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# Hillsboro Selected for \$40,000 Farm-to-School Grant

Hillsboro School District was recently informed it has been awarded a \$40,000 Farm-to-School grant from the Oregon Department of Education (ODE).

The state's Farm-to-School grant program was first authorized by the 2011 Legislature through HB2800. Under this initial authorization, \$200,000 was allocated to the program and distributed to eleven school districts last year, one of which was Bend-LaPine, whose 'Boat-to-School' idea—bringing fresh local seafood to students—has garnered national attention.

The 2013 Legislature increased the funding allotment to the grant program through HB2649 to \$500,000 then matching funds were secured for another \$500,000, making the total amount of new money available through the program to \$1 million. According to Farm-to-School grant coordinator Rick Sherman, the infusion of money is allowing ODE to fully fund programs in 19 school districts around the state in the 2013-15 biennium.

Grants are for two years and are calculated by multiplying the average number of students who participate in the lunch program at the identified schools by \$0.15 then multiplying that by the number of school days. The money is intended to help reimburse the cost of procuring of locally-produced crops and delivering targeted nutrition information to students.

Hillsboro Farmers Markets (HFM) Manager Laura Conroy headed up the grant-writing effort and collaborated with the District's Nutrition Services team to determine the scope of the project. Conroy's organization will work directly with local farmers to identify the timing of when certain crops will be ready and their actual delivery to the schools. They will also work with Yvette Parker, Hillsboro's Nutrition Educator, to develop the informational presentations to students.

Hillsboro's participating schools are Free Orchards Elementary and Eastwood Elementary. Each school has a population of close to 500 students and regular school lunch consumers of 350/day. Over the course of the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years, students at the schools will eat fresh, locally-grown cucumbers, ground cherries (pineapple tomatillos), cherry tomatoes, berries, and romaine lettuce, and will receive presentations on each crop prior to its delivery.

"Students are far more likely to try something that's familiar to them," notes Conroy, "so talking about the crop, letting students see and touch it, and sharing information about how and where it was grown should really help generate some interest and a willingness to try the item when it shows up on the menu."

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