

# Thinking about your food? Workshops aim to bring issues to your attention

By Karen Knelsen

"Food security."

It's a phrase that is being used more often these days, and soon there will be a two-part workshop in Oliver aimed at explaining just what that means. "Food security is when everyone has access to food that has been produced through ways that are environmentally sound, and socially just," said Christine Schwarz, a community developer for Food Security BC's South Okanagan Similkameen branch.

The organizers of the workshop, which is called "Thought about Food!" are hoping that there are plenty of people in the community who will come out to talk about one of the things we can't live without. So far, their hopes seem fulfilled.

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**- Christine Schwarz**

"Oliver is hopping! We have over 20 people registered. People are really informed around and concerned of course about the situation. I think it's going to be a good event," said Schwarz.

The forums will focus around food - healthy food. They will be open to discussion on what food is nutritious, where to find it, and how to use it.

"The first part of the event will be about assessing what's working, and what's not working in regards to food," said Schwarz. "Once we have a list of what's working and what's not working, we'll then develop a list of the possible actions the community might want to take."

Schwarz said the meetings will be largely driven by those in attendance, with those who show up basically brainstorming those actions themselves.

"From that list it'll depend on what the group wants to do. We're not going to be presenting anything necessarily to the group, it's going to be the group driving the boat," she said.

The workshops have already been to a handful of communities in the South Okanagan and Similkameen. Schwarz said that what some communities end up doing is making a list of priority actions. Priority actions are things that address the most urgent needs based on feasibility. The groups vote on priorities.

"It will be a group decision depending on what the group wants to do. We may go into action planning or not."



Christine Schwarz teaches her four-year-old son, Sasha Purton, how to plant onions in their backyard in Pentiction. Schwarz is working with Food Security in the South Okanagan and Similkameen, holding workshops with local communities to discuss food security and ways to ensure that healthy, locally grown food is available for everyone. A workshop will be held in Oliver at the United Church on April 3.

to those who attend the workshops.

Identifiable causes for action steps are things like type-two diabetes, which has also been known as late-onset diabetes, and obesity rates.

Those sorts of medical problems are preventable, and one way to help prevent them is to eat more fruits and vegetables.

"Obesity rates in kids are rising," Schwarz said.

She believes type 2 diabetes could be eliminated completely if the population ate properly. The problem, and cause of the workshops, is that not enough people know what healthy food is, where to get it, or what to do with it.

"It's one thing to know how to grow your own food or where to go and buy it," said Schwarz. "It's another thing to know what kind of meals to make with the local food that still makes it interesting and enjoyable."

"The common threads I see already from the three forums we've already had are connective-ness - people feel that they're the only ones worried about this - information exchange, and children. There's a need for more information for children to learn about healthy eating and even growing their own food."

Pentiction and Summerland are two of the communities the "Thought about Food!" workshops have already visited - a direct result of consultation with public who came out for the forums has been the identified need for an internet website complete with lists of farmers with farm-gate sales, where to get local food, emergency food sources, an advice column, tips on growing your own food, and the 100 mile diet (a meal plan that uses only food sources located within a 100 mile radius).

Another thing Pentiction has implemented is a community garden - for people who don't have backyards to

suitable backyards for doing so. They can rent a piece of land from the community garden and grow their own vegetables and fruit if they want to - and it's not just about growing food. Friendships can bloom there too.

"That can be a real neat meeting place for expert gardeners as well as those who are just learning."

The workshops are funded by Interior Health through the Public Health Agency of Canada and hosted by the Pentiction and District Community Resources Society. They will run in Oliver on April 3 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the United Church.

