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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Crawford and Vernon County Schools to Benefit from Americorps "Farm to School" Award

Wisconsin State AmeriCorps has awarded Crawford and Vernon Counties resources to start Farm to School programs with the goal of bringing more fresh, locally grown foods to area schools. As part of a statewide Farm to School initiative, Americorps will provide two part-time volunteers to work closely with teachers, parents, PTO's, food service staff, and local farmers to procure foods for schools and develop school based education programs with teachers. Farm to school initiatives across Wisconsin include successful projects such as school based gardens, farmer in the classroom programs, local foods fundraisers, fresh food tasting events, and integrating fresh local foods into snack and meal programs. Schools in Crawford and Vernon Counties will be actively involved in recruiting and hiring the Americorps volunteers, as well as setting their own Farm to School program goals, and providing some financial match.

While program details are still being confirmed, volunteers will likely be based in Prairie du Chien and Viroqua schools. Americorps volunteers receive a monthly living allowance of approximately \$475/month, student loan deferment, and an \$2,360 education award at the end of the service. The statewide Farm to School program was awarded a total of 20 volunteers at 10 sites around the state. The statewide program will provide training and support for volunteers.

"Many parents, volunteers, teachers and food service staff have been working hard to start farm to school programs in local schools. The Americorps volunteers will really help us to move toward realizing each school's vision and getting more fresh locally grown foods into our meal and snack programs" said parent and farm to school volunteer Kathleen Hein.

Laura Brown, Crawford County UW Extension Community Development Educator, is overseeing the Farm to School program. If you or your school district are interested in setting up a Farm to School working group or to apply for the Farm to School positions please contact Laura Brown 608-326-0223 for Crawford County or Jessica Luhning at the Valley Stewardship Network for Vernon County 608-637-3615 jessicavsn@frontiernet.net. Applications for the Vernon County Americorps Farm to School volunteer positions are due Monday, August 25th, 2008. To learn more about Farm to School projects in Wisconsin visit www.reapfoodgroup.org/farmtoschool/

