



**INSTITUTE FOR
AGRICULTURE AND TRADE POLICY**

PRESS RELEASE

**For immediate release
June 17, 2013**

Press Contact

Andrew Ranallo
Communications Associate, IATP
(612) 870-3456
andrew@iatp.org

Cara Johnson-Bader
New Horizon Academy
(763) 383-6198

About IATP

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. IATP is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota with an office in Washington D.C.

About NHA

New Horizon Academy is a nationally acclaimed early care and education company providing programs for infants through 12 years of age including before and after school programs, with a focus on the development of school-readiness skills, self-esteem, confidence and a love of learning.

Farm to Childcare program expands to 62 sites across Minnesota

Healthier, locally produced food on the menu for Minnesota children

MINNEAPOLIS – Beginning today, childcare centers throughout Minnesota are set to serve healthy, locally grown foods as part of a Farm to Childcare initiative—an innovative program designed in partnership between the Minnesota-based Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) and childcare provider New Horizon Academy (NHA).

The program began last year as a pilot project, designed to evaluate effectiveness at 14 childcare sites throughout the state. Now, after seeing great success, the Farm to Childcare program is expanding to 62 New Horizon Academy Centers throughout the Metro area and greater Minnesota, potentially reaching 7,500 children.

Healthy food from nearby farms combined with experiential learning opportunities, garden-based education and interactions with farmers connecting participating young children with how their food is grown. By the end of last year's pilot program, IATP found that 84 percent of participating children could correctly identify featured foods and 72 percent reported liking the local foods that were featured.

“We’re excited to see Farm to Childcare experience the same exponential growth we’ve seen in our Farm to School work,” said IATP’s Erin McKee VanSlooten. “Introducing young children to fresh, local foods and starting them on the path toward healthy eating habits just makes sense—kids love it, parents are happy, and our local farm economy retains more local dollars.”

Research shows children’s taste preferences are most actively developed between the ages of three and five. The childcare age is a golden opportunity to develop a taste for healthy foods and to help stave off childhood obesity and other diet-related diseases, some of the fastest growing public health concerns today.

“New Horizon Academy’s mission is to build the self-esteem and potential for the children in our care, and teaching healthy lifestyle choices is central to that goal. We believe our children are best served when they understand where their food is coming from and the critical role fruits, vegetables and other crops play in a healthy diet,”

said Cisa Keller, director of government and community relations for NHA. “Research shows that 90 percent of brain development happens in the first five years of a child’s life and we want to ensure that each child’s brain develops to its ultimate potential with engaged classrooms and healthy meals and snacks.”

“I loved the program, and my son loved it, too! He enjoyed the hands-on activities. And now he can point out healthy food choices and unhealthy food choices. As a parent, that is an important thing for your child to learn at such a young age,” said Renita Cyprian, parent at East St. Paul New Horizon Academy who participated in the pilot program.

IATP will be publishing a Farm to Childcare curriculum package, complete with teaching materials created with NHA and lessons learned from the pilot later this summer. IATP is working to grow farm to institution relationships in order to strengthen local food systems for farmers, communities and eaters.

This work has been funded in part by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota.

<30>