



WWW.GORGEGROWN.COM PO BOX 752, HOOD RIVER, OR 97031 P : 541-490-6420 F : 541-386-1203

December 2009

Dear friends,

If you're fortunate, you have three chances every day to choose what you eat. Each meal is an opportunity for you and your neighbors to eat food grown nearby by people in your community. Not only will the food be better for your community, the environment and your family's health, your dollars will stay *here* and support agriculture as a way of life in the Gorge.

We at Gorge Grown want to take a moment to thank you for your involvement with GGFN this past year, and to ask for your continued support and engagement. Whether through donating money or time, shopping or selling at the farmers' market, or simply signing up for our e-newsletter, your actions directly support our regional food system. Gorge Grown was formed in 2006 by a group of local citizens and farmers, and as an independent 501(c)3 nonprofit, we continue to base our work on our mission - to build an economically and environmentally sound regional food system that engages, educates, and improves the health and well-being of our community – and to be responsive to the needs and ideas of people like you, farmers and consumers both.

Right now, less than 2% of the food we eat comes from local sources. If residents of the Gorge purchased just 20% of their fruits, vegetables, and meat from local sources, it would add \$10 million to our regional economy, drastically improve our children's health, support our local farmers and ranchers, and reduce our impact on the environment by lowering the average 1,500 miles it takes for our food to reach our plates.

At the same time, between 10-15% of residents in every Gorge county report skipping meals because food is sometimes scarce, and even those who may want to purchase healthy local food have no place to access it, especially in the most rural parts of our region.

Gorge Grown Food Network is working together with folks throughout the Columbia River Gorge – two states and five counties - to ensure all of us have access to fresh, healthy food and that farmers and ranchers can succeed locally. Now we need your help to continue to fulfill our mission and grow our organization. Your financial support will allow us to continue working on these essential tasks:

- **Increased access to fresh, locally grown food for all residents –**
Including the bustling and ever-growing Thursday farmers' market in Hood River and our pioneering Mobile Farmers' Market, which served 4 rural Gorge communities in 2009 with fresh fruits and vegetables. Over 1,400 shoppers visited the mobile market in Stevenson, Mosier, Maupin, and Dufur. The Mobile Market was honored with the Harry Chapin Self-Reliance Award from World Hunger Year in 2008-9. This year we also helped source \$20,000 in local produce for food pantries in Klickitat and Skamania Counties, in addition to coordinating the donation of hundreds of pounds of produce to food pantries and Meals on Wheels across the region.

(over)

Gorge Grown Food Network Board of Directors

Bruce Bolme Brian Hennessy Ann Kramer Brian McCormick Nicholas Walrod Ben Zimmerman

- **More direct marketing and distribution opportunities for local producers –**
Our “Who’s Your Farmer?” local buying guide, the best Gorge resource for finding local food, is distributed for free to over 20,000 households annually, and is now available online! In 2010 we’ll be working with every farmers’ market in the Gorge to provide free vendor trainings and increased local advertising to strengthen these crucial community resources, in addition to exploring additional distribution opportunities through our mobile market and local partners.
- **Integrate education, awareness, and community food skills –**
We host several films, speakers and events throughout the year to help educate residents on the importance of local food and community food systems. In 2010 we’ll be putting together a food summit and piloting a Community Food Leaders program to teach people how to take action in their local communities. We are also pursuing a Farm to School program in the Gorge that will strengthen our schools’ community gardens, lunch programs, and nutrition education.

So far, we’ve been able to do all this – and to plan for so much more – on a yearly budget of just \$60,000. Now imagine what we could do with more. A prosperous local food economy is within our grasp, all we need is your help.

At Gorge Grown we believe in community-based solutions – our Farm to Food Bank work this year was a response to pressing local need for fresh, healthy food at food pantries by teaming established community partners (Washington Gorge Action Programs) with local farmers eager for an opportunity to scale up production. It was a “win-win”—good food for people and economic development for small farmers—that introduced a new model of community cooperation and mobilization of local resources.

If you too are concerned about where and how your food is grown, if you seek to support the local economy and want to ensure a livable wage for farmers, if you value increased access to healthy food for everyone regardless of income, and if you share our determination to make the Gorge ever more food self-sufficient, please renew your support this season!

Making a tax-deductible contribution to GGFN is simple: just mail a check in the enclosed envelope or donate online at gorgegrown.com. Because we run such an efficient organization, you can be sure that every dollar invested in Gorge Grown goes right back to your local community.

We are grateful for your support, and wish you a joyous holiday season.

Sincerely,



Sarah Hackney, Executive Director

Gorge Grown Food Network Board of Directors

Bruce Bolme Brian Hennessy Ann Kramer Brian McCormick Nicholas Walrod Ben Zimmerman