WHAT ALL OF US CAN DO
MINI-GUIDE

All Minnesotans have a role to play in making the healthy choice the easy choice. Though the process of getting food from farm to plate can be complex, small steps taken on an individual level can add up to meaningful changes. Whether in the workplace, a community setting or your own backyard, opportunities to get involved are plentiful.

SPOTLIGHT: ANACH CO-OP

The residents of Milan, Minnesota, embraced the power of food to revitalize a community. Beginning in 2000, the rural town of approximately 250 people experienced a rapid influx of new residents from the Pacific Island nation of Micronesia. While serving in the Peace Corps in the Micronesian state of Chuuk during the 1980s, Milan native Erik Thompson formed close friendships with several Chuuk residents. The friendships continued and by the mid-2000s, dozens of Micronesian families had moved to Minnesota seeking better opportunities. These residents brought new vitality to a town in economic and population decline.

In 2012 Bob Ryan, a local entrepreneur and consultant, learned of a USDA Rural Development grant for small food producers. Though the Chuukese were farmers and fishermen in their home country, food cultivation as a livelihood was lost during their transition to life in Minnesota. After a series of conversations between Ryan and several Chuukese residents, they applied for and received the one-year $163,000 grant, which was used to develop a 3.5-acre crop and chicken farm and a food distribution center. Named the Anach Co-operative, it included a kitchen and processing facility to serve as a shared space for other local growers and community members to process and preserve their goods. Anach means “our food” and “our path,” a name that appropriately reflects the dual purpose of the project: to establish food production as a livelihood for the Chuukese, and to utilize the co-op as a way to promote economic development within the community.

According to Bob Ryan, the project was a yearlong learning process. In addition to building the physical structures of the farm and co-op, the grant helped the Chuukese cultivate new knowledge of planting and production methods, business development and money management. Educators from the University of Minnesota Extension Service taught canning and processing classes; a horticulturalist taught plant science and permaculture production methods; chicken farmers and plant breeders were also brought in to share their expertise.

The influx of Chuukese residents has revived the community of Milan as a whole. Once in population decline, the town is growing. The establishment of the Anach Co-operative has also boosted the local economy. Chuukese growers learned to successfully grow, produce and sell new foods in the spirit of their agricultural heritage. Other local producers have taken advantage of the Anach facility to increase production of value-added goods. Community celebrations now feature lefse as well as fresh produce from the Anach garden. For Milan residents, food cultivation became a means of sharing knowledge and building sustainable partnerships among community members.
The following steps, based on strategies found in the Minnesota Food Charter, provide ideas and resources for taking action in your community.

**ACTION STEP**
Participate in gleaning programs that distribute excess produce from your garden or from local farmers to community organizations, emergency food programs, or food shelves.

**RESOURCE:** Hunger-Free Minnesota’s Good to Grow program encourages individuals to donate excess produce from their personal or community garden.
www.prweb.com/releases/2012/7/prweb9730295.htm

**RESOURCE:** In the Twin Cities metro, participate in The Minnesota Project’s Fruits of the City initiative.
www.mnproject.org/food-FruitsOfTheCity.html

**ACTION STEP**
Join or create a school food advisory council with students, parents, teachers, foodservice staff and administrators to make recommendations on current food and beverage policies.

**RESOURCE:** Use this tool from the Public Health Law Center to create a sustainable school health council.

**ACTION STEP**
Collaborate with community agencies to host nutrition education classes, food preparation lessons and food safety training for parents and families.

**RESOURCE:** Become a Cooking Matters® volunteer.
www.extension.umn.edu/family/cooking-matters/volunteer/

**ACTION STEP**
Organize or join a local food coalition with community members, city planners, public health practitioners, community-based organizations, food retailers and business leaders to identify priorities in the food environment and develop a plan to promote healthy foods within the community.

**RESOURCE:** Learn more about your region and get involved.
www.extension.umn.edu/family/health-and-nutrition/toolkits-and-resources/healthy-food-access/regional-food-access-profiles/

**RESOURCE:** Read about Clay County’s CassClayAlive! “snacktivist” initiative.
cassclayalive.areavoices.com/2014/04/15/why-we-need-snacktivists/pdf?1406301911
**ACTION STEP**
Develop community gardens with neighborhood groups and local non-profit organizations by identifying and converting vacant city-owned land or unused parking lots to increase the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables.

**RESOURCE:** Refer to this comprehensive toolkit to inform community garden decision-making.

**ACTION STEP**
Establish an interdisciplinary food team at worksites to develop healthy food policies for meetings and events.

**RESOURCE:** Visit Eat Well, Work Well online for fact sheets, tips and resources for creating healthy food environments in the workplace.
eatwellworkwell.com/why-worksites.htm

**ACTION STEP**
Partner with community groups to expand the number of sites offering the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

**RESOURCE:** Refer to the Minnesota Department of Education for resources and answers to frequently asked questions about sponsoring the SFSP.
www.education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/FNS/SFSP/App/index.html

**RESOURCE:** Second Harvest Heartland provides information, outreach opportunities and funding for SFSP sponsors.
www.2harvest.org/site/PageServer?pagename=progserv_sfsp
WHAT IS THE MINNESOTA FOOD CHARTER?

The Food Charter is a guide to planning, decision-making, and collaboration for agencies, organizations, policy-makers, and public and private entities across the state.

Developed through a broad based public process, the Minnesota Food Charter offers a shared blueprint for how all Minnesotans can have reliable access to nutritious, affordable, safe food in the places they work, learn, live, and play. In turn, this access will reduce the risk and cost of obesity and diet-related diseases such as diabetes and heart disease, conserve state resources, and boost economic prosperity.

In recent decades, diet-related health issues—such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease—have surged, presenting costly, long-term challenges to Minnesota’s economy. Changes in the way Minnesotans eat—particularly high calorie, unhealthy foods and beverages—contribute to growing healthcare costs and lower worker productivity.

This is not sustainable.

As a state, we must work together to improve our health and support a vibrant economy. To find out more about the recommendations outlined in the Minnesota Food Charter, visit www.mnfoodcharter.com

The Minnesota Food Charter was created so that individuals can work together to increase healthy food access for all.

Our health and prosperity depend on it.

mnfoodcharter.com

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