wednesday, October 20, 2010; 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Where: The Community Partnership, 1101 Hauk Drive, Rolla, MO 65401

RSVP: Lunch is provided so please RSVP to Casi Lock (LockC@missouri.edu or 573-882-9986) by Friday, October 15, 2010.

We look forward to seeing you there!

*Special thanks to Bill McKelvey, MU Extension, for his contributions to the text and photos. Thanks also to Annette Triplett, MU Extension; Rhonda Smythe, St. Louis University; and The Community Partnership for their contributions to the photos.

MU Extension and The Community Partnership to Host Peer to Peer Exchange on October 20