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**40 schools take part in the Alaska Farm to School Challenge**

(Fairbanks, AK) –Results are in for this year’s statewide Alaska Farm to School Challenge and they indicate that thousands of Alaska students engaged with their local food environment through a farm to school activity.

Students from 40 Alaska schools participated in projects that competed during the challenge, organized by the Division of Agriculture’s Farm to School Program. Projects included school gardens, local food production, cooking with local food, nutrition and healthy eating, and lessons about subsistence foods.

The state’s Farm to School Program encourages healthy eating and boost local agriculture sales while educating students about nutrition and the source of their food. The Alaska Farm to School Challenge ran from Oct. 1 to Oct. 31, in conjunction with National Farm to School Month.

“Educating our youth about the importance of making healthy food choices not only benefits this generation, but generations to come. Purchasing locally harvested and grown foods increases local demand, which increases production, and improves local food security. It is exciting to see this program take root in Alaska,” said Franci Havemeister, Division of Agriculture Director.

“Farm to School is a win-win-win for kids, farmers and communities,” says Anupama Joshi, executive director of National Farm to School Network. “Educating children about the origins of their food and providing them with healthy options helps instill good eating habits early in life. Buying direct from local farmers keeps 80-90 percent of each dollar in the farmers’ pocket, meaning more money stays in your community.”

During the challenge, 10,240 Alaska students engaged in an activity or event about local food and making healthy food choices. The first place winner this year was Louise’s Farm School in Palmer, which will get national and state recognition, an indoor growing station, and a school visit from the Alaska Farm to School staff.

Fourteen of the projects also took part in a national pledge campaign called “Farm to School Counts” during October. Participating schools were challenged to purchase local food and engage students in education activities related to food and agriculture.

For more information about National Farm to School Month or Farm to School Counts, visit [www.farmtoschoolmonth.org](http://www.farmtoschoolmonth.org).

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