

## Media Relations

### Carsey Researcher Explores Food "Landscape" Of Northern N.H.

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DURHAM, N.H. – “Eat your veggies” might be easier advice to swallow in Nashua or Manchester than Berlin or Gorham. Accompanied by the steady drumbeat of awareness of healthy eating, a University of New Hampshire doctoral student has explored the availability of fresh food in New Hampshire’s North Country. In a new brief from UNH’s Carsey Institute, Jennifer Esala, a Ph.D. candidate in sociology, finds that the food landscape in parts of rural northern New Hampshire is “dismal.”

“Because of both cost and accessibility, eating a healthy diet is more difficult for residents of Berlin and Gorham than for those in most other parts of New Hampshire,” says Esala. For this brief, she interviewed 18 families in Berlin and Gorham, two of the North Country’s largest towns; conducted a “market basket” analysis of food prices at three area grocery stores; and analyzed additional statewide and national data.

Among the findings in the brief, called “How Far Would You Drive for Fresh Food? How Some Rural New Hampshire Residents Navigate a Dismal Food Landscape”:

- Healthy produce is especially inaccessible to North Country residents. Berlin and Gorham residents are less likely to eat fruits, vegetables or salad than those in the rest of New Hampshire, and those interviewed reported that poor-quality, spoiled produce is a serious problem.
- Those interviewed with low incomes, and in particular single mothers, were most seriously affected by the limited selection, low quality, and inconsistent availability of fresh foods.
- To secure higher-quality foods, some of those interviewed traveled up to an hour to buy groceries, shopped at multiple food stores, or grew their own produce.
- Despite nutritional value that many said was lacking, school lunches were a vital source of affordable food for families.


A new farmer’s market in Berlin, which opened in summer 2010 after the interviews were conducted, brought hope to many residents, although they were concerned about affordability and wondered about the possibility of using food-assistance cards, such as WIC or SNAP, with vendors. “The excitement generated by the farmer’s market indicates an unmet need in the community,” says Esala, adding that other food innovations, like traveling produce trucks, might fare well in rural locations.


“That families in Berlin and Gorham are limiting fresh food points to not only the critical importance of food affordability but also to the critical importance of the quality of that food,” Esala says.


The brief is available to download here: <http://carseyinstitute.unh.edu/CarseySearch/search.php?id=153>  
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The Carsey Institute conducts policy and applied research on vulnerable families and on sustainable community development, giving policy makers and practitioners the timely, independent resources they need to effect change in their communities. Learn more at <http://carseyinstitute.unh.edu/>.

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