



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Local Farm Partnership Brings Fresh Beef to Warren County Schools

McMinnville, Tenn., March 28, 2025 - Warren County Schools has beefed up lunch menus this school year through a new community partnership. Thanks to a collaboration between the district's School Nutrition Department and Barton Creek Farms, students at Warren County High School, Warren County Middle School, West Elementary, Eastside Elementary, and Dibrell Elementary are enjoying locally sourced, farm-fresh beef in their lunches as part of a pilot program.

The initiative, spearheaded by Terri Mullican, Director of School Nutrition, has already shown great promise in its first few months. The partnership with Barton Creek Farms, located in Rock Island, Tennessee, ensures that the beef served is not only local to Warren County but of the highest quality. Barton Creek Farms specializes in farm-to-fork beef, with grass-fed and grain-finished cattle. Each calf is born and raised in Rock Island and goes through USDA-inspected processing, ensuring it meets the strictest safety and quality standards.

"When the opportunity arose to provide fresh, local beef, we knew it was a no-brainer," said Mullican. "The fact that it's a product from right here in our community makes it even more special. We can't wait to implement it district-wide."

Barton Creek Farms delivers fresh ground beef to the district monthly, and the nutrition department incorporates it into homemade recipes such as lasagna, meatloaf, chili, and tacos. As of now, the beef is being served at five schools, but the ultimate goal is to expand the program to all ten lunch-serving schools in the district.

The pilot program originated from a conversation between Mary Roller of Barton Creek Farms and Mullican. Roller, recognizing the farm's potential to support local schools, reached out to gauge the district's interest in serving local beef to students. Around the same time, a Warren County school board member contacted Mullican to share information about a similar partnership in neighboring Dekalb County, which helped push the initiative forward.

The timing worked in the district's favor, as the nutrition department was able to fund the purchase of the beef using existing resources, eliminating the need for additional funding. Now that the pilot program is enjoying a successful run, the department has budgeted to extend the partnership district-wide for the 2025-26 school year.

Dr. Grant Swallows, Director of Schools, praised the program's economic approach to student nutrition. "This pilot is a perfect example of how we can use local resources to continue providing nutritious, healthy meals for our students," he said. "We are grateful for partnerships

like this one that benefit both our students and our local community. We always strive to support our local businesses when we can because our community is so good to us.”

In addition to working with Warren County Schools, Barton Creek Farms also partners with local restaurants to offer farm-fresh beef on their menus. The farm's offerings include ground beef, steaks, roasts, and custom cuts by the quarter, half, or whole cow, meeting diverse consumer needs.

As the program continues to grow, the district hopes to expand its focus on farm-to-school meals, benefiting students' health and connecting them to the agricultural roots of the community.

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