SEMAP – an organization of passionate individuals dedicated to our physical health and that of the environment and local economy

Program Coordinator Kendra Murray and Executive Director Karen Schwalbe – two of the passionate souls behind the wonderful things SEMAP is doing

We've all heard the slogan "Buy fresh, buy local!" We've come across the bumper stickers. It's a sentiment we can all get behind.

But do you know the story behind the people who created the slogan? Ever wanted to know some specifics on *why* buying fresh and local is a great idea in the first place? Looking for some fun, yet educational, events to do this summer? Want to help boost the local economy? Eat healthier? Want to put some names and faces to the organization? You've come to the right place.

Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership or SEMAP is the organization whose mission is to make sure local, fresh, nutritious food is readily available to every man, woman and child. Their focus is on expanding that access which in turn will preserve sustainable farming which itself will provide more jobs and boost the local economies.

Meet Kendra and Karen – two passionate leaders at SEMAP

SEMAP was formed in 1998 and worked closely with UMass Dartmouth and became its own non-profit in 2009 and reaches 75 towns and cities throughout Bristol, Plymouth, and Norfolk counties. Executive Director Karen Schwalbe and Program

Coordinator Kendra Murray are two of a many spoked wheel that share a genuine passion to promote these ideas through a number of workshops, conferences, social media, newsletters, community outreach and special events.



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Kendra is the social media, communications, and website manager. She organizes and develops SEMAP's programming, including workshops, conferences, and other events and keeps the public informed. She also is responsible for the graphic design, including designing quarterly newsletter and website images. It doesn't stop there! She is also responsible for the community outreach including tabling at farmers markets and other food related and sustainability events. When asked what was particularly rewarding about what she does, she said "Every time we host a workshop or event and I see folks taking knowledge home on how to farm and garden, I'm ecstatic. I love seeing farmers expand their knowledge and see friends and neighbors learning to be self sufficient."

Karen oversees overall operations, advocates for agricultural advancement in Southeastern Massachusetts, manages finances and fundraising, leads community outreach. “I love those moments when we have just the resource a farmer needs – whether it’s information on federal regulations, a financial resource they didn’t know about or a new marketing opportunity. It’s also incredibly grounding to work with farmers (no pun intended). During the growing season, farmers are so busy that life is stripped down to the basic necessities – all their attention is on providing healthy local food for their customers. I am proud that SEMAP is able to support their efforts.”

How SEMAP impacts our environmental, economic, and personal health

One of the ways these efforts are supported is through education – not just educating the community and consumer about the important role of farmers and farming and its effect on the economy and our health and environment, but education for the farmer through technical assistance. There is a cycle here – an interdependent one by which each improves the health – literally and figuratively – of the other.

Do you care about the environment? Where there is grass, trees, fields, and crops there is not a parking lot, building, or factory. There is an entire ecosystem of birds, bugs, and critters that thrive in the soil, among the crops, and in the nearby flora. Rotating that soil keeps it healthy, farmers utilize a variety of pest control methods to keep the pesky bugs away and the beneficial ones thriving.



Produce picked that day is more nutritious and simply tastes better.

Eliminated is the use of massive trucks with large carbon footprints to travel long distances to deliver these goods. Not only are the trucks much smaller and have an infinitely lesser carbon footprint, you have the option to eliminate the truck altogether by visiting a local farm or farm-stand.

Because farmers utilize a number of crop varieties and not one because of its ability to survive the long transports, these heirloom strains won't die out and disappear.

How about the economy? The more farms there producing fresh produce, meats and other goods, the more local people are employed and the money they earn and spend is mainly right here in our nearby towns and cities. Since they leave the farms and go into town to spend their money, the rest of the town, which seems unconnected to the farm, benefits. So, that nearby store has more customers spending money because of that farm a mile down the road.

Now, if you are the type that says "That's all fine and dandy

– in concept, it’s sweet, but these are indirect, intangible benefits. What does that do for me directly?”

How about just because the produce is more nutritious and simply more delicious?!

As a person who shops at foodstands, farmer’s markets and enjoys the benefits of Community Supported Agriculture programs, I can say unequivocally that the food simply tastes better. It’s not subtle either – it’s a noticeable difference. The corn, carrots, or potatoes in my basket were likely picked that same day, not picked while underripe so that when they cross country and arrive at the supermarket days later, they arrive ripe.

I get to savor the fresh flavor of just picked produce and enjoy all the nutritional benefits that come with it. Produce picked and allowed to naturally ripen and eaten within a short time frame are more nutritious – they develop highly active anti-oxidants that won’t survive a long transport from another state or country. In addition, since a farmer isn’t concerned with long transport times, they aren’t limited to a few strains or varieties – they can choose more nutritional or delicious ones.

The Journal of the American College of Nutrition found that 43 different vegetables and fruits, had *“reliable declines in the amount of protein, calcium, phosphorus, iron, riboflavin (vitamin B2) and vitamin C …due to the preponderance of agricultural practices designed to improve traits (size, growth rate, pest resistance) other than nutrition.”*



You never know who or what you might encounter at a local farm!

How about looking directly in the face of the person who grew your food. You can ask them questions about it, they can point to the very spot on earth that it was harvested from. You can trust and have confidence in that food that you are about to digest or feed you children.

Besides, instead of heading to the inside of a supermarket, you get outdoors to the farm, the fresh air and maybe even a little socializing!

Enjoy one of the many farmers markets available locally

SEMAP has deep connections with the local farmers, making frequent visits. The help the farmers bring these markets and stands to our community, perfect for those who don’t have or desire CSAs or wish to drive into the country to the farms.

Live near New Bedford and want to check out some of the produce and folks growing the food you’re about to eat? In New Bedford there are three locations: Brooklawn Park Farmers Market is Mondays from 2:00-6:00pm, from June 13 – October 31. Clasky Common Farmers Market is Saturdays from 10:00am-2:00pm, from July 9-October 29. The Downtown Farmers Market at Custom

House Square is on Thursdays from 2:00pm-6:00pm from June 16-October 27.

Last year SEMAP assisted Mass in Motion New Bedford to make it possible to accept SNAP at all three of these markets.

If you're more towards Taunton, there is the Silver City Farmers Market at Hopewell Park between Hopewell and Hamilton Streets. These take place on Thursdays from 4:30pm-7:30pm, from July 14-October 13. SEMAP is also working to implement SNAP at this market.

If you are reading this from somewhere else on the South Coast or perhaps visiting someone in another neck of the woods, a full farmers market listing can be found here.

Conferences, workshops or special events

Each year SEMAP hosts a large Agriculture and Food Conference that offers more than 30 farming, gardening, and local food workshops at "Bristol Aggie" in Dighton. They have a workshop series that focuses on farming and gardening through the spring and summer. One very successful event is the "Farm To Tapas" dinner – an evening of local food, drink, and fun on July 31 (tickets are sold out) from 5-8 pm at the historic home and farm of Joseph Keith III, 775 Horseneck Rd, Westport, MA. There will be 19 different stations hosted by local restaurants and caterers. All tapas prepared are using ingredients sourced from local farms. There is an open bar with local beer, wine, and craft cocktails. Live music, live and silent auctions. $80 general admission, only $30 if you're a farmer!

Finally they also publish a local food guide.



SEMAP offers a number of workshops, conferences, and special events in their pursuit of furthering education.

The very popular “Twilight Workshops” are featured throughout the season. If you’re a farmer, gardener or foodie these annual hands-on workshops are a must. Growing Cut Flowers is August 8th at Skinny Dip Farm in Little Compton and Raising Alpacas is Tuesday, August 23rd at Moonlight Rose Alpacas. There is the “Growing Chili Peppers on a Small Farm” workshop in September at Nobska Farms in Falmouth, a “Diversified Livestock” workshop at Rosasharn Farm in Rehoboth, and the “Making Homemade Apple Soda & Hard Apple Cider” workshop at Round the Bend Farm, in Dartmouth, just to name a few. These go on through September.

This sound up your alley? Want to know dates, times, and other pertinent information? Check out the page dedicated to just that here.

SEMAP is a massive asset to the farmers and consumers, the environment and local economy. When you purchase goods from local farms you do the same in a major way. You help improve your own health, you help farmers to keep offering us varieties of produce, meats, and packaged goods, you boost the

local economy by helping the farmers employ locals, and you lessen the carbon footprint by removing the transport equation.

Buy fresh, buy local, indeed!

Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership

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