

Issue # 7
October 14, 2008

FOCUS on Liquori and Associates, LLC

Liquori and Associates, LLC (L&A) is a consulting practice that works with public institutions and policy circles to solve problems that affect our nation's health. Our primary work addresses the needed transformation of food options available in public institutions and guiding change in the way Americans relate to healthy food.

As the directing partner of School Food FOCUS, L&A is responsible for direct oversight of the budget as well as the overall strategic planning and development of this initiative. Perhaps most importantly, L&A coordinates the work of all organizations involved with the aim of creating a collaborative approach across all program elements of School Food FOCUS. In addition, L&A plays a lead role in three program areas:

- (1) *School Food Learning Lab* – In this learning community, school districts will work with others to construct a supply-demand food analysis of current food purchasing practices. On the demand side—determining which foods, which supply chains, which commodities are now ‘in play’ in the school district with a view toward the actual and potential food supply of the region surrounding the school districts. The decision-making that emerges from this process is intended to raise the questions—How could we do this differently? What would it take? What are the constraints in our region? What are the opportunities in using the power of ‘Big City’ institutional demand to strengthen a more diversified and regional food supply.
- (2) *Policy Development and Advocacy* around the 2009 Child Nutrition Reauthorization and relevant 2008 Farm Bill implementation
- (3) *Education and Outreach* to help a variety of audiences better understand the operating realities of ‘Big City’ school meals, the current state of reform efforts undertaken by school districts, and nexus of school-food-health-agriculture-environment and economic issues.

Bios

Toni Liquori founded [Liquori & Associates, LLC](#) in 2006 in order to broaden the scope of her work beyond schools to other public institutions and organizations across the country working on the transition to a more sustainable food system. Developer of the CookShop™ Program and the SchoolFood Plus Initiative™, two successful programs in New York City that focus on the important connections among classroom education, school meals and regional farms, Toni brings years of experience with urban institutions and their challenges with implementing large-scale institutional change. A longtime faculty member of Teachers College at Columbia University, Toni continues to work with graduate students to deepen their understanding and engagement with nutrition reform. Working with the Sustainable Food Lab, she has also "translated" some of the most exciting institutional food procurement change models in Europe to practitioners in the United States.

Kathy Lawrence is the Program Director of School Food FOCUS. She has worked for nearly twenty years in sustainable agriculture, local food systems development, and non-profit management. Before serving as Executive Director of the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, Kathy directed Just Food, the New York City-based non-profit organization she founded in 1995, which fosters new marketing and food-growing opportunities that address the needs of regional, rural family farms, NYC community gardeners, and NYC communities. Her achievements at Just Food include initiating the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in NYC program and The City Farms urban agriculture and food access program. While developing the foundation for Just Food, Kathy coordinated public information, outreach and education for both the New York and Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Groups (SAWGs) and gathered considerable experience in citizen advocacy at the United Nations on sustainable agriculture and food security issues.

Claire Spencer's diverse background includes a BS in resource economics from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst as well as five years assisting small businesses in administrative, managerial, and fiscal roles. Her role as the Program Associate incorporates this skill set as an integral team member in the support and execution of School Food FOCUS.

Thomas Forster is the Policy Advisor for School Food FOCUS. (See Week in FOCUS, Issue # 3.) He is also with the International Partners for Sustainable Agriculture, serves as Policy Advisor for the Community Food Security Coalition and teaches food policy at the New School. Thomas has worked on farm to school policy and related issues in the 2002 Farm Bill, the 2004 Child Nutrition Reauthorization and the 2008 Farm Bill. He is working on a campaign related to coming debates at the UN on food security, climate change, nutrition and related issues in 2008-2009.

Sheilah Davidson, as Policy Associate to School Food FOCUS, will be coordinating all of the work of the Policy Working Groups and forging and maintaining relationships amongst all participants. She is also the Administrative Director of the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture. She has spent over twenty years as an activist. Her passion is working with organizations that support people in realizing self-determined solutions. She has a degree in Social Work from San Jose State University and has extensive administrative experience both as a program director and support person. Much of her education and experience is in leadership development and training, community organizing and fundraising, involving a broad range of issues.

Dorothy Brayley is the Manager of the School Food Learning Lab for School Food FOCUS. She will lead the co-creative process of identifying and implementing food changes within participating school districts. She comes to us as the Executive Director of Kids First and Chairwoman of Rhode Island Healthy Schools Coalition. Having honed her skills over the last decade in making change happen both at the school and statewide level, we could not be more thankful to bring her on board in developing this work in a collaborative model—merging the expertise of the school districts with the C.S. Mott Group and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation

Jed Wolkenbreit is the Vice-President of Liquori and Associates, LLC and its counsel. He brings a longstanding history in working with small businesses, an expertise in financial matters and the kind of patience that makes this work possible.