

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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400 teachers, farmers, chefs and advocates gather for the Massachusetts Farm & Sea to School Conference

Leominster, MA -- November 7th On a warm November Friday, nearly 400 farm to school advocates representing communities from Provincetown to the Berkshires gathered together for the 4th Massachusetts Farm & Sea to School Conference, hosted by Massachusetts Farm to School. From seafood cooking demonstrations to curriculum development intensives, the event offered those looking to get students excited about local food and agriculture the tools to do so.

This year the conference also featured an awards ceremony recognizing two Farm to School “Kale Blazers.” The award, given to those individuals who work tirelessly advocating for farm to school programs across the state, recognized Mass. State Senator Anne Gobi and Mass. State Representative Tim Madden. “I am incredibly honored to receive the first ever “Kale Blazer” award,” said Senator Gobi. “Farm to School programs have had great success and I have been proud to work with Rep. Madden, our colleagues and Mass Farm to School to expand them across the Commonwealth.”

Conference workshops covered a wide range of topics including procuring local food for institutions, garden based learning, nutrition education, and cooking with farm fresh foods. The event also included a producer-buyer networking session where school food chefs could meet directly with farmers and fishermen to develop new sales relationships. “Bringing all of these people together for this conference is really important for building the farm to school movement in Massachusetts. Participants learn from each other and leave inspired to bring new ideas back to their own communities,” says Mass. Farm to School Co-Director, Simca Horwitz.

Farm to School programs have exploded across the country in recent years, with a wide range of impacts on local economies, student health, and learning. Massachusetts has been at the forefront of this movement, with a strong statewide program since 2004. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farm to School Census finds that 171 Massachusetts school districts are helping 422,000 students gain access to healthy,

local foods and helping school cafeterias spend an estimated \$10.2 million on Massachusetts produced food.

For more information about Mass. Farm to School, visit www.massfarmtoschool.org or contact Simca Horwitz at Simca@massfarmtoschool.org or call 413-253-3844.

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Massachusetts Farm to School was founded in 2004 as a grassroots initiative to increase access to healthy, locally grown food in schools and other institutions across the state. The organization facilitates sustainable purchasing relationships between local institutions, distributors and local farms, promotes local food and agriculture education for students, and supports networking of farm to institution practitioners.

Schools or communities interested in starting or expanding a Farm to School program can visit Mass. Farm to School's website at www.massfarmtoschool.org for resources, information, and ways to get involved.