

Initiative started to support economy, help hungry

By REGAN TUTTLE Editor | Posted: Wednesday, February 1, 2017 12:00 am

The food movement in Norwood is growing. Though farmers, ranchers and other producers have existed on Wright's Mesa for the last century, they have in the last few years been more active in the community and have begun working together.

For example, the Harvest Celebration has been beefed up over the last few years. In 2015, the FRESH Food Hub, Norwood's food cooperative, was established. And in 2016, the Apple Core Project was birthed.

Also, last summer, a few people — Heather Priestly, Paula Robinson and Lori Thayer — collaborated to produce Norwood's first farm-to-table event on Grand Avenue. In addition, two new bakeries (Indian Ridge and Blue Grouse Bread) have recently emerged in the town's core district, and it seems most events held at the Livery these days showcase local food creations.

In support of the growing food movement, the Telluride Foundation is now launching a local food initiative, targeting the San Miguel watershed communities of Norwood, Naturita, Nucla, Redvale, Paradox, Bedrock and Telluride. Foundation officials said that what can be produced locally has a better taste and health benefits, as well as the ability to support a stronger local economy.

"The region has a rich history and culture of farming, including good soil and available land and water," Paul Major, president and CEO of the Telluride Foundation, said. "We also have viable markets and the potential to promote farm-to-grocery, -school and -restaurant/table opportunities."

Recently, the Telluride Foundation received grants from the Colorado Health Foundation and the Goldman Family Charitable Foundation to support the local food initiative. Officials said the money will be used to encourage local farming and education efforts.

The goals are to boost the overall health and economies of the region by supporting small local producers; to support organizations, producers and farmers to provide healthy, nutritious food to communities and also to low-income populations; and to increase local food security.

Leila Seraphin, co-founder of Norwood's FRESH Food Hub, said she believes supporting the local food movement is important. Her organization has already been looking at ways it can support Norwood's food bank and help those who need groceries.

"The local food initiative is working to facilitate cooperation between food advocate groups, producers and the local food market," she said. "Our goal is to provide improved access to quality local food in our communities."

Now, the Telluride Foundation will invite various groups to come together. The food initiative is hosting a roundtable discussion with key organizations on Feb. 16 from 10 a.m.-noon at the Livery in Norwood.

Officials from Tri-County Health Network will officiate the roundtable, and in the end, help to identify

existing gaps in access to nutritious food. The meeting will also look at potential collaborations and partnerships for the food economy, as well as strategies for better connecting fresh, local food to low-income individuals.

Anyone who would like to attend the roundtable or who is interested working with the initiative should contact Matt Teague at vista@telluridefoundation.org.