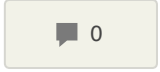




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What on earth is a ‘Kale Blazer’?



MASSACHUSETTS FARM TO SCHOOL

From left: Simca Horwitz, Anne Gobi, and Lisa Damon.

By Catherine Smart | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT NOVEMBER 09, 2016

How does one become a “Kale Blazer”? Ask state Senator Anne Gobi, who received the distinction from the [Massachusetts Farm to School Project](#) last week at its fourth Statewide



Department of Agricultural Resources and the School Nutrition Association of Massachusetts, among others — works on getting locally grown food into schools and other institutions. The award was created to honor advocacy work on Farm to School programs across the state.

“I was in 4-H when I was young, and so I’ve always been involved in the farming community,” says Gobi. “For this particular issue, one of the big things that happened this year was trying to codify into law that October would be ‘Farm to School Month’ every year,” she says, referring to Bill H.2782. The bill, which aims to bring awareness to the cause, and spread farm to school opportunities throughout Massachusetts, was presented to the Legislature by the other “Kale Blazer” recipient, state Representative Tim Madden.

Gobi spent much of her time ensuring it passed. “I was a co-sponsor and really tried to push it once it got over to the Senate, to make sure that it was signed, and of course the governor did sign it into law, which was very nice,” says Gobi. October is National Farm to School Month, and now Massachusetts can coordinate celebrations and campaigns with others across the country.



Gobi says this year it’s especially important to support local farmers: “This was the worst drought in 50 years, and I’m very concerned that we are going to lose farms over the course of these next several months.” She believes there is room in the state budget to help, beyond providing loans — which count as income — and may increase taxes for farmers. “I’m working with our federal and state partners to see if there may be something else available, maybe a loan forgiveness program.”

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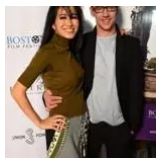
At the consumer level, Gobi says, there is also a lot that can be done, starting with supporting local farms. “I think people think, ‘You know, my backyard garden is done producing, that means we don’t have any agricultural products,’ and nothing can be further from the truth. We have a lot of great agricultural products that continue to be available.” She points to farm-raised meat, eggs, produce, and value-added products like cheese and wine.

Gobi acknowledges that buying local can be pricey, but she says you don’t have to spend a lot to make a difference. “Even if people would take maybe 1/20th of their food budget and say that they are going to use that to buy just local products, something like that would have an enormous effect.” CATHERINE SMART

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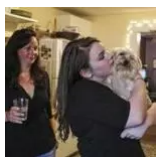
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