

DAS newsrelease

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For immediate release

Departments of Agriculture, Education and Administrative Services join with Cheshire, Wolcott and New Milford Public Schools to serve local produce in school lunches

October 15-19, 2012, was Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week. School districts around the state participated in preparing school lunches using all Connecticut grown produce and locally produced food items.

On October 16, 2012, Commissioner Steven Reviczky of the state Department of Agriculture joined Dr. Greg Florio, Superintendent of Cheshire Public Schools at lunch time at Cheshire High School to eat a Connecticut-produced lunch with students. They moved on to Chapman Elementary School for a taste of that school's menu, also locally produced.

On the menu was JT Farms' beef served in a meat sauce over Connecticut-produced Carla's Pasta. The ground beef in the meat sauce was from Ellington, raised by JT Farms and processed into ground beef at Bogners in Manchester. The sauce was Ragozzinos from Meriden.

There were whole grain buns for sandwiches that were made and delivered fresh from Hamden. The bakery is called Sweet Creations, known for their delicious their whole grain bread. There were apples from Drazen Orchards in Cheshire. Hummel Hotdogs served that week are manufactured in New Haven. The week's other local products featured: variety of vegetables and Severance Foods nacho chips from Hartford. All groceries delivered by a local company: Hartford Provision Company, HPC.

New Milford Schools also participated in Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week. Produce from Connecticut farms was served throughout the week and included zucchini, cucumbers, butternut squash, apples and peppers that topped a vegetable pizza. Other highlights of the menu included beef raised from JT Farms and processed into ground beef at Bogners in Manchester. The Connecticut beef was used to prepare sloppy joes and taco meat. The taco meat was served along with Severance nacho chips from Hartford. Other Connecticut featured items included Hummel Hotdogs from New Haven, Carla's Ravioli from South Windsor that was topped with Ragozzino's sauce from Meriden.

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And finally, Wolcott Schools also provided Connecticut-produced lunches throughout the week, offering menus with healthy and wholesome foods originating from local farms and including vegetables, fruits and farm raised meats. In addition, local businesses throughout the state such as Hummel Hotdogs from New Haven, Carla's Raviolis from S. Windsor, Ragazzino's pasta sauce from Meriden , Ardmore juices and Wades Milk were on the lunch plates. Also featured was Chili and Sloppy Joes made from beef from JT Farm in Ellington.

Coordination of the locally grown USDA inspected beef and other local menu items used in these three towns was a result of a coordination of efforts which included Cheshire Food and Nutrition Services, Wolcott and New Milford Food Services, Hartford Provision Company, JT Farms, Bogners, and the state departments of Administrative Services, Education and Agriculture. The locally produced school menus are made possible by state contracts set up through the Department of Administrative Services (DAS).

By acting as the contracting agent for the furnishing food commodities and services, DAS has managed to achieve a cost savings by leveraging the three towns' collective buying power to ensure steeper product discounts as opposed to each town solely bidding out their unique requirements. The cost savings that these towns achieved through this cooperative consortium agreement is more than the time and labor of DAS staff who administered the procurement. The aggregate savings is estimated at \$100,000.

These public schools served as a great demonstration of the potential for use of locally produced school menu items. The kind of effort assures fresh local products and helps stimulate the local economy. It is hoped that it can serve as a model for school systems across the state.