At the Cleveland Clinic, those efforts have included purchasing more locally grown food, which is marked in the cafeteria with signs identifying the farm

Want some fresh apples grown in Rittman?

Try visiting the cafeteria at the Cleveland Clinic.

The Cleveland-based health-care giant is among a couple of hundred hospitals nationwide in recent years to embrace local, nutritious and sustainable foods.

For the past year, the Cleveland Clinic and several of its affiliated regional hospitals have been following the "Healthy Food in Health Care Pledge," a program developed by Health Care Without Harm.

The nonprofit group is an international coalition of hospital and health-care systems, medical professionals and others working "to implement ecologically sound and healthy alternatives to health-care practices that pollute the environment and contribute to disease."

The Healthy Food in Health Care Pledge calls for hospitals to use more locally grown food, work with vendors to obtain products free of pesticides and hormones, purchase more organic foods, educate the community about nutritious and "socially just" foods, minimize or reuse food waste, use ecologically protective food packaging and support humane agriculture systems.

At the Cleveland Clinic, those efforts have included purchasing more locally grown food, which is marked in the cafeteria with signs identifying the farm, said Christina Vernon, the Cleveland Clinic's senior director for sustainability and environmental strategy.

On a recent afternoon, for instance, apples were available in the cafeteria from Rittman Orchards.

Some other examples of the Cleveland Clinic's efforts include:

• Gardens at Huron, Fairview and Lutheran hospitals, with food used in the cafeterias and shared with local residents.

• Farmer's markets at the main campus, Huron and Hillcrest hospitals and the Solon Family Health Center.

• Labels to mark healthy foods and the calories in products.

• Use of more reusable products and fewer Styrofoam items.

In addition, the main campus has started a composting program for pre-consumer kitchen scraps, such as carrot tops and peels and coffee grounds.

About 1,500 pounds of food waste is collected each week and shipped to a local worm farm, where the worms turn it into fertilizer, Vernon said.

Not only is the project good for the environment, she said, it also saves money. The Cleveland Clinic spends less transporting the food waste to the worm farm than it would cost to send it to a landfill.

The Cleveland Clinic plans to eventually roll out these initiatives and others at all of its regional hospitals, including Medina Hospital, Vernon said.

"It's an approach that we're taking toward food that's all-encompassing," she said. "The nice thing about the pledge is it helps us hold ourselves accountable to making progress."