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Edward Cooney
Congressional Hunger Center
Hall of the States Building
400 North Capitol Street North West Suite G 100
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Dear Mr. Cooney:

It is my pleasure to nominate Healthy Acadia for the Victory Against Hunger Award. This fine organization is a Healthy Maine Partnership based in Bar Harbor, Maine and is sponsored by the Acadia Community Association in partnership with Mount Desert Island Hospital and School Union 98. As the Congressman representing Maine's 2nd District that includes this region, I fully support the work of Healthy Acadia in initiating Farm to School Programs in Hancock County over the past three years.

Healthy Acadia has been connecting farms with schools in Hancock County since October 2005 as part of its effort to systemically assure a reliable, locally-produced supply of food and to increase vegetable consumption among school children. These connections help schools provide healthier lunches while providing small farms with access to local institutional markets. This is especially important in the Downeast region of Maine, where there are higher than average low-income, poverty and childhood obesity rates, and the local agricultural economy is challenged to find new markets for its products.

It is my hope that you will consider Healthy Acadia for a Victory Against Hunger Award for its notable work in several areas:

- In the Farm to School Project's first year, two schools began purchasing produce from local farms. In 2007, eight area schools (including a Head Start program) regularly purchased from local farms.
- To facilitate the creation of Farm to School programs, Healthy Acadia identifies schools that are "ready" to initiate farm to school purchasing, then works closely with them to set goals and assure program success and sustainability. These model schools inspire and catalyze action among other schools, creating a ripple effect of change.
- Healthy Acadia researched and published a county-wide Farm to School Directory that identified farms that are interested in selling their products to schools. This first-of-its-kind directory in Maine also helps demystifying the process, and is being used as a model by groups around the state.
- Healthy Acadia provides one-to-one support for both schools and farms. Creating these new relationships has not been without hurdles that need to be overcome. For example, in a system based on pre-prepared food items, many school kitchens lack the basic equipment and infrastructure to store, handle, and process whole and fresh foods. Small-scale farmers must learn about how to work with institutional buyers to better meet their needs and expectations.
- Healthy Acadia's Farm to School Initiative also facilitates curriculum and community connections in conjunction with School Union 98. Students and teachers are able to connect directly with farms and farmers, and integrate food systems education with science, math, social studies and art lessons while meeting Maine Learning Results. In addition to creating new and engaging learning

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opportunities, Farm to School highlights the value of local farms and farmers to a secure food system and teaches our youth to be critical thinkers, thoughtful consumers, and active participants in their communities.

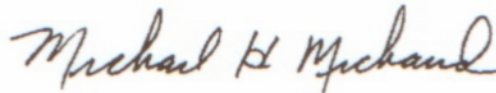
- With Farm to School programs in place, several schools have taken the initiative to launch complimentary efforts. Examples include a "Culinary Club," where older children are involved in preparing and cooking for their schoolmates, creation of school gardens, and agricultural and nutritional research projects.

I understand Healthy Acadia is now planning to deepen and expand its Farm to School Program into more schools and institutions in both Hancock and Washington Counties, with the result that a greater number of children and farmers will benefit from these innovative programs. This leadership is especially important at a time when local farms must find new markets in order to remain viable, and food transportation costs are an increasing hurdle for all. At the same time, children, especially in these rural, low income parts of the state, are in great need of access to fresh, healthy food and greater understanding of, and appreciation for, their food system. National recognition of its work with a Victory Against Hunger Award would help Healthy Acadia in its current quest to raise funds and develop this expanded program.

Over 18 million meals are served by Maine schools each year. By incorporating significantly more food from local producers into these meals, Healthy Acadia's work provides farmers access to a greater share of the market, thus contributing to the economic viability of farming as a way of life in rural Maine while increasing regional food security. By including local produce in school meals, all children have access to a nutritional boost. Research shows that kids eat more vegetables when they are fresh. Students also benefit from enhanced learning when their curriculum and cafeteria experiences are integrated.

I fully extend my support to Healthy Acadia to receive the Victory Against Hunger Award for 2008. Following is the contact information for Healthy Acadia.

With warmest regards,



Michael H. Michaud
Member of Congress

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