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ARMED AUTHORITIES RAID FAMILY FARM Ohio Dept of Agriculture Traumatizes Women and Small Children

December 15, 2008--Washington, DC—Using tactics normally reserved for drug dealers, a heavily armed team raided an Ohio family farmhouse on December 1, 2008. Agents herded women and children, the only family members home at the time, into the living room and held them there for eight hours while they ransacked the premises and seized belongings, including food, computers and records. The head of the household, John Stowers was not there at the beginning of the raid. His son, Chad Stowers, who also helps run the co-op is a Navy Seabee currently serving our country in Iraq.

The Stowers family are sheep farmers and operate Manna Storehouse, an organic food buying cooperative just outside of Cleveland. The agents confiscated one year's worth of family food, food purchased for co-op members, computers and all business records.

The agents possessed a search warrant similar to that used for drug dealers, giving them permission to take anything and everything. The affidavit authorizing the warrant cited the Stowers for operating a retail food establishment without a license, in violation of Ohio Revised Code 3717.21.

According to Maurice Thompson, Director of the 1851 Constitutional Law Center at the nonprofit Buckeye Institute, exemptions do exist to the code, and they do apply to Manna Storehouse. "Even if these exemptions don't apply to Manna Storehouse," said Thompson, "the co-op has the right to operate without a retail license because it is a buying club not a selling operation. If the state of Ohio doesn't return the food taken in the raid, it will have engaged in a taking of perfectly legitimate private property, that could have been used by the Stowers to feed their family of 12, without any compensation at all."

Farm buying clubs and co-ops have become more numerous as the 'buy local' trend has become popular and more consumers seek to support sustainable agriculture. Fresh food farmed using traditional methods like pasture grazing, composting and manure fertilizer can be more expensive than conventional groceries. Buying clubs help families obtain nutritious food at considerable savings over retail establishments.

According to Sally Fallon Morell, president of the Weston A. Price Foundation, "Authorization of the raid at Manna Storehouse reflects emerging bureaucratic hostility to the dynamics of direct-farm sales. The state has violated not only the rights of Manna Storehouse farmers but also of the co-op's consumer members."



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Local chapters of the Weston A. Price Foundation promote farm-to-consumer direct trade, which often takes the form of private farm buying clubs or co-ops, such as Manna Storehouse. Volunteer local chapter leaders help their neighbors find sources of locally produced farm fresh food. Numerous members of the Manna Storehouse co-op are also Weston A. Price members or followers of the Weston A. Price Foundation's nutritional advice.

Because of increasing tensions around the country between farmers and regulators, the Foundation launched the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund in July, 2007. The Fund promotes and protects farmers' rights to sell farm foods and raw milk directly to the consumer.

The Weston A. Price Foundation is a nutrition education non-profit (501c3) which advocates a return to nutrient-dense foods and a diet rich in animal fats from grass-fed animals. Sally Fallon Morell, the founder and president, is a highly respected consumer advocate for natural, whole foods and small-scale, mixed-species, pasture-based farms. The Weston Price Foundation actively promotes grass-fed meats, pasture raised chickens, eggs, fermented vegetables, organ meats and raw milk for their nutritional benefits.

Grass-fed animal foods contain higher levels of nutrients, especially the fat-soluble vitamins A, D and K, and will not contain the contaminants routinely found in the products of industrial agriculture. Compared to pasteurized milk, raw milk is easier to digest and less likely to cause allergies; its nutrients are more bio-available.

The organization has 10,500 members worldwide, and 400 local chapters, 17 of which are in Ohio. The Foundation is named for Dr. Weston A. Price, DDS, author of the nutritional classic, Nutrition and Physical Degeneration. The Foundation offices are in Washington, DC. Their websites are: www.westonaprice.org, and <http://www.realmilk.com/>.

Contact:

Kimberly Hartke
Weston A. Price Foundation Publicist &
Volunteer Chapter Leader for Reston, VA
home office 703-860-2711
cell 703-675-5557
kimberly@hartkeonline.com