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**Date:** 6/7/2007 2:53:59 PM

**Subject:** News From the KC Center for Urban Agriculture

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# URBAN GROWN

## The Newsletter of the Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture, June 2007

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### **Countdown to the Urban Farms Tour**

*Urban Agriculture takes center stage in Kansas City on June 24*



Preparations are in their final stages for the 2nd Biennial Urban Farms Tour organized by the Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture. On Sunday, June 24, between 12:00 and 5:00, you're invited to visit any of 11 farms in the metro area, learn about food production in the city and enjoy a day of fun, music and food for the whole family.

We'll begin the day's activities with a talk on urban agriculture by Daniel Dermitzel and Katherine Kelly, co-founders of KCCUA. We'll talk about how agriculture can become a vital aspect of a healthy urban neighborhood, some of the new trends nationally and globally, and what is happening right here in Kansas City. The talk will be held at 12:00 at the Cross-Lines Community Outreach Food Kitchen at 736 Shawnee Avenue, Kansas City, KS.

Then, it's your turn to visit the farms! There'll be small farms, larger farms, farms with veggies, farms with flowers, even a few with hogs and chickens! Sherri Harvels Root Deep Urban Farm on 19th & College in KCMO is about a quarter-acre in size, but big in heart and vegetables. East Wind Gardens, farther east, has a wonderful partnership with the Drumm Farm Institute, a beautiful and historical residential program for young people, made nationally known through the book *A Hole in the World* by Richard Rhodes. John Kaiahuas place in Raytown is one of the most established urban farms in Kansas City; he's been feeding people and supplying restaurants for more than 20 years now, and his place is beautifully managed. Troostwood Youth Garden is a green and alive site on 52nd and Paseo with raised beds, a small greenhouse, and lots of young people helping to grow and sell vegetables! Each farm has its own unique character, and the farmers are pretty unique characters too- so no matter which farms you visit you'll learn and enjoy yourself.

Some of the farms will feature live music and children's activities, two will have cooking demonstrations. This will be a great afternoon!

All the information you need is available in our lovely brochure (design and printing donated by Boulevard Brewing Company- THANK YOU!). If you haven't received one in the mail, email us at [info@kccua.org](mailto:info@kccua.org) and we'll send you one. Or visit our website at [www.kccua.org/uff2007.htm](http://www.kccua.org/uff2007.htm) and download it. See you on the 24th!

### **Field Volunteers / Photographers Wanted!**

Right now, here at the KC Community Farm, we're doing the farmer equivalent of "Oh, no, there's people coming over and the house is a mess!" The Urban Farms Tour will bring possibly hundreds of folks to our farm, and we're sure wanting to look nice for the occasion! Come help us out the week before (June 18 - 22); we'll be weeding, tidying things up, and generally trying to make ourselves look presentable. Times to volunteer are Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday mornings between 7AM and 1PM, and Friday between 7AM and 7PM. Call ahead at 913-831-2444. Your help will be hugely

appreciated!

Also, we're still looking for a few folks with digital cameras who would like to take some pictures during the Urban Farms Tour on June 24. We want to make sure we catch some of the action at each of the participating farms. Email us at [info@kccua.org](mailto:info@kccua.org) if you want to help with this.

### Field Notes from the Kansas City Community Farm

It seems that we have finally passed through some of the more challenging weather this year. Unseasonably warm temperatures in March combined with unseasonably cold temperatures in April and heavy rains in May set back crops and cause losses. Crops in our high tunnels were largely unaffected by these fluctuations but in the field it was a different story. After the big April freeze we were fortunate to have sufficient transplants to replant much of our broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage crop. As a result we are now starting to harvest these crops and quality is high with the exception of broccoli where heads tend to be smaller but still flavorful. We've also started harvesting peas, potatoes and squash from the field, all a bit later than expected but with very nice quality and acceptable quantity. Most of our high tunnels have been planted to their second crop already; we're still pulling some excellent fennel, kohlrabi and carrots out of them as well as our first tomatoes of the season!

The difficult weather this spring has triggered thoughts of further expansion of high tunnel production at the KC Community Farm and we are currently exploring options to add more tunnels to our field. This should boost farm productivity and harvest volume not just in the spring but in summer and fall as well. High tunnels provide an improved growing environment during the entire growing season.

Finally, our thanks go out to all the visitors and volunteers we had in our fields over the past couple of months. In May, a busload of university extension agents from around the country toured the Community Farm as part of a field trip to Kansas City horticultural sites. Later that month we were joined by a group of employees of Embarq Corporation who came out for a teambuilding event; our thanks to them for helping us stay on top of our weeds. And we ended the month giving a tour to a group of local school teachers interested in urban agriculture as an educational tool and a strategy toward reaching sustainability. Our appreciation goes to all of you for your interest in our work.

### Planning Cities with Local Food in Mind

*Urban planners vote for policies to promote regional food systems and urban agriculture*

By Bruce Wiggins



Can you imagine a city with vegetable gardens in parks and in large plots next to apartment houses? KCCUA Associate Director Daniel Dermitzel showed me a photo of such a place (see picture on left). He snapped it in Frankfurt, Germany, just minutes from the downtown train station. The U.S. may be getting closer to following this example. At its national conference in April, the American Planning Association (APA) adopted a *Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning*.

The APAs "Food Policy Guide" elevates the visibility of urban agriculture and community food systems and discusses how they relate to problems our society faces, such as obesity and environmental degradation. Our cities will look different in the future if ideas like those in the Food Policy Guide are adopted.

Why is this issue becoming important and why would planners want to create a food policy guide? The guide discusses some trends and facts about how the food system impacts localities and regions, including loss of farmland, loss of biodiversity, growing problems of both hunger and obesity, lack of healthy foods in many low-income communities, and water degradation from excess use of pesticides and fertilizers. Our food system has become predominantly industrial, with large energy inputs, corporate farms, and confined animal feeding operations that maximize efficiency but can lead to environmental and health problems. The safety and security of food has also increasingly become a concern.

Films, such as *Super-Size Me* and *The Future of Food*, and books, such as *Fast Food Nation* have presented compelling stories about our food problems and have heightened public awareness about food. Increased awareness of climate change is coupled with awareness that the food Americans eat takes a considerable amount of fossil fuel energy to produce, process, and transport. Our food system is now global, with fruits and vegetables from Asia and Latin America available in our Kansas City supermarkets.

The Food Policy Guide spells out numerous connections between our food system and other systems, such as the economy, transportation, housing, and health. It provides ideas, policies, and actions to promote local and regional food systems, strengthen local and regional economies, improve the health of our citizens, promote sustainability, address problems of health and hunger, and preserve the traditional food cultures of Native American and other ethnic minority communities.

Some cities have been successful establishing urban gardening programs and food policy councils, showing a better way. In some, community-based food projects have provided economic opportunities for low-income residents. At the same time, with growing suburbanization, many inner cities have significant amounts of vacant land that could be used to grow food. This is certainly true in both Kansas City, MO & Kansas City, KS where the inner city population has declined.

Many inner cities have significant amounts of vacant land that can produce multiple health, social, and economic benefits. The Food Policy Guide cites Portland and Detroit as examples of cities that have vibrant urban agriculture movements. Philadelphia could be added to the list as could KCMO and, especially, KCK. Go on the Urban Farm Tour June 24 to see for yourself!

Agriculture and farming are not typically part of city plans. Farm land becomes housing or other forms of urban development. Most communities want the improvements (buildings) that result in increased taxes because most systems tax the buildings at a higher rate than the land. In Kansas City, MO, some land on the edges of the city is designated for agricultural use on the Future Land Use Plan. However, many people think these areas are holding zones until the land is ready for development for urban or suburban uses.

According to the Food Policy Guide, neighborhood and community plans should recognize community gardens and other forms of urban agriculture, farm/garden stands, and farmers markets as desirable civic uses. By including urban agriculture, these plans can better help build stronger, sustainable, and more self-reliant communities, and can also enhance benefits such as economic vitality, public health, and social equity.

Economic development plans and policies should also recognize the importance of food to a local economy, the Food Policy Guide states. The plans should support food incubator facilities (*see editor's note below*) and entrepreneurial urban agriculture. The policies should support the development of farm stands, various urban agriculture projects, and community vegetable gardens at schools, community center sites, and public agency offices. Community gardens, community kitchens, and urban agriculture should be included in multi-family and low-income housing developments. According to the Food Policy Guide, governments should provide incentives and special zoning provisions to integrate agriculture into existing settlements and areas of new residential development.

Planners and citizens--all of us--must balance the need for an improved food system with other goals, including economic vitality, public health, ecological sustainability, social equity, and cultural diversity. The critical question is how we all work together to achieve--or at least work towards--this balance. The Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture is helping us find our way in Kansas City!

For a complete copy of the Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning (19 pages including a substantial bibliography), go to: <http://www.planning.org/policyguides/pdf/food.pdf>

*Bruce Wiggins is a professional urban planner and resident of Kansas City, Missouri.*

*Editor's Note: KCCUA is currently working with the Department of Parks and Recreation of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County to turn unused parkland into an "Incubator Farm"--a place where start-up growers can get training, land and infrastructure to help them build new small farm businesses. The site would also support community gardeners and provide educational opportunities for folks interested in urban food production. This unique and promising public-private partnership is still developing and we thank the Unified Government and Department of Parks and Recreation for their initiative and vision in wanting to support urban food production. Look for more on this story in an upcoming issue of Urban Grown.*

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### **Kansas Citizens Adopt 100 Mile Diet: Guide to Local Food Inspires Local Eating**

*KCCUA Board Member Lisa Markley joins others in exploring local food options*

Originally inspired by a couple from British Columbia who vowed for an entire year to only eat foods produced within 100 miles of their home, in the Spring 2006, eight enthusiastic eaters banded together to focus on eating food grown or raised within 100 miles of Kansas City. Hence, the KC 100 Mile Diet Team was born.

We did not entirely deprive ourselves of non-local foods, but that was the way we approached the challenge, said

teammates Jim & Lisa Markley. We just started looking for local sources of the things that we eat most and made a commitment to purchase the local option if there was one. In addition to our share of local produce from our CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farmers, it has been easy to add staple items like farm fresh eggs, grass-fed lamb and beef, cheese from a local dairy, and local organic whole wheat flour into our diet on a regular basis. We've become so accustomed to the superior freshness, quality, and flavor of local food that the simple changes we made are definitely here to stay.

In an effort to raise awareness about how to find local foods and inspire other Kansas Citians to increase the amount of local foods in their diets, the team wrote a ten-month series of articles published in PresentMagazine.com and compiled their research onto a CD creating a Users Guide to Local Food. In addition to the PresentMagazine.com articles, the CD also includes favorite recipes featuring local ingredients, the KC Food Circles 2007 Directory of Local Organic and Free Range Food Producers, and an extensive list of websites and publications about local, organic foods. To order the CD for \$6.50 email [kclocalvore@gmail.com](mailto:kclocalvore@gmail.com).

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## Calendar of Events

*Urban Agriculture on the Air*, KCCUA Executive Director Katherine Kelly and other urban farmers will join Steve Kraske on "Up to Date", Wednesday June 13, 11:00 - 12:00, KCUR, 89.3 FM.

*The 2nd Bi-Annual Urban Farms Tour*, Sunday, June 24, Noon - 5pm. Eleven area urban farms will be featured. The event will kick off with a presentation on urban agriculture by Daniel Dermitzel and Katherine Kelly at the Cross-Lines Community Outreach, 736 Shawnee Ave., Kansas City, KS. Afterwards head to the farms of your choice to see urban agriculture in practice and to enjoy music, food demonstrations and kids activities. Tickets are \$5 per person or \$12 for families of 3 or more. Tickets can be purchased at the Brookside Farmers Market, the 39th Street Market, the City Market in downtown Kansas City, MO or at the KCK Greenmarket. Visit: [www.kccua.org/uft2007.htm](http://www.kccua.org/uft2007.htm) and download our beautiful brochure (thanks to Boulevard Brewery for donating design & printing services) or email [info@kccua.org](mailto:info@kccua.org) and we'll snail-mail one to you.

*Whole Foods Farmers and Food Artisans Road Tour '07*, Sunday, July 22, 11AM to 3PM. This summer, Whole Foods Market is expanding its commitment to local agriculture and food production by hosting a one-day event called The Farmers and Food Artisans Road Tour 07. Join them for this fun outdoor fair with live music, cooking and product demonstrations throughout the store and activities for the kids. Best of all, **buy a Local Meal and help raise funds for the Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture!**

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