

## PEOPLE

# “Good Food” kicks off Reel Food Film Fest

by *Marnie Jones*

**O**n Jan. 21, the Everson Library will open its doors to community members eager to learn more about food sustainability and Northwest farmers. The screening of *Good Food*, scheduled for 3 p.m., is part of a broader effort to inform county residents about the importance of sustainability in agriculture. The documentary was made in Whatcom and Skagit counties by filmmakers Melissa Young and

Mark Dworkin and profiles local family farmers, distributors, and others. The library will show films in the same theme on the third Saturdays of February and March, while other locations around the Whatcom County hold similar screenings. The film series will culminate in April at a Pickford Dreamspace event with a film screening, panel discussion, and reception.

The planning committee includes representatives from Sustainable Connections, the Community Food Co-Op, and the Whatcom Farm-to-School Support Team (a

program of the Whatcom Community Foundation's Sustainable Whatcom Fund Committee).

The festival, according to Sustainable Connections Food and Farming outreach coordinator Sara Southerland, offers residents a chance to learn more about their food and how to connect with sources for local, healthful foods. “We’re hoping to spread the message of what’s going on in our food system and where the food comes from,” she said, “then link that to Farm-to-School activities that are already happening in these communities.”

These activities, which include a local Harvest of the Month menu item in all eight Whatcom County school districts, help improve the quality of school cafeteria food and bring nutrition knowledge with students and families.

Whatcom Farm-to-School coordinator Mardi Solomon would agree that bringing the concept of healthy local food to families of school-age children is essential. “We’d like to draw families, have discussions, and raise awareness,” she said. That is going to be accomplished, the committee has decided, by

showing monthly free films at several libraries throughout the county. These sites include Blaine, Everson/Noksack, Deming, Bellingham, and Ferndale. While the film selection process is still underway, some likely candidates include the documentaries *Food, Inc.* and *Forks Over Knives*.

Rio Thomas, an Everson-area farmer and founder of Small Potatoes Gleaning Project (now stewarded by the Bellingham Food Bank), has been active in coordinating the Everson area events. After spending years working to bring healthier food into Whatcom County school districts, Thomas is excited to see growing awareness and momentum for local, sustainable eating. “I’m really passionate about making the most nourishing food available to everyone,” the farmer and longtime food activist said. “Eating local makes a difference. It strengthens the community.”

Elaborating on the Farm-to-School concept and her work in local school districts, Rio said she hopes parents will attend the film series to learn more about good food. “I strongly believe that kids can’t really learn or perform if

they’re not nourished.”

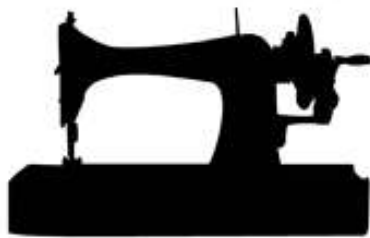
Gretchen Hoyt, of Alm Hill Gardens, one of the farms featured in the film, is also hoping for a lot of community participation. “I’ve been working with food my whole life,” she said. “The way we get our food is causing us to be in very poor health.” Hoyt pointed to diabetes, reduced longevity, and obesity as symptoms of a problem with the food production system, adding cheap food policy, big business lobbying, and government subsidization have made it harder for farmers to grow wholesome food. “We don’t value our farmers,” she explained, “and they’re doing an essential job in our nation.”

For more information about the Reel Food Film Festival, contact Sara Southerland at Sustainable Connections at (360) 647-7093 x 114.

## Farmers, advocates in Good Food

The documentary *Good Food* was made in Whatcom and Skagit counties by filmmakers Melissa Young and Mark Dworkin and profiles local family farmers, distributors, and others. Some of those in the film include Mark Musick (Tilth Association), Susan Ujcic (Helsing Junction CSA), Dr. David Suzuki (host, the Nature of Things, CBC), Brooke Lucy (Bluebird Grain Farms), Hilario Alvarez (Alvarez Family Farms), Connie Hatfield (High Desert Ranch), Ben Craft (Alm Hill Gardens), Billy Allstot (Billy’s Gardens), Gretchen Hoyt (Alm Hill Gardens), and Eiko Vojkovich (Skagit River Ranch).

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