

Winter Fare market packs 'em in By ANITA FRITZ Recorder Staff
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GREENFIELD -- The hearty aroma of beef stew and butternut cider soup wafted through Greenfield High School Saturday as people from throughout the Pioneer Valley and beyond escaped winter for just a few hours to attend an indoor farmers market and gather root vegetables, winter greens, locally-raised organic meat and more.

Hats, jackets, sweatshirts and pocketbooks sported stickers reminding everyone to "Be a Local Hero, Buy Locally Grown." The Winter Fare Farmers' Market held its second annual event at the high school from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The school cafeteria and main hallway were still packed well after 1 p.m. and many items had sold out by noon.

Kellie Finn and Sandra Washburn, both of Greenfield, came for the dark chocolate-covered goat cheese.

"This has been on our calendar for a while," said Finn. "We ran out of our chocolate-covered goat cheese before the holidays and couldn't wait to get more." Sangha Farm of Ashfield didn't disappoint -- Finn and Washburn left with two boxes filled with the homemade treats.

"The idea came from a pregnancy craving," said Maribeth Ritchie, the farm's co-owner.

Sallie Kleinfeldt of Orange said she grows her own vegetables and stores many for the winter months, but couldn't stay away from the Winter Fare.

"This is so nice," she said as she packed a variety of potatoes she'd bought. "You can't find this stuff in grocery stores. Everything is grown locally. This is fantastic."

The Winter Fare, in its second year, was born from an idea peace activist and founder of Greenfield's Free Harvest Supper, Juanita Nelson, shared with others.

"When we began the free harvest supper, Juanita made the comment that it was easy to feed people locally-grown foods in August, but how could we do the same in February," said Mary McClintock of Conway.

McClintock, one of the Winter Fare organizers, said a group began planning the winter farmers market in March 2007. "We had our first in February 2008," she said. "It was ridiculously successful. They'd sold out of everything by 1 p.m."

McClintock said what's nice about the Winter Fare, besides all of the fresh vegetables, meat and dairy, as well as syrups, canned goods and handmade items, is that it allows farmers to reunite long before farmers markets throughout the county re-open each year in May.

"It's all about community," said McClintock. "And an incredible abundance and variety of tasty fare."

Farmers from throughout Franklin County and the valley participated. Informational displays were set up in the hallway outside the cafeteria; people could learn about CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture programs) and about the Winter Fare. Green Fields Market and Bart's, both of Greenfield, sold soup, with some of the proceeds going to the Winter Fare, while Hope and Olive of Greenfield and the Wagon Wheel of Gill sold soup, with some of the proceeds going to the local food bank.

"This is fabulous," said Ann Hamilton, president of the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. "I followed a car from Connecticut here. This is really enhancing all of our efforts to sustain agriculture in the valley." Hamilton said it's important to support farmers by shopping and eating locally. "I love seeing all of the families here."

For a list of Winter Fare participants and weeklong events, visit: www.winterfare.org.