

Growing Healthy Food Systems from the Ground Up

Central Appalachian Network

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Participant List

Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACEnet)

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The Appalachian Center for Economic Networks, which is more commonly known as “ACEnet”, is a nonprofit economic development and business support organization located in southeastern Ohio. Since its incorporation in 1985, ACEnet has been working to build the capacity of Appalachian communities to network, collaborate, and innovate to create a dynamic sustainable regional economy with opportunities for all.

ACEnet provides services to small businesses, including start-ups, primarily in the food, agriculture, artisan and wood sectors, giving priority to those who are lower income and residing in Appalachian Ohio. Sustainable food-related services include a kitchen incubator with a 12,000 square foot shared use manufacturing facility; experienced staff to assist with the development, production and marketing of value-added agricultural products; and collaborative work with Community Food Initiatives to expand access to fresh produce through community gardening and gleaning projects.

Appalachian Nutrition Network (ANN)

Beth Castner

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<http://appalachiannutritionnetwork.wordpress.com/>

The Appalachian Nutrition Network (ANN) is a non-profit organization born out of the need to feed at-risk children in the Appalachian counties in both Ohio and West Virginia. By organizing, sponsoring, and administering USDA food and nutrition programs such as the Summer Food Service Program, the After School At-Risk program, the Youth Development Program, and the Family Child Care program, ANN is committed to combating hunger and promoting healthy life-styles and good nutrition by providing healthy food, nutrition education, and healthy activities for as many children living at or below the poverty level in Appalachia.

In an effort to support local farmers, ANN is currently partnering with Rural Action as well as Athens and Washington County Extension offices to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers. This “Fresher by Thousands of Miles” project is currently being piloted at 16 sites and will gradually be



expanded to provide locally grown fresh produce to children participating in all of ANN's Summer Food Service Programs in both Ohio and West Virginia. This project is environmentally sound, improves nutrition, fights hunger and brings sorely needed capital into Appalachia.

Appalachian Sustainable Development

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Appalachian Sustainable Development is an action-oriented nonprofit organization working to build an ecologically sustainable, locally rooted economy in the Appalachian regions of Virginia and Tennessee. This organization employs a "field-to-table" social enterprise strategy that links farmers, woodland owners, loggers and others directly to buyers and consumers.

Primary initiatives include:

- Appalachian Harvest which enables former tobacco growers and limited resource farmers to successfully transition to organic farming, linking them to supermarkets and other buyers
- Sustainable Woods through which hardwood flooring is produced from ecologically managed private forestlands
- Learning Landscapes which builds and utilizes outdoor classrooms, including gardens, ponds and nature trails at elementary and middle schools

Blue Rock Farm

Don Olson and Linda Zimmer

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Don Olson and Linda Zimmer are co-owners of Blue Rock Farm, West Virginia's first certified organic producer of maple syrup. The farm is home to a pick your own blueberry operation. Also in development are an heirloom apple orchard and a small trout farm.

Don has a degree in landscape architecture and worked as a landscape designer in the Washington, DC area before returning to the farm. Linda uses her background in the arts and early childhood development to encourage children to explore and write about their experiences with nature. Her dream is to establish an "Edible Schoolyard" program following the model of Alice Waters.

Bosserman & Associates, Inc.

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Steve Bosserman is co-coordinating a three-year USDA Special Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) grant that began in January of this year. Recognizing that less than five cents out of every food dollar is currently spent on locally produced foods, this grant is designed to increase participation in a social networking site dedicated to local food systems (<http://localfoodsystems.org>); offer more processes and tools that are useful to participants, and expand the number of projects focused on establishing, strengthening, and sustaining local food systems. This project is also looking for opportunities to web its network with others, leverage resources, and influence the larger system to be more supportive of local food systems. Ohio State is the lead institution on this grant and Casey Hoy is the Primary Investigator. Other partners include Michigan State, Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), and Penn State.

Catawba Sustainability Center - Virginia Tech

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Catawba Sustainability Center is a research, learning and engagement center that promotes and demonstrates sustainable practices through its Landcare Incubator. The Landcare Incubator is a land-based enterprise center for businesses that “care” for the land, generate economic opportunity and build community. The Landcare Incubator develops skills through training, technical advice, certification and protocol support, and access to assistance programs; all in a low risk environment. The Incubator identifies current and emerging regional economic systems, and pursues opportunities to network and build partnerships – to achieve economies of scale, enhance market opportunities, and retain value with producers.

Center for Economic Options (CEO)

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The Center for Economic Options (CEO) is a catalyst for West Virginia Entrepreneurs to develop socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable enterprises that foster individual and community wealth.

CEO works with entrepreneurs and innovators who share a commitment to development that is socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable. They develop models and engage in special initiatives which connect small-scale manufacturers, particularly those operating “green” businesses, with markets for their products. CEO’s innovative models target failed market systems and create the missing

infrastructure to fill the gap, enabling the natural flow and vitality of free enterprise. True success occurs as the model is replicated or absorbed by locally-owned businesses.

This work is of significant benefit to a region that experiences stagnant job growth, low rates of entrepreneurship, and in many rural areas, insufficient market demand for locally-made products. Owners of these enterprises create sustainable jobs for themselves and others as they contribute to their local economies and to community wealth.

With awareness of the growing green economy and issues related to our environment in mind, CEO is now developing a new enterprise model - the Green Business Accelerator (GBA) - which will offer a wide array of information, connections, and resources on environmental sustainability to communities and businesses.

Center for Rural Strategies

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The Center for Rural Strategies is a public-spirited communications organization that seeks to improve rural life by increasing public understanding about the importance and value of rural communities. Our goals are to:

- Use media strategically to reframe the broad public discourse that defines rural communities, and
- Create an environment in which positive changes can occur.

The Center for Rural Strategies helps communities and nonprofit organizations incorporate media and communications into their work in support of strategic goals. We also design and implement information campaigns that educate the public about the problems and opportunities that exist in contemporary rural communities.

Chesterhill Produce Auction

Jean and Marvin Konkle
8380 Wagoner Rd.
Chesterhill, OH 43728
(740) 286-3458

The Chesterhill Produce Auction is owned and operated by Jean and Marvin Konkle, who started the business with help from local non-profit organization Rural Action and The Ohio State University Extension Horticulture Educator Brad Bergefurd, from OSU South Centers in Piketon. Local growers, including members of the Chesterhill Community, supply the produce for the auction.

The Konkles started the auction to address economic needs in the community. The auction acts as a wholesale operation, supplying buyers seeking to purchase produce in bulk, including restaurants, suppliers to farm markets, and even institutions, such as Ohio University. Smaller retail sized lots,

featuring baked goods, are also available. This strengthens food systems in Appalachian Ohio. The Chesterhill Produce Auction is a weekly event from mid-May through mid-October.

Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation

Mary Hunt-Lieving
223 Fourth Avenue
1400 Benedum-Trees Building
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222
(412) 288-0360
800-223-5948 (toll-free from West Virginia)

The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation's role largely takes on the agenda of the people they serve. Their business is to help people help themselves. This is not intended to suggest that the Foundation's role is passive. To the contrary, they go out into the field and listen closely. They build strong and supportive relationships with grantees. They provide technical assistance. They broker ideas and institutions. They create partnerships. They undertake analyses of issues and problems and promote public awareness of them. They help to build broad consensus for change. They seek to empower people to develop their own capacity and the capacity of their institutions to succeed. They leverage not only funds but interest, involvement, and commitment.

Community Farm Alliance (CFA)

Don VanErden
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www.communityfarmalliance.org

Founded in 1985 in response to the farming crisis, Community Farm Alliance is a grassroots organization of about 2,000 members in 75 Kentucky counties. CFA is dedicated to the preservation and sustainability of the small family farm. From creating new Farmers' Markets in underserved urban communities, to developing Farm-to-Cafeteria programs that link local farmers with institutional buyers, to successfully passing more than 20 pieces of legislation in the state that protect or advance the interests of family farms, CFA provides a grassroots voice for Kentucky's citizens-farmer and non-farmer, urban and rural alike-on farm, food, and economic issues.

Community Food Initiatives (CFI)

Ronda Clark
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Founded in 1992, Community Food Initiatives is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping people grow their own food in the greater Athens County area, as well as helping to promote self-sufficiency as it relates to basic food production, preservation, and preparation. This work is rooted in community and the development of a strong local food system. Key projects include:

- CFI Sponsored Community Gardens offer residents of 8 local communities the opportunity to grow their own food and give back. Individuals work their own plot of ground, while voluntarily donating 10% of their organic harvest back to the CFI Donation Station. The CFI Donation Station distributes the fresh produce to the 9 county food pantries, several social service agencies in need of fresh product, many of the local free meal programs and low-income families.
- The Free Seed Project distributes educational material and a selection of vegetables and flower seeds, seed potatoes and tomato plants free of charge to nearly 300 low-income households in Athens County each year.
- The Seed Saving Group was organized in 2003 to help gardeners become more self-sufficient by learning how to save their seeds as well where to sell and trade seeds.
- The Edible Schoolyard Project is working with elementary and high school teachers to develop gardening projects that will teach students to plant, maintain, harvest, cook, preserve and compost fresh produce. These kids are also given the incentive to create economic opportunities and learn how to sell their produce at local farmers markets.

The Ford Foundation

Wayne Fawbush
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The Ford Foundation is an independent, nonprofit grant-making organization. For more than half a century it has been a resource for innovative people and institutions worldwide, guided by its goals of strengthening democratic values, reducing poverty and injustice, promoting international cooperation and advancing human achievement.

A fundamental challenge facing every society is to create political, economic and social systems that promote peace, human welfare and the sustainability of the environment on which life depends. The Foundation believes that the best way to meet this challenge is to encourage initiatives by those living and working closest to where problems are located; to promote collaboration among the nonprofit, government and business sectors; and to ensure participation by men and women from diverse communities and at all levels of society. In their experience, such activities help build common understanding, enhance excellence, enable people to improve their lives and reinforce their commitment to society.

The Ford Foundation is one source of support for these activities. They work mainly by making grants or loans that build knowledge and strengthen organizations and networks. Since their financial resources are modest in comparison with societal needs, we focus on a limited number of problem areas and program strategies within our broad goals.

Barbara Hartman

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Barbara Hartman is past chair of the American Dietetic Association's Hunger and

Environmental Nutrition (HEN) practice group and currently serves as chief of Nutrition and Food Services for The Veteran's Affairs Medical Center in Martinsburg, West Virginia. This 550+ bed facility provides a full range of general medical, surgical, and psychiatric services to veterans in 23 counties in West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

Barbara Hartman has been working with the VAMC - Martinsburg Nutrition and Food Service program to develop a "Green Kitchen" project with a sustainable food and beverage component that includes local produce procurement. For two growing seasons, VAMC - Martinsburg has procured a small amount of organic produce from a local farm and is hoping to expand the program after working through some contracting questions. A national VHA food policy is currently being developed that encourages (but does not mandate) procurement of local produce and/or bread at Veteran's Affairs Medical Center's throughout the country.

Healing Heart Herbals

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Located in beautiful Meigs County, Ohio, Healing Heart Herbals is committed to inspiring people to strive to be all they can be through simple living and connecting with nature. They offer a variety of educational opportunities and events focused on nature and the environment, herbology, foods and cooking. Educational opportunities range from classes and weekend retreats to internships and private consultations as well as a six month apprenticeship program for those interested in more serious herbal studies. Healing Heart Herbals also creates and markets a line of specialty tea blends.

Hocking College

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Founded in 1968, Hocking College is a public, open access technical college with a focus on training associate degree graduates. It offers over 40 degree programs, including multiple degree options in natural resources, culinary arts and advanced energy and transportation technology. Hocking College is also actively involved in outreach activities with local organizations related to community development and food production, processing and distribution.

Institute for Local Government Administration and Rural Development (ILGARD)

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Established in 1981, ILGARD is a division of Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs. ILGARD's mission has been to improve the performance, innovation, and efficiency of government; serve as an applied research center for state, regional, and local policy issues; provide information and technology services for increased regional competitiveness; and serve as a public service learning laboratory for undergraduate and graduate students.

Jefferson County Development Authority

Kellie Boles

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The Jefferson County Development Authority has been in existence for almost five years and is currently working to promote a year-round market and a local food distribution system. There is strong community support, but limited funding for the effort. Jefferson County Development Authority is considering pursuing grant funding to support additional work in this area.

Jubilee Project Inc.

Steve Hodges, Lisa Long and Elizabeth Malayter

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Founded in 1991, the mission of Jubilee Project Inc. is to assist in the economic and social empowerment of people in east Tennessee through active programs in leadership development, youth development and economic development with a special focus on microenterprise incubation assistance with artisans, youth, farmers and food product entrepreneurs; and on working in local, regional, and statewide coalitions to improve policies and resources for entrepreneurial and community development, social justice and community food security.

Major initiatives include:

- Clinch Powell Community Kitchens, offering an inspected food processing facility enabling farmers and local entrepreneurs from 14 counties to produce value-added foods for commercial markets.
- Appalachian Spring Cooperative, a member-owned cooperative providing assistance in marketing value-added foods both online and through sales of gift baskets to businesses and churches.

- Jubilee Farm-to-School Project, coordinating efforts of local farmers to sell fresh produce and semi-processed foods like frozen potato wedges to local school systems, hospitals and other institutions.

Lynchburg Grows

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Lynchburg Grows started in October 2003, when a group of friends worked together to rebuild Paul Lam's vegetable garden at his group home for disabled individuals. A groundskeeper had destroyed the vegetable garden due to a miscommunication with managers of the property. While working to restore the garden, the volunteers decided to expand their mission to help all disadvantaged persons to enjoy the healthy benefits of gardening and to have access to a space where they can learn gardening skills, and thus Lynchburg Grows was born.

In 2004, the group located the H.R. Schenkel, Inc. Rose Production Facility that had closed its doors in 1999. The 6.5-acre property, located near the urban center of Lynchburg, had nine historic greenhouses totaling over 70,000 sq. ft. and many materials for gardening on site as well as some very overgrown rose bushes. Lynchburg Grows signed an option to purchase the property at a 'bargain sale' that same year and, with the help of hundreds of volunteers, they transformed the dilapidated site into productive organic gardens. This renewed facility provides jobs for four disabled part-time stipend workers as well as gardening and learning experiences for an average of 36 youth and 18 adults per week.

Since renovation efforts began in 2004, over 2,300 people of all ages have donated over 24,000 person-hours to create a beautiful urban farm that benefits children and adults from Lynchburg and the neighboring communities. With the help of these volunteers and local partnerships, Lynchburg Grows hopes to continue to fulfill its mission and leave a positive, lasting impact on central Virginia for years to come.

Since September 2006, LG has met with over 2,500 children and 3,200 adults in its targeted community outreach campaign. From 2004-2008 they donated over 8,000 lbs of food to Daily Bread, a local food bank serving an average of 125 people each day. Since its inception, Lynchburg Grows has increased its initial revenue of \$8,000 to annual revenues averaging \$270,000 over the past three years. Lynchburg Grows signed a Master Partner agreement with Lynchburg City Schools in November 2008 to provide hands on learning about science, agriculture and food systems. The Farm is already a valuable asset to the community and has the potential for much more!

AP Marrone Farm

Arthur Marrone and Beth Bell
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Arthur4th@frontier.net

Monroe Farm Market

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Alderson, WV 24910
(304) 772-3003
contact@monroefarmmarket.com
www.monroefarmmarket.org

Monroe Farm Market includes 25+ producers from Monroe and Greenbrier Counties, selling a range of produce, eggs, meat and value-added products. An online market has also been developed to sell products to restaurants in Beckley, West Virginia.

Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation

Sandra Mikush
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The Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation's mission is to assist people in the Southeastern US to build just and caring communities that nurture people, spur enterprise, bridge differences and foster fairness. Their mission is to help people and places to move out of poverty and achieve greater social and economic justice. They support organizations and networks that work across race, ethnic, economic and political differences to make possible a brighter future for all.

Mountain Association for Community and Economic Development (MACED)

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MACED works to equip communities, entrepreneurs, and change agents with the tools they need to build stronger economies that work for low-income people and natural places in eastern Kentucky and Central Appalachia. This organization aims to help people build more economic security, expand their sense of the possible and increase their capacity to participate in creating vital communities.

For over three decades, MACED's commitment to the people and places of the region have shown that high expectations, vision and hard work are essential to accomplish results. MACED focuses on three core strategies toward those ends.

- **Enterprise Development:** Investing capital and capacity-building technical assistance in for-profit and nonprofit enterprises to create economic opportunities, protect natural and cultural assets and provide important services.

- Program Demonstrations: Developing new approaches to old problems and testing them out on the ground.
- Research and Communications for Policy Change: Conducting research around policy opportunities and barriers that results in better development practice and potential for people in need.

Natural Capital Investment Fund (NCIF)

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 www.ncifund.org

The Natural Capital Investment Fund (NCIF) provides debt and equity financing to high-potential natural resource-based business that will advance sustainable economic development in West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, and northeast Tennessee. The NCIF focuses on businesses that are unable to obtain sufficient financing from conventional sources and that have the potential to diversify rural economies and create or retain family wage jobs. Debt and equity investments are structured to provide incentives to meet specific environmental goals. In addition, businesses in which the NCIF invests are required to meet all existing local, state and federal environmental regulatory requirements as well as adopt environmental related industry specific best management practices.

Eligible activities include, but are not limited to, specialty agriculture, aquaculture, recycling and value-added wood products, sustainable tourism related enterprises and enterprises whose products or services add value to a natural resource-based product. The NCIF and its partners will also provide ongoing technical assistance as needed to ensure the success of portfolio companies.

The Conservation Fund launched the NCIF in 2000 in partnership with the West Virginia Small Business Development Center in response to the critical, identifiable demand for capital and technical resources by natural resource-based businesses in central Appalachia and to lift up models of sustainable enterprise, to encourage individual and organizational leadership in sustainable development and to increase the participation by traditional arms of the economy and government in sustainable practices.

New Appalachian Farm and Research Center (NAFRC)

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West Virginia has 20,000 farms, of which approximately half of have fewer than 100 acres. Making a living on a farm this size requires produce and products be sold at other than commodity prices. In other words, it requires that they be specialty crops or value-added products. New Appalachian Farm and Research Center (NAFRC) is building a knowledge base focused on providing farmers with information which will enable them to work in this new arena. NAFRC schedules demonstrations, workshops, conferences, lectures, panel discussions, structured dialogues and other presentations that

are open to the public (sometimes in conjunction with other similarly purposed organizations such as educational or workforce development organizations, or agricultural research organizations) for the purpose of the cross-sharing of information related to creating entrepreneurship and developing confident business leaders. It then generates, produces and publishes its findings and insights in learning materials and training manuals, both text and electronic available on the NAFRC website.

NAFRC's current project is a collaboration between the Natural Capital Investment Fund, The Upshur County Development Authority and New Appalachian Farm and Research Center to create a processing facility in Southern Upshur County that will help farmers get their product cleaned, graded, packaged, branded and distributed.

Ohio State University Extension, Morgan County

Amy Grove

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The OSU Extension office in Morgan County works closely with the agricultural community in this large but sparsely populated southeast Ohio county. The majority of producers in the area raise a variety of market vegetables, fruits, plants and flowers, with a few involved in the production of meat, eggs or processed foods.

The Extension office currently partners with the two farmers markets located in the county as well as the Chesterhill Produce Auction which provides a weekly wholesale distribution mechanism for local farmers during the growing season. Challenges include marketing, accurately identifying the needs of the consumers and finding new producers, particularly for the produce auction. Ohio University and several independent grocery stores are interested in buying local products and have begun patronizing the produce auction. In addition, the Extension Office has joined the Ohio Farmers Market Management Co-op to further increase marketing opportunities and benefit from additional partners. The OSU Extension Office's Master Gardeners group is also active at the farmers markets, providing suggestions and guidance to individual gardeners.

Oklahoma Food Cooperative

Kim Barker

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www.oklahomafood.coop

The Oklahoma Food Cooperative is a local food production and consumption operation serving the state's population. The coop acts as a bridge between the state's producers and buyers of local food and non-food products. As of June 2008, the coop has nearly 2,000 members, 125 of whom are producers (although not all producers have items to sell every month). The coop is seeing \$61,000-65,000 per month in sales and has 32 pickup sites across the state for buyers to pick up their product.

Randolph County Development Authority

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The Randolph County Development Authority is the lead economic development organization in Randolph County, West Virginia. The Authority has been assisting businesses for the past 30 years through real estate development, business retention efforts, facilitating state and federal business loans, offering special training to the wood industry, bring new investment into the county, and receiving grants for area projects. In addition to working with the Randolph County Development Authority, Nancy Barlow is also an organic farmer and sells vegetables and honey at the Elkins Farmers Market.

Rural Action

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Founded in 1991, Rural Action is a membership based organization whose purpose is to promote economic, social, and environmental justice in Appalachian Ohio. To carry out this mission, Rural Action organizes, educates, networks, and supports citizens committed to sustainable rural renewal activities. Although engaged in work throughout the region, the organization's home office is based in northern Athens County and its projects are concentrated in Athens and the six counties surrounding it: Meigs, Vinton, Washington, Hocking, Morgan, and Perry.

Rural Action works in partnership with farmers, business owners, nonprofit organizations, community groups and government agencies on a wide range of projects related to three main categories of work:

- Environmental Restoration which includes watersheds, forests and woodlands, native species, agricultural lands in production, and environmental education;
- Asset Building and Green Enterprises which includes broadly shared economic opportunities from agriculture, forestry, and energy;
- Leadership and Democratic Systems which includes youth leadership, service learning, and community capacity building.

Rural Resources

Sally Causey and Rhonda Hensley
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www.ruralresources.net

Rural Resources is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating the community in the preservation and improvement of agricultural land, preserving our rural heritage, and developing a locally sustainable system of producing and marketing agricultural products. Education and marketing projects include:

- Farm & Food Training Program involves groups of at-risk teens in a multi-year Farm, Chef, & Business Training program. Ultimately, teens have the option to participate in livestock ownership, and/or a micro-loan program.
- Cooking & Gardening with Children involves children and their teachers in gardening and experiencing where their food comes from as a part of their after school programs.
- Farm Day Camp offers weeklong sessions of summer fun on the farm for children ages 4 to 12. Campers hand milk a cow, care for other farm animals, garden, discover worms, wildlife, and play in the creek.
- Four Seasons Grazing Club & Workshops facilitates the sharing of ideas and knowledge among local livestock and other producers as they gather for farm tours and fellowship. Pasture walks focus on utilizing rotational grazing, fencing, and watering systems.
- Farm Arts Festival showcases farm and heritage arts & crafts of our region while celebrating the harvest season!
- Mobile Farmers' Market (with Mobile Kitchen coming soon) transports locally grown produce into neighborhoods where many residents do not have their own transportation. The vehicle is a converted handicapped accessible mini school bus. Food stamps/EBT Cards are accepted! The Mobile Kitchen will be another bus converted to be an inspected food preparation facility. The kitchen will provide opportunities for tasting and food preparation demonstrations alongside the Mobile Farmers' Market.
- Local Food Basket Subscriptions provide pre-paid weekly or bi weekly ½ bushel baskets of fresh produce ready and waiting on the Mobile Farmers' Market for subscribers each week of the growing season.
- Greeneville Farmers' Market celebrates the season with a traditional open air Saturday morning market for locally grown produce in downtown Greeneville, Tennessee.

Staple Food Collaborative

Michelle Ajamian and Brandon Jaeger

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Located in southeast Ohio, Michelle Ajamian and Brandon Jaeger are actively involved with researching staple food crops, the food system they require and the food security they can provide as rising fuel costs and climate change threaten the viability of more distant sources. Their work began with a North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) grant to test several high nutrition crops for the Appalachian region including buckwheat, millet, amaranth, quinoa, meal corn and adzuki beans. That work quickly provided a valuable education about the farming and food systems that support these crops and the limitations of economies of scale when working on the small and irregular plots characteristic of this area.

Current activity includes working with the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Ohio University to look at developing appropriate scale technology under a foundation grant that would fund their participation; using funding from the Ohio Farm Bureau Foundation and the Stinner Endowment to help

demonstrate harvesting and processing of this season's crops; establishing a Food Policy Council in Athens County that would take on several projects including:

- A study funded by the Center for Farm Policy and Innovation and the Ohio Department of Agriculture examining policy that would support the use of publicly owned and managed agricultural land for staple seed crops.
- A mapping project funded through the Sociological Initiatives Foundation aimed at assessing the assets and needs for building a staple foods system in the region. Michelle Ajamian has developed a survey to be used with a network mapping system that will illustrate the regional strengths and relationships and assist in the identification of allies and areas in which more work needs to be done to move forward.

Sycamore Run Early Childcare Center

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Started in 2005, Sycamore Run is a daycare center serving children aged birth-afterschool. Founder Megan Weber is interested in renovating a second building on the school property to incorporate a commercial kitchen, with the long-term goal of having children grow, process and eat their own fresh organic produce.

True Harvest

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True Harvest is a new nonprofit organization founded by Leslie Miller and Megan Weber in August, 2008. Its mission is to advocate for, support, develop and implement programs that promote optimal nutrition and food security for children ages 0 - 5, their families and early childhood educators.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development – West Virginia

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The overall mission of USDA Rural Development is to increase the economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for all rural Americans by coordinating Federal assistance in rural areas. West Virginia Rural Development works closely with the profit and non-profit sectors, along with state, tribal, and local governments to provide technical assistance and programs to strengthen the economy and improve the standard of living for rural citizens throughout the state.

University of Kentucky Appalachian Center

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The University of Kentucky Appalachian Center aims to build robust partnerships with diverse constituents to address the issues, challenges, and opportunities of importance in Appalachia. The Appalachian Center places great value on participatory and collaborative processes and therefore involves community-based partners and faculty in the design and implementation of their interdisciplinary programs. In addition to its general support of research related to the Appalachian region, the Center has a particular interest in fostering networks, discussion and study devoted to the development of innovative economic development strategies for the area.

University of Tennessee

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The focus of the University of Tennessee Vegetable Extension Program is to help growers reduce their off-farm inputs and increase farm profits. As the University of Tennessee Vegetable Extension Specialist, Annette Wszelaki has statewide responsibility for developing a comprehensive educational program in commercial vegetable production. The main focus of this extension program includes production and variety recommendations, diversifying production, developing alternative crops, organic and sustainable production, crop sensory and nutrition evaluations, and postharvest handling. Wszelaki also has co-coordinated the design and implementation of research projects at the Organic Crops Unit in Knoxville, TN, with emphasis on alternative crops, season extension, minimum tillage, cover cropping and farmscaping.

Virginia Cooperative Extension

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As a community viability specialist for Virginia Cooperative Extension, Eric Bendfeldt serves a 14-county area in the Shenandoah Valley from Roanoke to Winchester. In this role, he has helped facilitate the development of the SV Produce Auction, the SV Local Food Work Group, and has partnered with the Shenandoah RC & D, Valley Conservation Council, Washington & Lee University, James Madison University, Eastern Mennonite University, Rockingham Memorial Hospital, Harrisonburg City, Rockingham County, and Shenandoah County Public School to promote local farming, more direct connections with consumers and producers, and a community-based food system. Virginia Cooperative Extension's overall goal is to make farming more sustainable and profitable and expand the availability and accessibility of healthy, nutritious, locally grown food for stronger individuals and communities.

Virginia Tech Dining Services

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Founded in 1872 as a land grant college, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) is now a comprehensive, innovative research university with the largest number of degree offerings in Virginia, more than 125 campus buildings, a 2,600-acre main campus with over 28,000 students and a 1,700-acre agriculture research farm. Located in the Town of Blacksburg in Montgomery County, Virginia Tech is 38 miles southwest of Roanoke, in the New River Valley.

Virginia Tech Dining Services serves over five million meals each year at eleven dining locations and has won numerous awards for its innovative food and service. A commitment has been made to improve nutrition and minimize environmental impact by serving more locally grown and organic foods, decreasing food processing and trans fats and incorporating more whole grains. One initiative is The Farms and Fields Project shop, which offers students weekday lunch and dinner choices made from a variety of local, organic, and sustainably grown foods, including carved roast organic turkey, organic vegetable lasagna, all natural meatloaf made with Grayson county grass-finished beef, and organic cream of broccoli soup. The shop also provides educational fliers which explain terms that students may be unclear about, such as "all natural" and "organic", and a full-time employee with an agricultural background to answer questions. Other Virginia Tech Dining Services sustainability initiatives include trayless dining, direct relationship coffee purchasing, recycling programs, and the beginnings of a composting system.

Washington and Lee University

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Founded in 1749, Washington and Lee University is located in the historic city of Lexington, Virginia about three hours southwest of Washington DC. This private university serves 1770 students through its undergraduate program and an additional 412 students in its law school.

Until two years ago, Washington and Lee University did not serve any local food products in its dining halls. However, the school is located in a largely rural county and became interested in helping to develop a food system in which mid-size farmers can make a viable living and where end-users, distributors and farmers are partners, sharing both the rewards and challenges of locally grown and processed food. To this end, they have partnered with Appalachian Sustainable Development and Cavalier Produce as well as the local high school, regional food groups (including Buy Fresh Buy Local) and the local food bank to stimulate food-related economic development in the region and increase low-income residents' access to fresh, healthy food.

As a result of these efforts, Washington and Lee University increased its local food purchases significantly, accessing 8.5% of its food from local providers last year and on track to reach 22% this year. In addition, food costs have been reduced by .8%. Moving forward, there is an interest in identifying additional funding for municipalities interested in pursuing this type of project as well as figuring out how to effectively demonstrate the value of a local food system in the context of a green

economic engine. Ongoing challenges continue to be the need for improved strategies for farmer coordination / communication and increased infrastructure, particularly related to beef processing.

Sarah Watling

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Wendling's Food Service

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Keith Buchanan
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A.F. Wendling, Inc. is West Virginia's largest "locally grown" family-owned and operated Foodservice distributor with over 8,000 items in our warehouse and access to thousands more. Our food products line consists of fresh meats and seafood including sustainable species and natural products as well as fresh produce, frozen foods and other food items to round out any menu. We also carry a broad line of non-foods items through our "SupplyWorks" division including bio-degradable tableware, cleaning supplies, trash liners, and anything else needed beyond the plate. Regardless of the size of our business customers, we work to promote their growth and development with a personal touch for service that is the hallmark of our family-owned business since 1913.

Says owner Chris Wendling, "We are proud of our family of employees and their dedication to make a difference for our customers. We're always open to new ideas and the door to management is always open and that's the best way we can continue to learn and improve our customer service and satisfaction".

West Virginia Community Development Hub

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The West Virginia Community Development Hub is dedicated to connecting communities to a network of resources and opportunities to help them realize their visions for the future. Based in the Harrison County community of Stonewood, the Hub was formed in September 2008 through the merger of two similar statewide nonprofit organizations, Community Collaborative Inc. (CCI) and the Community Development Partnership of West Virginia (CDP). The Hub does not directly provide funds or services, but rather convenes, connects and aligns various stakeholders in the network. This new Community Development Model is designed to engage communities in a sustainable process of community development and to connect them with the tools and support necessary to see projects through to completion. According to Executive Director Kent Spellman, "The economy is forcing communities to shift gears and adjust to new and very different challenges and opportunities. Our role is to help them find the resources they will need to meet those challenges and opportunities, and to align those resources in order to reduce redundancies and fill gaps."

The Hub is currently working with leadership teams in 20 communities who were previously involved with either the CCI or the CDP through the Sustainable Communities Training Program (SCTP) or the Federal Home Loan Bank's Blueprint Communities Program. Participants are the cities of Huntington, Beckley, Fairmont, Bluefield and St. Albans; smaller communities of Ansted, Mullens, Salem, Williamson and Winding Gulf; and Monroe, Pleasants, Marshall, Doddridge, Roane, Fayette, Harrison, Ritchie and Gilmer County groups.

**West Virginia State University Extension Service – Fayette County
Sustainable Community Development**

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WVU Extension Service educators and volunteers build and help sustain collaborations and partnerships with people and organizations in West Virginia, to improve their lives and communities. WVU Extension develops and teaches best practices for sustainable agriculture, for responsible use of renewable resources, and stewardship of natural resources.

One project Carl Thompson, Fayette County Extension Agent for Community Development, is actively involved in is the Fayette County Farmland Protection Program. This program seeks to ensure that agriculture will continue to be an integral and viable part of Fayette county's economy, landscape, natural resources and sense of community. To do accomplish this goal, a voluntary conservation easement is placed on eligible farmland, protecting it from extensive commercial development in perpetuity. Acquired easements are either donated by the farm owners or obtained through a purchase agreement. This allows farmland owners to voluntarily protect agricultural areas and woodlands for the future.