

BOOKS & BEETS



Hour photo/Erik Trautmann
Customers of the library's new CSA program, Kaitlyn Fitzpatrick and Andrew Fieffe, 10, pick up farm-fresh produce from Children's Circulation Supervisor, Laurie James, at the library Wednesday.

CSA brings farm-fresh produce to Library

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NORWALK — Norwalkers can now become members of Simpaug Farms's Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program and receive deliveries of farm-fresh produce at Norwalk Public Library each Wednesday through the fall.

Norwalk Library's new CSA pick-up program was spearheaded by Cynde Lahey, Programming Specialist at the library, and Vicki Oatis, the library's Director of Children's Services.

Part of the project's inspiration, Oatis said, was the difficulty she had when trying to find a CSA program around Norwalk to participate in.

"Speaking from personal experience, it's not easy to find CSA pickups in Norwalk," Oatis told The Hour. "The library is a place where we provide information, we provide access, and so what better place to offer something that's hard to find than at the library?"

After visiting several farms in the region, Lahey and Oatis decided to partner with Simpaug Farms.

Located on 250 acres near Suffield, but headquartered in Ridgefield, Simpaug is five years old: brand new, by farm standards.

"When they started, the land was not being farmed already, so they cleared it and started from scratch completely," said Megan Robertson, the farm's marketing and



Hour photo/Erik Trautmann
Children's Circulation Supervisor, Laurie James, waits for 34 registered customers of the library's new CSA program who pick up farm-fresh produce at the library Wednesday.

sales manager (and, sometimes, a farmer — the farm's operation is so small that all employees help with farm chores like picking berries, Robertson said).

Many small farms use CSA systems to allow community members to directly support the farm. For \$825, Norwalkers can purchase a "share" of Simpaug Farms that will

entitle them to a weekly delivery of fresh fruits, vegetables and eggs, harvested the same morning. (Half shares are also available, delivered every two weeks.)

The food items included in the deliveries vary based on seasonal availability. On June 23, members received kohlrabi, squash,

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squash bread.

When customers pick up their farm share at the library, they can also choose from a range of cookbooks chosen by Lahey and Oatis relevant to the week's selection of vegetables.

Robertson was impressed by the additional energy Lahey and Oatis

have put into the project.

"They've been really amazing," Robertson said. "They got out all their books about vegetables, they're talking to people, explaining things."

"They're really taking it a step further on their end," Robertson added. At the moment, the program has the capacity

to accommodate about 45 members, and spots filled quickly, according to Lahey.

So far, Robertson said, Norwalkers have been enthusiastic about the new program.

"People have been really excited about it, so it must be working," Robertson said with a laugh.