



Dear [INSERT NAME OF MEDIA CONTACT HERE],

I hope you will consider developing a feature on a new health-care-based movement in the U.S. that is enabling those who are hospitalized to eat healthier, thus reducing return visits to the hospital, and is supporting the livelihood of local farmers and food producers.

Fletcher Allen Health Care in Burlington, Vt., Hospital Sisters Health System in Springfield, Ill., and our own MaineGeneral here in Augusta, Maine are a few of the hospitals and health care systems on the cutting edge of **servicing locally-produced foods to patients**.

MaineGeneral, one of the first in Maine to institute such a program, works with local farmers to source in-season fruits and vegetables, breads and oatmeal, milk, sour cream, meats, herbs and more which are then used in prepared meals served to patients as well as those that dine in its cafeterias.

Providing access to these farm-to-table, nutrient-dense foods supports economic development in the local community, lessens the hospital's carbon footprint, and combats poor eating habits including reliance on processed foods. This is particularly important in Maine, where 65 percent of the population is obese or overweight.

The program has been growing in scope every year. MaineGeneral purchased 16.5 tons of local foods in fiscal year 2012 only to increase that amount to 17.5 tons the following fiscal year.

It also constructed a specially-designed kitchen space in the state-of-the-art, \$312 million Alford Center for Health, slated to open November 9, to ensure local produce is handled safely. It includes a cold prep room, allowing for the safe preparation of temperature-sensitive items, and an X-Green™ System that automatically injects a wash solution into a cold, agitated bath, removing 99.9 percent of the harmful bacteria that cause foodborne illnesses. It is an entire food safety program, complete with reporting and traceability features.

If you are interested in pursuing this angle, I would be happy to put you in contact with those at MaineGeneral in charge of the program as well as the farmers (many of them are young and very passionate about what they do) that are supplying the food items. Let me know what you think.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Boes
Nancy Marshall Communications