

# NORTHWEST HERALD

## **Loyola campus digs into organic, local food**

By Patrick Mason

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Eating local and organic food is all the rage and Loyola University Chicago Retreat and Ecology Campus in Woodstock plans to take advantage of that.

The Retreat and Ecology Campus will hold five food-related events this summer, focusing on the importance of locally grown and organic food.

“It’s part of our mission,” said Amanda Hitterman, director of campus operations. “We want it to be a place for the community to come and visit. We want to be a good neighbor and show people what we’re doing.”

The campus boasts a sustainable agriculture program highlighted by a two-and-a-half acre garden that will supply the events with fresh-grown vegetables. The garden also supplies dining services and meals that Loyola’s summer program offers.

In one event, participants will create a unique menu and prepare a meal based on the seasonal crop they will pick straight from the garden.

Other events will allow participants to enjoy a meal prepared by chefs while dining in the garden, take tours of the garden after an interactive cooking class, and meet campus farmers and other local farmers.

This summer marks the first year that Loyola is holding such a series of events and the second year the garden has been in use. The events are the brainchild of executive chef Scott Commings and campus farmers in an attempt to show that eating locally and sustainably is possible.

“That is the way it needs to be,” Commings said. “We are getting away from the grand scale food system ... We want to show people what they can do to support them.”

The events are meant to be interactive with an informational aspect. Most meals are paired with wine and organizers envision participants engaging in conversation while enjoying good food.

“This has always been a passion of mine,” Commings said. “It’s a lot more fun to cook with healthy and great food, than normal everyday food. It’s such a better, wholesome way to go about things and it’s fulfilling to me.”

Those interested can find the list of events at [luc.edu/retreatcampus](http://luc.edu/retreatcampus). Click on the ‘specialty classes and dinners tab on the right to find registration information and a summary of each event.