

News Release

Northwest Minnesota Celebrates Farmers Markets

By Itollegs on Friday, March 14, 2014 Things went off without a hitch at this year's second Farmers Market celebration. The event was held in Bede Ballroom at the U of M Crookston campus on February 27, 2014. Celebrating the success of local farmers markets and the continued support from various communities brought special "bright spots" from participants.

The phrase comes from Dan and Chip Heath's book, *Switch: How to make change when change is hard*. Heath asks, "When is my organization being its best self?"

A common reply from participants was that they were at their best when customers are happy with the products they receive. They are also at their best when they bring in new attractions like bringing in classic cars from the 50s and 60s. Another "bright spot" shared by participants was combining food and art in a winter market, which allows them to reach out to customers during the winter. Lastly, members shared that they are more productive when using resources provided to them from Minnesota Grown. Minnesota Grown is a statewide partnership between the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Minnesota producers of specialty crops and livestock. The Minnesota Grown Program has over 1,100 diverse members including farmers' markets, CSA farms, garden centers, wineries, fruit & vegetable growers, pick-your-own farms, livestock producers, meat processors, Christmas tree growers, and producers of honey, wild rice, maple syrup, cheese, and other gourmet products.

Paul Hugunin, Executive Director of Minnesota Grown, spoke about the importance of using social media and other venues to reach out to more diverse customers. Lynda Annoreno, Market Manager for Fresh Start Market in Baudette, gave tips on how to strategically lay-out a farmers market location in order to enhance the flow of customers. Terry Nennich, Commercial Food and Vegetable Specialist with U of M Extension, presented on the Minnesota Farmers Market Association (MFMA) and provided information on new legislation for providing proper food sampling. He also talked about the educational development offered by MFMA and the services it offers to members as far as being properly insured.

The Minnesota Farmers' Market Association (MFMA) is a non-profit, membership-based organization dedicated to supporting the growth and development of farmers' markets across the state of Minnesota.

To learn more about the work of the Northwest Regional Partnership go to <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/rsdp/northwest>.

The Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships (RSDPs) give communities in Greater Minnesota access to the University of Minnesota in order to help solve problems and take advantage of new opportunities. As a part of University of Minnesota Extension, NW RSDP brings together local talent and resources with University of Minnesota knowledge and seed funding to drive sustainability in four areas: agriculture and food systems, tourism and resilient communities, natural resources, and clean energy.

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