



CARLTON COUNTY

P.O. Box 220 • 301 Walnut Avenue, Room 103 • Carlton, MN 55718

October 10, 2014

Paul Brinkman
Northeast Service Cooperative
5525 Emerald Avenue
Mt. Iron, MN 55768

Dear Mr. Brinkman,

We are writing on behalf of the Carlton County Wellness Committee, with the unanimous support of the Carlton County Board of Commissioners. The committee works to promote health and well being for the employees of Carlton County. We are contacting you to explore the potential of expanding our current wellness benefits to include membership with a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) vegetable box program. There are lifelong benefits to families when they receive a box of fresh, locally grown vegetables from a local farm. A variety of studies demonstrate CSA membership increases the variety and quantity of vegetables consumed. CSA farms are also an important model for supporting the socio-economical health of our farm economy.

A variety of health plans and employers now encourage CSA participation as a means to improve employee health. Maine Health (ME), Physicians Plus (WI), Unity Health (WI), and Health Tradition (MN, WI and IA) are examples of health insurance and health coverage plans providing CSA rebates or including CSA's as part of their wellness initiatives. Health Partners (MN) includes a CSA in their Healthy Discounts program.

One of the biggest roadblocks to the establishment of a CSA wellness initiative is criteria demonstrating CSA experience in growing and working with customers. We are excited to share that this criteria and a review process has been established in our region. The criteria and review process is carried out by the Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association and has been enclosed for your information.

We are hoping together our organizations can establish a similar initiative for our employees in 2015. A survey conducted of Carlton County employees in April 2013 revealed a favorable response to having CSA membership included as a wellness rebate in our health care plan. Please let us know how I can be of assistance in your discussions with Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Minnesota as we solidify our health insurance plan in the near future.

Sincerely,

Dick Brenner, Chair
Carlton County Board of Commissioners

Dennis Genereau
Carlton County Wellness Committee Member

C: Jamie Harvie
Institute for a Sustainable Future

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