

**Dustin Jones**  
djones@greeleytribune.com

February 2, 2015

## Healthier Colorado connects Colorado schools and local farmers for childrens health



George Bonnell, 4, a student at ABC Preschool, paints a shed for the Food to School program Monday at the Greeley Evans School-District 6 Service Center. The event was held to promote the idea of serving more locally grown food in school lunch programs.

For more

For more information on the Farms to School program visit [www.coloradofarmentoschool.org/](http://www.coloradofarmentoschool.org/)

If you wish to support Healthier Colorado and their bill, HB15-1088, [click here](#) and sign the petition.

It was Monday — a time for important thought for local preschoolers busying themselves with painting a shed or drawing barn animals.

“What kind of vegetable would you be?”

While George Bonnell, 4, and other children pondered the answers at the Greeley-Evans School District 6 Service Center, team members from Healthier Colorado explained the importance of bringing healthy meals into schools using locally grown foods to their parents, hoping that they would sign their petition to put a bill into place to help farmers provide locally grown food for Colorado schools.

Healthier Colorado, a nonprofit that focuses on health related policy changes, began a statewide tour Monday to help bring healthy foods to Colorado schools while promoting business to local farmers. Healthier Colorado and the Farm to School Task Force encouraged residents to sign a petition to help pass House Bill 15-1088, which will help put locally grown foods in Colorado schools.

The bill would help farmers overcome two predominant obstacles that prevent many of them from selling their products to Colorado schools. Local farmers say they find it difficult to compete with the prices of the larger food companies that traditionally sell their products to schools. They also say they can't afford extensive food safety measures required in schools.

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The bill would fund a grant program to help pay for certain safety measures and allow farmers to sell their products at more competitive prices. "They already know how to grow the food, they need help getting it safely to the schools," said Jake Williams, executive director of Healthier Colorado.

The grant program would provide a total of \$1 million in assistance for farmers per year for five years. Each farmer could receive a maximum grant of \$30,000 per year. The value of the grant would vary depending on the producers' financial needs.

"Every farm of any size will be eligible for the grant," said Williams.

Colorado is often regarded as one of the healthiest states in the union though, according to statistics provided by the National Survey of Children's Health, about 25 percent of Colorado's youth are obese or overweight. Schools that serve locally grown goods are 14 percent less to have obese students, said Joel Swanson, also with Healthier Colorado.

The Healthier Colorado tour also will head to Alamosa, Salida, Montrose and Colorado Springs to continue to raise awareness for their program and the bill.

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