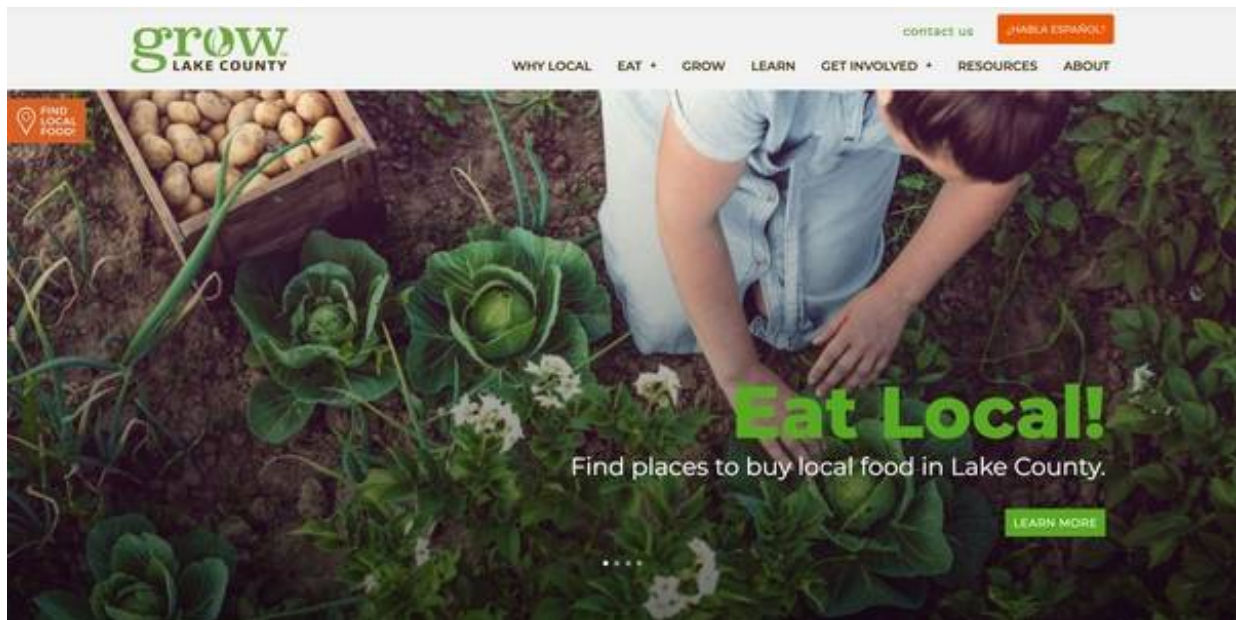


Foundation launches website on food locally grown in Lake County

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A new website has expanded the menu of local food options in Lake County.

Launched by Grayslake-based Liberty Prairie Foundation, www.growlakecounty.org is intended as a clearinghouse for those looking for locally grown food, to support local farmers or connect with the food movement.

"The website includes a Lake County-specific map to identify sources of local food, highlights groups throughout the county working to feed our hungry neighbors, lists ways in which people can get involved, and provides gardening tips and resources for consumers, farmers, community gardens, nonprofits and so much more," said Brad Leibov, president and CEO of the Liberty Prairie Foundation, a private group founded in 1993 and headquartered at the Prairie Crossing Farm in Grayslake

Lake County has what is considered a robust local food scene with a bounty of farmers markets, farm stands and small farms growing food for the region. But there are other elements to be considered by those looking to learn more.

"We started thinking, 'What's missing?'" said Emily Weber, the foundation's director of community food systems. "We just wanted to create a source where we could house all kinds of information about the food movement in Lake County."

Website visitors can find volunteer opportunities, for example, or may learn there is a local food task force that distributes seeds and seedlings to schools, nonprofit organizations and other partners.

"We've got about 35 organizations on our distribution list," Weber said.

The foundation also offers micro-grants of \$500 to \$2,500 to "any group that's working on food," she said. That program is funded by the Lake County Community Foundation, an affiliate of The Chicago Community Trust, which also funded the website work.

The site also contains an overview of Lake County's food system by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and its economic potential. A food system is all of the activities involved in feeding people: the production, processing, distribution, transporting, access, consumption, disposal and recovery of food.

"If local food production were increased in the seven counties of metropolitan Chicago, it could create over 5,000 jobs and generate \$6.5 billion a year in economic activity. The demand is there," according to the planning group.

Other sites in the region that offer information on locally produced food include the Kane County Farm Bureau, Sustain DuPage, and Advocates for Urban Agriculture in Cook County.

"It's a work in progress," Weber said of the new website. "If people know of things happening in their community, we want to know about it so we can get them on the site."