

What one partner school has to say about **Meadow Creek Farm's** Organic Garlic Fundraising program

An interview with Holy Trinity Catholic High School's Foods and Nutrition Teacher Brooke McMillan

Meadow Creek Farms: Why did you participate in this particular fundraising program?

Brooke McMillan: We wanted to participate to support a local Alberta farm, to educate our students and school community about local food and our local producers, as well as organic vs. conventional produce. Also, we hold many different fundraisers at our school so this was a new one added this year that I thought would maybe draw some interest as well. We fundraised for our Culinary Arts Program to put money back into teaching youth cooking skills and food awareness.

MCF: How did it work?

Brooke: I feel that although the fundraiser may not have met the fundraising amounts that were expected or hoped for, it was still a successful fundraiser based on the short timeframe and on it being at the beginning of the school year. Also, at our school we have a lot of various fundraisers going on at all times, so sometimes it means fundraising efforts are competing with one another for buyers which is why we don't always raise a huge amount. I feel like the biggest setback was the price of the garlic bags for people. Some people do understand why it costs more, but for most of the students to feel like they had a chance to make any sales it required a lot of education efforts on why organic and local is more expensive than the cheap, imported product you can buy at the grocery store. I think next time I would amp up the education campaign part of the fundraiser and now that I have done it once I would have more of an idea of how to encourage people to buy into the fundraiser. In terms of product distribution it was very easy with just the bags of garlic - didn't take up a lot of space or require any refrigerator or freezer space, it was small and convenient for people to pick up, and only having one option of item to buy also streamlines the orders as well.

MCF: Would you do it again?

Brooke: Yes, I would do it again and I would open it up to any other fundraising groups at our school (like dance academy, band students, etc.)

MCF: What did it mean to your class to participate? Why would you support the fundraiser again?

For many of my students they got the chance to learn about local foods and farming in Alberta, we discussed a lot about pricing of food products, the challenges that local farmers face, and also the differences with organic vs. conventional farming and food. It was a perfect tie in to many of the things that I try to cover in my classes to educate the students. It also gave them a chance to hopefully have those conversations with family members and teachers as they were trying to sell the garlic. It also is really important to me to support our local food economy and farmers so this was a simple way to do that and infuse it into my classroom as well. I would support the fundraiser again for all of these reasons and hope to make it bigger and better next year now that we have done it once! I know the consumer attitudes that we will be facing so can better prepare with our selling methods and advertising, and also people may remember it from last year and want to buy again.

