

11 BHSU receives \$49,000 SD Department of Agriculture grant for Spearfish Local program

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Black Hills State University was awarded a \$49,000 Specialty Crop Block Grant from the South Dakota Department of Agriculture recently.

The purpose of the Specialty Crop Block Grant is to increase the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). The USDA considers most local food a specialty crop.

Katie Greer, sustainability coordinator at BHSU, said the grant will be used to further support BHSU's Spearfish Local program, which was launched in summer 2014. Spearfish Local brings local producers, distributors, purchasers and consumers of local food together with the goal of growing support of the local economy.

"BHSU and community partners are seeking to create a culture that supports and values local food in order to expand the reach and depth of our regional local food economy," Greer said.

She added the group's goals are to advance the competitiveness and market share of local food, increase the number of local producers, expand consumption of local foods and increase the knowledge of local food for community members and visitors.

Dr. Rachel Headley, Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics Liaison for BHSU, said that BHSU is uniquely positioned to unite a variety of community interests to work together.

"Broadening Spearfish Local efforts will mean additional educational opportunities and local food system support for the region," Headley said.

With the help of the grant, Greer said over the next year Spearfish Local plans to develop a regional foodshed analysis that will identify gaps between consumers and producers, partner with a local producer to use a straw bale greenhouse to extend the growing season of the campus garden and address local food barriers in cafeteria-style venues. In addition, more marketing and advertisement projects will be completed over the year to promote local food production and consumption.

The grant will provide six semester-long internships for BHSU students in 2015. Three internships will be offered in the spring, one in the summer and two in the fall semesters.



Black Hills State University students work in the campus garden. The BHSU campus garden supplies more than 1,300 pounds of produce each year, which is used in BHSU dining services for campus meals.



From left, Chor Ni Tsoi, professional accountancy major from China; Evan Griggs, outdoor education major from Bloomington, Minn.; and Tara Price, corporate communications major from Mud Butte, interned for the Black Hills State University Spearfish Local program during the fall semester.

Internships will include work toward the foodshed analysis, researching local cafeterias on providing local food, organizing volunteers for the BHSU campus garden and organizing and executing a multimedia project around local food. The project will include the history of agriculture in Spearfish and "Know Your Farmer" videos.

Greer said Spearfish Local also will use a portion of the grant to rent a space in a straw bale greenhouse from Cycle Farm, an organic farm in Spearfish, to extend the growing season of the BHSU garden. The greenhouse will also allow for additional educational opportunities for youth and BHSU students

"Planting in the BHSU garden doesn't take place until late May when students are out for the summer," Greer said. "Being able to use space in the greenhouse will allow us to start seeds as early as March."

The straw bale greenhouse also is a great example of natural building, Greer said. The house allows the extension of the growing season without the use of electric or gas heat. Straw bales covered in clay provide higher-quality insulation and the design of the greenhouse utilizes the sun for heat, a technique called passive solar.

The grant will also provide funding for marketing associated with the Spearfish Local badge. The Spearfish Local badging program identifies businesses in the community that sell or use local produce.

For more information, go to www.BHSU.edu/SpearfishLocal

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