Food for Thought Film Series focuses on local and sustainable eats

By Pamela Powers
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In the film "Dirty Work," Don Roberts the then owner of Elsie's Farm in Ridgeland says there needs to be thousands of community supported agriculture farms growing organic food for their local communities.

The film follows Roberts and co-owner Joni Cash as the farm operates for a year from planting until harvest. In the film Roberts talks about the importance of the circle of farming from planting the seeds, to harvest and then dropping off the vegetables to those who bought shares in the community supported agriculture.

To him it was important to know who grew the food and who ate the food.

"Dirty Work" was shown recently at the Mabel Tainter Center for the Arts as part of the Films & Resources for Encouraging Sustainability & Health Food for Thought film series. The series is focuses on sustainable and local food. The eight-week series started in October and runs through Nov. 29.

Movies still scheduled include "Ingredients," a documentary on the importance of eating locally and how restaurants are incorporating local food. The movie will show on Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. at UW-Eau Claire's Hibbard Hall Room 100.

On Tuesday, Nov. 22 the movie "Lunch Line" will be shown at 6:30 p.m. at the same location. The movie addresses the USDA's relationship with the school lunch program and how public and private interests have impacted it.

The final show in the series is "Terra Madre," a documentary on an international organization promoting local farming communities and sustainable agriculture. It shows at UW-Eau Claire Davies Theatre at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 29.

After the showing of "Dirty Work," four of the people who worked at Elsie's Farm talked about the impact of working there had on their lives and how they still continue to eat organic.
Arthur Kneeland, who is now a lecturer at UW-Stout, said one of the issues facing America is people only spend 10 percent of their income on food and tend not to value their food as much as they do electronic gadgets.

Shopping locally and buying food produced locally will benefit the local economy, he pointed out.

Deb Wallwork, who produced "Dirty Work," said she believes there needs to be more awareness of local growers and the nutritional and tasty food they are growing. There is a gap between growers and the actual marketing of the homegrown food that needs to be addressed.

Roberts and Cash ended up selling Elsie's Farm, but now operate Otter Creek Growers in the town of Otter Creek still creating locally grown vegetables.