

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

TJ TYLER- Farm Operations Manager

Farming – *Good Food, Good Cause*

Freshwise Farms opened in 2002 as a "social enterprise" of the Rochester-based food bank Foodlink. Unlike other divisions of Foodlink, Freshwise was intended to grow pesticide-free hydroponic greens and vegetables for sale to the general public, rather than distributed to Foodlink's partner agencies. The profits on the venture are passed on to Foodlink to support its larger mission of eradicating hunger in the 10 counties that it serves here in Western New York. Freshwise Farms produces almost an acre of hydroponic greens year-round in its greenhouse, offering retailers, restaurants, and consumers access to some of the freshest salad greens imaginable.

I am pleased to present some exciting new changes that will be taking place at the farm. The farms main focus has been the production of high-quality greens and vegetables with the goal of providing fresh, local, healthy, food for the community. Although this will remain one of our primary goals, this winter we will be transitioning our product line and infrastructure to meet a new sustainable, vision and mission. These new initiatives include creating a sustainable growing medium and building an educational, living work space for our community.

Poor nutrition and obesity have become a public health crisis as we increased our consumption of over-processed nutrient void foods. To combat this many Americans increasingly demand to know the source of their food, growing techniques, and nutritive value. Freshwise Farms is committed to being part of the solution and is launching Farm-based education and Farm-to-School initiatives. Freshwise will partner with local schools to educate children about the sources of their food and prepare them as future stewards of the land that provides it. On-site educational facilities at small-scale local farms are becoming a common destination for classroom field trips and educational workshops. We will be transitioning a portion of a greenhouse to accommodate a classroom for student groups to learn about farming and healthy choices. In addition, this winter we will be transitioning from our hydroponic growing system to an organic, soil-based growing system. This change will enable us to use organic compost that is produced on site at Freshwise, replacing synthetic chemical fertilizers. This change will allow us to become a more sustainable and environmentally friendly farm, as well as grow organically. We plan on joining local farmers in the New York State Farmers Pledge at the beginning of our new growing season in April 2011. As mentioned, our onsite composting will continue with our collaboration with Wegmans grocery stores where we pick up over 3000 pounds of pre-consumer compost a week!

In addition, are Farm to cafeteria program is taking off with 3 additional public schools requesting fresh , local greens and vegetable into the lunch menu!