

Think Local First



Colin Anderson, graduate student at the University of Manitoba, delivered an enlightened and informative presentation at the Think Local First evening in Westmount School Complex on Monday, February 2nd.

working towards a PhD in Geography. Several of his projects include Farm to Fork Research, Harvest Moon Food and the Harvest Moon Society. Colin grew up on a grain farm just outside of Cypress River, Manitoba.

"This rural upbringing fuels my interest in rural and farm issues. Over the course of my childhood, rural areas changed a great deal yet this evolution went largely unnoticed to my young eyes. It was not until I moved into the city that I gained a new per-

"Why should you consider your community's offerings first? There are many reasons why local businesses and services are the key to a sustainable community, but the biggest reason is that economies cannot grow without support, and local support is one of the most valuable things you have to offer your community.

By choosing to support locally owned businesses, you help ensure that we have choice and diversity of products and services. More support means more businesses can thrive. More businesses mean more choice.

Locally owned enterprises build strong neighbourhoods by sustaining communities, linking neighbours and by contributing more to local causes. Local ownership means that important decisions are made locally by people who live in the community and who will feel the impacts of those decisions.

Your dollars spent in locally-owned businesses have up to fifteen times the impact on your community as dollars spent outside your community. Why? Because local businesses bank locally, advertise in local media, and hire local accountants, attorney and employees. When shopping locally, you simultaneously create jobs, invest in community improvement and promote community development," outlined Audrey Bessette.

The keynote speaker of the evening was Colin Anderson, who is presently attending the University of Manitoba in the Environment Conservation Lab

**by Patti Hacault
STAFF REPORTER**

Think Local First! "Find Out How We Can Plant the Seeds for a Sustainable Future". The Lorne CDC hosted a workshop to launch their new campaign supporting our local economy.

The Monday, February 2 night was frigid but a keen crowd was welcomed to a warm and inviting venue. Lorne CDC Board members were on hand to present a first in a series of local economy projects and seminars.

"We began the organization in late 2006 and our mandate is to foster the social and economic development of the R. M. of Lorne. Last April, I had the opportunity to attend a three-day session "Capturing Opportunities" in Brandon. Several of the sessions, which I attended were presented by Michael Shuman, author of *The Small-mart Revolution*, and were exactly what our committee was looking for to help increase the economic development of Lorne Municipality. His two sessions 'Going Local' and 'Smallmart Revolution' provided us with many ideas we hope to implement in the coming year. Part of our initiative is this session tonight called 'Think Local First', is highlighting how we can plant the seeds for a sustainable future," Aline Saunders, Co-chair of the Lorne CDC, noted in her introduction.

Audrey Bessette, the Lorne CDC Economic Development Officer presented some advice on Why Think Local?

spective as I reflected on these changes in retrospect. With a new set of eyes, I was able to recognize a growing set of interconnected problems facing family farms and rural communities. Declining services, a dwindling and aging population and the erosion of infrastructure in my own community was perhaps most recently manifested in the announced closure of the elementary school that I attended.

The issues plaguing rural Canada are complex, systemic

and troubling.

Yet family farming and rural communities are an integral part of our culture, identify our natural environment and are fundamental to the food security of urban and rural residents alike. Further, rural communities are wonderful places to visit, to live and to raise a family in. We must not sit idle as we continue to lose family farms and erode the basis of our rural communities. I believe that a combination of individual acts and collective action can reverse the trend of rural and farm decline. To that end, I have decided to undertake an action research project through my PhD program at the University of Manitoba that will at once work towards change

and contribute to a deeper understanding of the farm/rural crisis by exploring possible solutions," emphasized Colin.

Anderson's topics included the grass roots and development of the Harvest Moon Society with its mandate of "Healthy Land, Healthy Communities, Healthy Food. What is Local?" He stressed how important it is for the farmers to develop a connection with the people who are using their product as well as the value of having communities develop a local food initiative. Finally, building bridges - growing local, getting vocal - local for local!

Testimonials were presented by

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Interested individuals attended the Think Local First Evening to learn. As well, they had an opportunity to visit with some local producers and taste samples of products available that evening.

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Dan DeRuyck representing DeRuyck Organic Farms and Andrew Grift from Windy Lake Farm. Both local farmers outlined their family's journeys, the highs, the lows, and what is ahead for them in the future, as well as their connection with the Harvest Moon Society Local Food Initiative.

Danielle Cabernel concluded the list of speakers for the evening. Her presentation and display "Feast On Local" featured food products from Manitoba. She also highlighted the project the Pembina GO team has been working on.

"In November 2006, together with the Harvest Moon Society, the Pembina GO team held a Buy Local/Buy Fresh meeting, looking at getting a local distribution group started. The team continues to work with Harvest Moon.

In January 2008 we looked at various ideas to promote the Buy Local initiative. We came up with a Feast on Local Foods project, to get people thinking about buying local food products, either in the store or directly from the producer.

The second part of the project involves promotional items. We have been distributing these items at meetings and in handout bags at various events, both in Pembina and provincially as well," reported Cabernel.

The project includes distribution of placemats and place cards for community food events and or restaurants.

"To promote the project, we declared September as Feast on Local Foods Month and placed articles in the local papers in Pembina. We thought September was a good month to choose, as this is when much of the garden harvest is in.

The last part of the project is to purchase roadside signs to assist communities in promoting local food events, farmers markets. We hope to have these signs available for April, for a meeting we're planning to hold for the organizers and vendors at the Pembina area Farmers Markets," concluded Danielle.

The Lorne CDC has several future tactics scheduled.

"Over the next year, Lorne CDC has made plans to hold a Product Fair in late spring that will allow local entrepreneurs, businesses and services to showcase their locally made products. In the fall, we will organize a stamp card contest to promote shopping at local businesses. Shop at local businesses, collect enough stamps and you can enter to win a valuable prize package.

We've also handed out a flyer that gives you 'Eight Easy Ways You Can Think Local First'. But that is not all our Think Local First campaign can do. This is not a one year project. We are open to your ideas for more ways to promote our local economy. We will continue to promote 'Think Local First' for years to come. We're planting the seeds now, so we can reap the rewards for the future of our communities," concluded Audrey Bessette.