

HOBART CENTER FOR FOODSERVICE SUSTAINABILITY

Bartels Lutheran Retirement Community becomes first nursing home to participate in local Farm-to-Fork initiative.

WAVERLY, IOWA

In 1997 the University of Northern Iowa partnered with the Leopold Center at Iowa State University to create a local food project to connect buyers to locally grown foods. The participants included local restaurants, hospitals and local growers. In February 2000, Bartels Lutheran Retirement Community became the first continuing care retirement community (CCRC) to join the project.

Bartels' initial objective was to purchase 10 percent of its total food from local growers. By the end of the 2001 growing season, Bartels' Nutrition Services management team had developed relationships with many of the local growers by visiting all of their farms.

Due to an expansion of facilities, the Nutrition Services department moved into a new state-of-the-art kitchen. The new kitchen was almost three times the size of the old one and allowed for a 2,800-cubic-foot freezer. The freezer's size played an important role in the Farm-to-Fork program because the staff was able to purchase more produce and freeze excess foods such as sweet corn, strawberries, asparagus and squash to be used in the later cold months.



In addition to produce, Bartels decided to purchase all of the beef needed locally, since Waverly, Iowa, is located in the middle of a beef-producing area. Bartels requested all animals be purchased within no more than a 20-mile radius from its facility.

A contract was developed with a local farmer only five miles away to deliver the animals to the local locker to be butchered and

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processed. The farmer raised Red Angus beef without the use of hormones or sub-therapeutic antibiotics. Bartels has been purchasing two head of cattle per month from him since the end of 2005.

Bartels Lutheran Retirement Community was also instrumental in the development of a local dairy. The local dairy began processing the milk they were producing. After convincing the dairy of the importance of fortifying their milk, Bartels became the first health care facility to purchase from them. Similarly to other local growers, the staff has developed a great rapport with the family-owned dairy.



Financially, Bartels Lutheran Retirement Community has helped sustain several area farmers. By purchasing within a 20-mile radius, Bartels has aided in the reduction of the amount of fuel used and pollution caused by transporting food for thousands of miles.



Additionally, Bartels can ease the minds of its residents because they know exactly which farmer the food came from and how it was processed. This became increasingly important when a couple of residents became alarmed due to the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) scare.

Bartels Lutheran Retirement Community is in the seventh year of its Farm-to-Fork program. Bartels exceeded its original 10 percent purchasing goal; in 2006, 25 percent of the \$313,000 food budget was spent within a 20-mile radius of the facility. Bartels is committed to keeping money in the community and plans to continue purchasing locally to help sustain the local farming operations.