Overview:

We believe that the connection between students at Luther College and the Decorah community should be stronger. Bringing a farmers market to campus one time in autumn would foster this connection—providing students with access to local, fresh food and conversation with those who produced it. What began as a project in an Environmental Philosophy class turned into plans for a farmers market on campus, a concept which would benefit both the Luther College students, faculty, and staff, and the Decorah community at large.

Background:

Decorah is host to the Winneshiek county Farmer’s Market that runs from May 1st to October 30th, on Wednesdays from 3-6pm and Saturdays from 8-11am. This market draws to up to 40 vendors who sell produce, crafts, meats, dairy, and crafts. Season changes affect the items available at the market. The early season brings asparagus, spinach, root vegetables, meat, flowers, baked goods, jewelry, and crafts. Mid season is filled with fresh tomatoes, berries, greens, cheese, honey, baked goods, and other things. The late fall season is amass with such things as harvest apples, pears, vegetables. Special indoor markets occur in November and December. These markets are held in the recycling center parking lot by the Decorah elementary school. To our knowledge, the farmer’s market has never occurred on the Luther College campus.

Proposal:
We recognized the importance and the need for Luther students and faculty to understand the direct connection and relationship to their food and the producers of their food, and this lead us to the idea of bringing the farmer’s market to campus. We began this process by visiting the market and getting into contact with Steve McCargar, the Winnesheik Farmer’s Market coordinator. We were in continual contact with him throughout the planning of the market. Steve communicated with the producers to see if there was any interest in moving the market to Luther for one day. 9 vendors were willing to move their stands to Luther and we arranged a date. Next, we talked to Luther’s Security about preparing an area for the market and determined that the library lot would be the best place to host the market. They agreed to block off a portion of the parking lot so the vendors would have space to set up their stands. After the location was established, we talked to Trish Neubauer, Luther coordinator of student activities, and reserved a poster for the week prior to the market so students and faculty would know about the market. We also created an informational poster about the market, had it approved by Trish Neubauer, and put them all around campus. To further increase the publicity of the farmer’s market, we talked to our classmates and sent emails out to our professors to forward them off to their students and other faculty. Unfortunately, the morning of the market was very cold and rainy and Steve called to cancel the market. Some vendors had already canceled their appearance because of the rain and cold. This was a frustrating thing to have happen, but the work we did to prepare for this market makes it much easier to hold one in the future.

Our hope for the future is to educate more students about the Farmer’s Market and the importance of local food. If we were to continue on with this project, we would plan to have a Farmers Market in the Dahl Centennial Union. This would be an easy way to gain awareness of local food, while also providing students with tasty homegrown and homemade foods. In order to plan a Farmers Market in the Union, we would first contact Steve McCargar, coordinator of the Winnesheik Farmers Market, and also Trish Neubauer at Luther College, who would help us make the Union available as a possible location for the Farmer’s Market.

If we were to still continue on with this project, we would try to permanently move the
Farmer’s Market to Luther College on Wednesday afternoons when school is in session. We think this could be beneficial not only for the students and staff at Luther College, but also for the farmers. It would be easy for staff and faculty to stop by the farmers market before they go home, so the farmers would get a wider range of customers. Maren Stumme-Diers is very interested in doing something like this, so we would first get in contact with her, as she could facilitate us in getting this part of the project going. There is a lot we could do with the Farmer’s Market, but we think it is most important to get student awareness. We believe the easiest way in doing that is to bring the Farmer’s Market to Luther College.

**Rationale:**

Both the Luther College community and the larger Decorah community would benefit if a local farmer’s market could take place at Luther College. We believe it is important to become more knowledgeable about the interconnectedness of the source of our food for the health and livelihood of our college and town community.

The students, faculty, and staff at the college would benefit by having direct access to fresh, local, and healthy produce and goods by having the opportunity to develop a new relationship with a member of the community, by being able to attend the market without needing to leave campus or use transportation, and by being able to provide a direct source of income for farmers and producers who are doing sustainable and responsible work in our area.

The Decorah community would benefit as the customer base for the farmers market would increase to include students and faculty at Luther College who would supply them both the funds to make it economically worthwhile, as well as a much-needed connection between producer and consumer.

**Contact Information:**

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