

Nicole Stephens: Eco Warrior and Farmers Mate!



Paige Koschitzke, Locky White, Michala Ballentine,
Natalie Heagney, Lilli Hamilton-Cronin,
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Brocklesby Public School

Creative Catchment Kids

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of the Murray Darling Association and Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between the Local Land Services and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to agriculture and natural resource management issues.

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants. www.wirraminna.org

Murray Darling Association

The Murray Darling Association has membership of over 100 Local Government councils in the Murray-Darling Basin, as well as community groups, businesses and individuals with an interest in ensuring that the Basin continues as a valuable asset for all Australians. Since 1950, the Association has initiated various school and community education programs on managing the Basin's land and water resources. www.mda.asn.au



Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area. www.envirostories.com.au

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Local Land Heroes

In 2014, students involved in the **Creative Catchment Kids** program researched and wrote stories about 'Local Land Heroes' - people, businesses or industries who contribute to productive agriculture and healthy environments along the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers. The program was generously funded by Murray Local Land Services and Riverina Local Land Services.

Local Land Heroes acknowledges the United Nations
2014 International Year of Family Farming.
www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/en/



Local Land Heroes is part of Enviro-Stories, a Peekdesigns education program.



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Nicole was born on the 10th of February 1966 in Windsor, New South Wales. She currently lives on a farm near Beechworth, Victoria. She is passionate about our environment. Nicole feels strongly about sustainable living and believes that buying produce locally and supporting local producers is a great start. The benefits to supporting our local producers are that we get to eat fresh and seasonal.



Nicole says that supporting our local producers ensures food security for our local area, meaning that we are not dependent on having food transported into our region. Buying local reduces the amount of petrol used for transporting. Unlike when you buy from the supermarket, the produce from there often travels many kilometres using many resources to get it there.



V's





Nicole is passionate about our local food economy and helps to reduce our environmental impact by fostering local farmer's markets. Buying fresh and local reduces our ecological footprint. Nicole has always bought her food and groceries direct from farmers. Farmers markets are a great way for the shopper to buy direct from the farmers too.



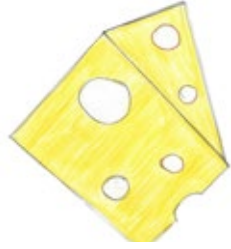
Farmers markets are where the farmers can sell their produce. It is great for the farmers as they get to be the price makers instead of price takers. That means they set the price of their produce, not the supermarkets setting it. Somehow the price of produce at the Farmers Market often seems to be cheaper than at the supermarket.



Six years ago Nicole started working at the markets as a volunteer where she helped out at the breakfast stall with her daughter. Two years later she was employed by the Hume Murray Food Bowl to organise and run the Albury Wodonga Farmers Markets. Nicole works hard to help the farmers who want to sell their produce in the markets.



Her role requires her to communicate between local councils and the local farmers to make sure that the Farmers Markets run smoothly. She also discusses any up and coming special events or themes that are important to the local area that could be then incorporated into the Farmers Markets.



On a Saturday morning when the markets are on, Nicole is up about 5:30 in the morning. She makes sure that the producers have all the right gear and are conforming to health regulations. Nicole is there till the end which is 12pm. It is then that she makes sure everything is packed away and locked up.

A GROWING MARKET



IT'S ON WALLACE

MORE and more shoppers are heading to farmers' markets for supplies of fresh vegies, meat and bread, according to a recent national survey.

The new consumer research shows where Australians typically shop for their fresh vegetables and the results may surprise mainstream fresh food retailers.



Farmers' market tips

- Arrive early to get the best selection of produce — some stallholders sell out early.
- Walk around the market before you buy, to see what's available and to compare prices and quality.
- Each month you will find different fruits and vegetables according to the season.
- If you don't know what something is

ABOVE: Nicole Stephens says the Murrumbidgee Farmers Market in Havelock Park has been a great success.

Survey shows community markets, municipal markets and wholesale markets offering retail sales access. Ms Adams says there are more than 150 best practice farmers' markets trading regularly in all states.



There is a lot of travel involved in Nicole's job for conferences and meetings. She does all of the marketing for the markets, to advertise when and where the Farmers Markets will be on. There are many emails to attend and websites to update. Marketing is also important to encourage new farmers to come and sell their produce at the markets.



Nicole is employed 20 hours per week but she volunteers an additional 10 hours every week because it takes that much time to be so committed to do her job.

Nicole has had many fun experiences working in her role. One of the highlights for her has been starting up a new Farmers Markets, called the 'Murray Riverina Farmers Markets'.



This market is slightly different as it is held on a Thursday night and sells street food as well as produce. At one of these markets they celebrated Harmony Day. They had Bhutanese dancers, bands, Cuban Salsa dancers, Mexican and Bangladeshi food. Once, they had a pig come on a lead which was to promote animal rights. Everyone loved that!



In the time it took to write this book Nicole had moved on from her position with the Hume Murray Food Bowl. Now she is starting up another Farmers Market. She is also establishing a consulting business to assist communities wanting to establish Farmers Markets. Again she will be supporting new producers to become stall holders at farmers markets.

Nicole is currently Chair of the Albury Wodonga Food Alliance which works alongside of Community Health and councils to network all of the Community Gardens and Local Food Economy projects, businesses and not-for-profit organisations. We're looking forward to what this amazing woman does next as we will all reap the benefits, consumers and farmers alike!



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2014 Year 5 and 6, Brocklesby Public School



Local Land
Services
Murray



Local Land
Services
Riverina



Australian Government