



Sylvia Burgos Toftness, Interim Executive Director  
Farm Table Foundation, Amery, WI  
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The Board of Directors of the Farm Table Foundation, Amery, WI, has decided to reshape the organization's strategic direction to better advance its mission and streamline operations.

Former Executive Director Laura Phoenix has resigned for a position in the Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN, metro area. "We appreciate the commitment and service Laura provided, and we wish her well," said Peter Henry, President of the Board and a co-founder of the Foundation. The Foundation has hired Sylvia Burgos Toftness as Interim Executive Director to initiate the organization's strategic reshaping.

"In the last two years, COVID significantly changed people's buying habits and the ways we interact at work, in schools, and recreation," said Henry. The Foundation and its nonprofit restaurant were also hit by impassable streets and sidewalks during nine months of road reconstruction directly in front of its building.

"We are very proud of the ways the Foundation pivoted in these challenging times," Henry explained. "Restaurant staff created products to meet the demand for curbside pickup, "take-and-bake" meals, and a range of cooking staples. At the same time, our classes moved from in-person to online platforms.

Despite these innovative shifts, "We concluded we had to change to continue advancing our mission, address budget gaps and thrive. We are deeply grateful to the donors, staff and volunteers, teachers and students, and community for their contributions and good will," said Henry. "We value and want their partnerships as we move forward."

To that end, the Farm Table Foundation will focus its resources around its popular restaurant and grow from that core. "Now, more than ever, people want to know the people, practices and stories behind their food. Our aim is to help visitors connect the dots between what they eat, how it's grown, and the unique qualities of our area," said Henry.

Burgos Toftness brings a deep understanding and appreciation for Farm Table's history, the local agricultural scene, and the challenges of organizational change," said Henry. She and her husband David Toftness own and operate Bull Brook Keep, their grass-fed, grass-finished beef farm in nearby Clear Lake, WI.

"The Farm Table Foundation is unique in our region," said Burgos Toftness. "It has fostered an outstanding nonprofit restaurant that is so much more than a great place to eat," she said. "Every dish and beverage demonstrates a series of tight relationships between ingredient and farming practice, nutrition, excellent meal preparation and their impact on the environment and local economy." During the growing season, the restaurant sources 80 percent of its ingredients from sustainable farms within 40 miles.

"Our aim is to make these connections even more evident going forward," she said. Prior to farming, Burgos Toftness had a long career in public relations serving for-profit businesses and nonprofit organizations in manufacturing, government, organic farming and philanthropy. A former member of the Farm Table Foundation Board of Directors, she currently serves on the boards of the Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association and the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Services organization.