

Growing Up Organic Steering Committee Meeting  
Wednesday, February 13th, 2008  
9:00 a.m. conference call

Julie Fine (Chair), Janine Gibson (recorder), Kris Antonius, Betty Kehler, Candice Rideout, Paul Chorney, Joel Novek, Sabrina Longobardi, Robin McRae, Liz Carlson.  
Regrets: Marnie Feeleus, Jen Zorn, Manon Roy and Hermann Grauer

**Agenda**

- Introductions

- *(Briefly provide some information about your background and connections/interest about the Growing Up Organic project.*

Julie has served as the co-chair of OFCM and has done project coordination and is currently the part time coordinator of GUO. Julie has 2 degrees in education and is passionate about improving access to local organic food, especially since she has become a mother to her daughter.

Janine serves as the Chair of the OFCM Steering Committee and is the past president of Canadian Organic Growers participating in the strategy planning sessions that identified outreach to children as a priority for COG in building organic acres. She works as an organic inspector and encourages development of organic agriculture and marketing locally. Her two adult children have benefited from organic food and she wants to see this advantage shared more widely with all children and our community in general, both for environmental and health reasons.

Sabrina, runs Eatit.ca, an online and in store business to distribute organic food and make it more accessible. She wanted the best food for her children and this project connects with her desire to make organic more available locally. Sabrina supported healthier food into daycares but the program did not continue so she is glad to see this program increasing access.

Liz runs Taking Care, a childcare program for single parents and parents on social assistance involved with the Taking Charge Program. They provide snacks and lunches to all children and have been enjoying ordering organic food through this program. The fruit and vegetable colours are very appealing to the children. The parents are asking for recipes and the children are involved in preparing snacks and lunches. Parents are introducing these foods into their homes. They are finding this program very successful.

Betty Kehler, lives and farms north of WPG and runs Plum Ridge Nursery which grows a variety of fruits and asparagus. They weed with geese and are natural but not certified.

Paul Chorney has had a long interest in organic food which started with Crones disease when a teenager. To heal himself he strove to avoid pesticides and explored natural health alternatives to conventional medicine. He got involved with Agassiz Food Buying Club and started Harvest Food Collective in 1979. He is interested in supporting and strengthening local organic. He is doing work through the MB Food Charter to strengthen local food networks.

Candice Rideout from the U of M is an Asst Prof of Community Nutrition. Doing nutrition education across the lifespan with a main interest in nutrition ecology, she strives to show the links between dietary behaviour and sustainable food systems. Main research and service perspectives is to provide interest to link sustainable practices and personal motivators in accessing foods.

Joel Novek is a Sociology Prof at the U of Wpg, interested in sustainable and local food and the development of local food economies. Joel has a social economy research grant which includes MB Food Charter and Mount Carmel Clinic. He has volunteered at the Weins Shared Family Farm. In the course of his research he has seen that school feeding programs are important incubators for developing cooperative group buying power for a number of schools at one time.

Kris Antonius is a teacher now at home with her ten month old son. She has been volunteering for OFCM and is now working on part time contracts with GUO in a variety of design and outreach aspects. She and her family have been trying to cut down on packaging and make more sustainable food choices. As a teacher she wants to connect children to the food they are eating.

Robin McRae works for MAFRI as an organic Business Development Specialist, striving to connect growers with consumers. She is at the Portage Food Development Center in Portage. Developing tools to help the organic sector and GUO fits with both her personal and professional goals. She has a background on a small mixed farm which nurtured these personal and professional interests in small scale sustainable agriculture.

Regrets from: Jen Zorn, who has worked in childcare since 1983 at the River Ave Coop which had a whole Foods program and continues her work in childcare.

Manon Roy has interests in nutrition and organic food and is a mature student at U of MB with a background in radio. Hoping to do a practicum as a dietician with GUO, Manon wants to involve more French schools and daycares.

Ad Hoc supporters include Molly McCracken Exec Dir of West Broadway Dev Corp, Dr. Martin Entz, Dept of Plant Science U of Mb, Paul Fieldhouse, Nutrition Policy and Research Analyst with MB Health

- Growing Up Organic Update
  - Overview- COG is the national charitable membership based organization that has been promoting organic food for 30 years with over 15 chapters across the country. COG launched the GUO program in 2006 to increase institutional buying of local organic food. 6 chapters across Canada are implementing the program of collecting organic food and providing them to local centres. Some projects are developing gardens and distribution models. In MB we have local organic distributors so have not needed to focus on that aspect. Please see our GUO description on our website [www.organicfoodcouncil.org](http://www.organicfoodcouncil.org).

We have approached centres by providing presentations and connecting the centre with a distributor. GUO simply provides educational supports like menus, recipes and workshops including farm tours and perhaps garden development. Centers are asked to increase their ordering after 6 months and sign a non binding commitment to supporting local organic food. GUO conducts surveys to track information and will be surveying parents as well as the centre staff. 10 centres are currently involved, some with more than one location. We have a minimum order for food to make delivery sustainable at \$50.

Julie asks for any questions. In 2006/7 we obtained SDIF funding from the project provincially and have received federal funds as well as business and foundation sponsorships. Julie has been working 25 hrs a week with some contract work being done by Marnie Feeleus and Kris Antonius. Janine Gibson has also been receiving expense reimbursements for her support of the program.

- Future directions- workshops are coming up with the MB Childcare Association to encourage bringing organic food into classrooms; and for the Getting Vocal, Growing Local Conference March 7 & 8, U of W.
  - Feasibility Study - Outreach is continuing with the centres but Julie is focusing on conducting a feasibility study which will be a snapshot of our local situation for both production and distribution of local food.
- Other topics/ Comments / Suggestions – asking Steering Committee members to review our studies and provide feedback and guidance to our work. Julie will also be looking for information to augment our efforts.
  - Scheduling our next meeting Mid April to review feasibility study and then again in August or September, as well as email communication.

Joel asks if we have a centralized supply and Julie responds that we have that through Fresh Option Organic Delivery and Eat.it. Betty points out that storage of product is a great need and producers need to know what products are required.

Julie points out that GUO is also reaching out to cafeterias and all interested food buying institutions as well as childcare centres. Liz points out that Taking Care has increased their buying budget to offer more organic food to the children.

Julie asks how the Doodle worked for scheduling the meeting and gets positive feedback from folks. Julie says she may have questions she will circulate via email and thanks.

Janine, as the Chair of OFCM Steering Committee, thanks everyone for their interest, time and support of this project!